

Where is Theory When I'm In a Muddle?

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Standard 3

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of theories and models of organizations and the principles of organizational development.

Dispositions: The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to making management decisions to enhance learning and teaching.

Scenario

Sally James had first met Ms. Mason before either of the Conway boys was enrolled in school. Josh, the older boy, had been attending school in a neighboring district, although the school where James was principal was actually the school of his residence, and no formal application had ever been made for his transfer to the neighboring district. The circumstances around their return were somewhat clouded, but James had heard that the former district had actually instigated the process of the return.

Josh, the older boy, was very bright and had been reported as being a joy in the classroom. The younger boy, James, was his exact opposite. The teachers felt strongly that he was probably much less bright and possibly suffered from Attention Deficit, Hyperactivity Disorder. He had not been identified with any specific learning challenges to date. Mrs. Conway had been very vocal when school started about volunteering with the art program, and James had proffered many invitations to come help, as had the individual teachers. So far, there had been much talk about Mrs. Conway's abilities, how she could really improve the program, but no action.

Both parents worked in their own businesses. She ran a very successful antique and art gallery business and he was owner and CEO of an international computer consulting company. They were very involved with the elite of the community and were close friends with two or three of the present school board members. There had been suggestions that one of them would certainly make a good board member in the near future.

Sally James' brain moved rapidly through all this information as she listened to Dr. Smith, her superintendent, relate a "most unusual" meeting he had just completed with Mrs. Mason. "I have checked our files, and I can't find any children by that name," he said. "I have just had a conversation with a woman by that name who says she has children in your school. I think she was here about four hours."

"Four hours!" exclaimed Sally. What on earth did she discuss that took four hours?"

"Oh, it was something about wearing socks to school."

"The nurse and I sent one home last year after the incident with the health problem we were having with children's feet. I sent one to you, I think."

"Oh, I remember," Dr. Smith responded. "Wasn't that about when we had to fumigate your office and the health room after that child had all those foot blisters treated? But that was last year wasn't it?"

"Yes," she responded. "The PTA had a garage sale just before school started, and sent out a flyer that they had lots of children's socks of all sizes and parents could get all they needed. Incidentally, we have not had a single blister so far all fall."

"Well. I guess the result of the conversation with Mrs. Mason or Conway is that she wants you to run a 'kinder, gentler' school. So, I want you to run a 'kindler, gentler' school from now on. Just don't ask me what that means." Dr. Smith was laughing now, and Sally knew that he had no more idea what that meant than she did.

Sally also knew she had a potentially huge problem on her hands.

Assignment

This activity is an opportunity to summarize your study of administrative theories and apply the concepts of the various theories to an administrative experience.

Describe the actions you would take relative to the incident. Remember, there is no absolute, correct, one single way to handle this situation. It is your best judgment. You are to act as you believe you would as the actual principal in this situation.

After you have determined and written your "solution" to the situation, your task is to identify at least one administrative theorist whom you believe would agree and support your decision. Describe the theory and analyze the concepts of the theory identifying how and why they support your action.

Finally, identify at least one theorist who would disagree with your decision. Describe the theory and analyze the concepts of the theory, identifying how and why they do not support your action.

Instructors' Notes and Scoring Guide
For
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To The Instructor

This activity summarizes a study of administrative theories and their application by the students of the concepts of the various theories to an administrative experience.

Scoring Guide

Score: 2

Finished product addresses any four of the following criteria, and the grammar, spelling, and general format is correct.

- At least two administrative theories are used to positively analyze the vignette
- At least two administrative theories are used to negatively analyze the vignette
- The actions taken identify the perceived problem and are clear, concise, and directly address the issue as stated by the student
- The perceived problem is confronted and resolved in a timely manner
- Evidence is presented that clearly reflects effective problem-framing and problem-solving skills.

Score: 1

Finished product addresses any three of the above criteria, and the grammar, spelling, and general format is acceptable.

Score: 0

Finished product addresses only one administrative theory positively, one negatively, and the grammar, spelling and general format is unacceptable.

To be of most value, both aspects of the instructions, to identify theories that would support and those that would not support the actions taken, should be used. The response can also identify the student's ability to think and write analytically.