

Leadership Platform

When I think about why I lead, I return to five core values: grace, service, learning, contribution, and connection. These are not abstract words to me, they are the daily reminders that shape how I treat others, how I make decisions, and what kind of school culture I want to build. Leadership, as Vogel (2012) notes, is never neutral; every choice restructures human lives. I've seen this truth in small moments, like when a scheduling decision opened opportunities for one student while closing them for another. Those choices reminded me just how important it is to hold tightly to my values so that the impact of my leadership leaves a positive mark on the students, teachers, and families I serve.

The schools I want to help shape are not only academically strong but also deeply human places. I imagine schools where students feel known, respected, and challenged to grow. Academic rigor matters, but so do joy, creativity, and belonging. Vogel (2012) emphasizes that many leaders act from an ethic of care, centering values like empathy, trust, and dignity. That resonates with me because I have watched students flourish when they feel that sense of belonging - like the quiet student who found her confidence after joining choir, not because of a grade, but because she finally felt part of something bigger. At the same time, schools must stand for justice. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2013) makes clear that student well-being must guide every decision, and that includes protecting fairness and rights. For me, this means ensuring equitable access to opportunities, confronting bias in systems, and advocating for those who are too often overlooked. Care and justice have to go hand in hand: students need compassion, but they also need leaders willing to fight for equity.

I want to be a leader who blends head and heart. Grace shapes how I respond in conflict, through patience, perspective, and forgiveness. Service reminds me that leadership is not about control but about lifting others up. Vogel (2012) describes this as stewardship, leading by empowering rather than coercing. That is the kind of leadership I strive to embody. Connection is also central. Without strong relationships, trust fades, and without trust, little else is possible. I think of times when parents have come into my office upset or frustrated. The turning point was never the data I presented, but whether they felt heard and respected. Those moments taught me that trust grows out of connection, not compliance. Learning and contribution round out my platform because I see leadership as a process of growth. I want to stay curious, reflect on my practice, and contribute back to the profession by mentoring others and advocating for change.

I have learned that what works in leadership is consistency between values and actions. When I communicate openly, act fairly, and make decisions transparently, trust grows. Vogel's (2012) research shows that many leaders operate from altruism, focusing on the well-being of others. I see the same in my own practice - when I center decisions on students and staff rather than my own convenience, people feel respected, even if they disagree. I remember once facing a difficult staffing decision that disappointed some colleagues. Because I was honest about the reasons behind it and kept the conversation open, they accepted it even though it wasn't the outcome they hoped for. What does not work is leadership that ignores relationships or equity. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2013) reminds leaders to act with honesty and integrity, and I know that even small compromises in those areas damage trust. Leadership that prioritizes efficiency over humanity or compliance over fairness may meet short-term goals but erodes the culture of a school. Silence in the face of injustice is especially harmful; failing to act communicates acceptance of inequity.

The ethics of care and justice form the backbone of my leadership. The ethic of care reminds me to put people first, to listen deeply, and to lead with empathy (Vogel, 2012). The ethic of justice keeps me rooted in fairness, accountability, and integrity (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2013). On their own, each has limits - care without justice risks favoritism, while justice without care can feel rigid. Together, they create balance, helping me ask two essential questions: Is this decision fair? And does it honor the humanity of those it affects? These ethics also set boundaries for me. I will not use my position for personal gain. I will not remain silent when students are mistreated or when inequities persist. I will not value efficiency more than people. My commitment is to act with honesty, fairness, and compassion even when those choices are inconvenient or unpopular.

My leadership platform is still evolving, but right now it is anchored in grace, service, learning, contribution, and connection. Vogel (2012) reminds me that leadership is a moral act, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2013) underscores that students' well-being must always come first. Together, these ideas affirm the path I want to walk: leading with both head and heart, balancing care with justice, and ensuring that my decisions consistently reflect the values I claim to hold. I know this platform will grow as I continue learning about myself, my students, and the communities I serve. For now, it gives me both a foundation to stand on and a compass to return to when decisions are hard.

References:

- National Association of Secondary School Principals. (2013). *Ethics for school leaders*. NASSP. <https://nassp.org/who-we-are/board-of-directors/position-statements/ethics-for-school-leaders>
- Vogel, L. R. (2012). Leading with hearts and minds: Ethical orientations of educational leadership doctoral students. *Values and Ethics in Educational Administration*, 10(1), 1–12.