

I have always wanted to be a teacher. That is to say that, for as long as I can remember, my professional goals included a career in education. I was fortunate enough to secure a job as an Education Assistant in the St. Paul School District while I worked to complete my teacher education program. I obtained my Minnesota 5-12 Social Studies teaching license in 2005. It was at this early stage of my professional development, while working closely with my school's administrative team, that I knew I wanted to one day be a principal. My goal then, was to teach for five to ten years, develop the skills, knowledge, and leadership qualities needed to be an effective administrator and then pursue a K-12 principal license. And now here I sit, just over ten years after getting my license. Three schools and three deployments later and I'm on the verge of achieving another career goal.

Right or wrong, I have always held the belief that the best administrators have served a substantial amount of time in the trenches of their respective learning communities. I felt it important for my credibility and ability as a future administrator to first establish myself as a strong teacher and teacher-leader. I feel I have strived toward that goal over the past decade and, while I am a long way from ever mastering the art of teaching, I am anxious and ready to take that next step.

My leadership philosophy is an amalgamation of lessons learned from past leaders. I have learned much, as we all do, from former supervisors, mentors, and peers. I have often made mental notes about how certain situations were handled, good or bad, and reflected on how I might have responded in similar situations had I been in a leadership position. I have slowly assembled my leadership toolbox by tucking away best perceived practices and tossing away tools that don't fit my style.

Overall my leadership style is closely tied to my twenty years of military service. I don't mean the concrete, black and white, yes sir and no sir, type leadership that most people think of when they hear the words military service. My leadership style is steeped in the rich traditions of Army's the non-commissioned officer corps; traditions that include mutual respect and collaboration, lead-by example direction, structured but not rigid standards, and open and honest communication.

That training and experience has served me well as I have learned to apply it to my career in education. I feel teachers and students alike want firm, fair, leadership with integrity and transparency. I strive to be the type of leader that encourages and inspires the learners and educators around me. A leader in education should continue to champion the cause of education from the office, without forgetting the time I spent in the classroom. A principal should empower teachers to empower our students, create safe and supportive learning environments, and be a conduit for positive change throughout the building and community. My desire is to soon be able to breathe new life in to that ever-evolving philosophy and to be the kind of administrator I have wanted to see in our schools since I began this quest ten years ago.