PLA Portfolio #1: EDLD 6793 Principal Internship I

My name is [Redacted], and I am the assistant principal [Redacted] – one of two major high schools in the Kalamazoo Public School system. I was named to this position in January 2021, after 10 years of being a teacher and special education director in a different district. With my two and a half years’ experience as an assistant principal and completing all but two of the courses required to obtain my Master of Arts in Educational Leadership degree – I will clearly demonstrate that I have already mastered the knowledge and skills established as the course’s learning outcomes/standards. I am submitting this portfolio to seek prior learning assessment (PLA) credits for EDLD 6793.

Course Learning Objectives/Standards

Due to the length of the excerpts of the EDLD 6793 learning outcomes/standards, I have listed them below. The full specification for each of the learning objectives/standards can be found in this NELP Program Recognition Standards document.

Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program:

Learning Outcome/Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Improvement:
Understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to collaboratively lead, design, and implement a school mission, vision, and process for continuous improvement that reflects a core set of values and priorities that include data use, technology, equity, diversity, digital citizenship, and community. In other words, a building-level education leader must have the knowledge and skills to promote the success of every student through collaboratively leading, designing, and implementing a school mission, vision, and process for continuous improvement that reflects a core set of values and priorities. This includes knowledge of how to evaluate, design, and communicate a district mission and vision that reflects a core set of values and priorities and to lead improvement processes that include evaluation, design, and implementation.

Learning Outcome/Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms:
Understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to understand and demonstrate the capacity to advocate for ethical decisions and cultivate and enact professional norms. In other words, a building-level education leader must have the knowledge and skills to promote the success of every student through advocating for ethical decisions and cultivating and enacting professional norms. This includes the
capacity to reflect on, communicate about, cultivate, and enact professional norms and evaluate and advocate for ethical and legal decisions. It also includes the capacity to model ethical behavior in their personal conduct and relationships and to cultivate ethical behavior in others.

**Outcome/Standard 3: Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness:**
Understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to develop and maintain a supportive, equitable, culturally responsive, and inclusive school culture. In other words, a building-level education leader must have the knowledge and skills to promote the success of every student through developing and maintaining a supportive, equitable, responsive, and inclusive school culture. This includes the capacity to evaluate, cultivate, and advocate for a supportive and inclusive school culture; equitable access to educational resources, procedures, and opportunities; and equitable instructional and behavior support practices among teachers and staff.

**Learning Outcome/Standard 4: Learning and Instruction:**
Understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to evaluate, develop, and implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, data systems, supports, and assessment. In other words, a building-level education leader must have the knowledge and skills to promote the success of every student through evaluating, developing, and implementing coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, supports, and assessment. This includes the capacity to evaluate, develop, and implement academic and non-academic student programs and academic and non-academic instructional practices, resources, and services that support the needs of each student. It also includes the capacity to evaluate, develop, and implement formal and informal assessments that support instructional improvement and student learning and well-being and to evaluate, develop, and implement the school’s curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in a coherent and systematic manner.

**Sources of Learning/Experiences**
It was in January 2021 that I began my role as an administrator. Right from the start I was given my specific job responsibilities as an AP and my list of teachers I’d be responsible for observing. The start to my career was very unconventional. I started halfway through the school year and not the typical school year – our school was fully virtual. I began my administrative duties from behind a computer screen – the administrative team and secretarial staff were the only ones in the building. I became involved in the administrative team decisions immediately. Our administrative team met weekly for hours discussing procedures and protocols. These meetings consisted of the five administrators on staff working through a list of weekly tasks/duties – to apply knowledge, skills and commitments necessary to understand and demonstrate the capacity
to advocate for ethical decisions as defined in *(Standard 2 – components 2.1 and 2.3)*, an example agenda can be found here in Artifact 1.

One of the first responsibilities I took on was to be the administrative lead on the school improvement team. My role (co-leader) was to support the lead – who was a veteran teacher through additional meetings and collaboration. Over the past three school years we have established and led many discussions, made many changes to the schools climate/culture, and rules/procedures to our school - which defined by research on school improvement *(Standard 1 – component 1.2 and Standard 3 – component 3.1)* and engaging in advocacy for a supportive and inclusive school culture as shown by an example of our SIP agenda in Artifact 2.

August 2022, I chose to be a part of a pilot team of administrators that used the Harvard model of Instructional Rounds to identify building specific problems of practice – within this model the learning of research on effective and ineffective assessment of student learning and well-being and appropriate and ethical use of data to monitor and continuously improve the school’s curriculum and assessment practices *(Standard 4 – components 4.3 and 4.4)* as shown through the initial agenda Artifact 3. Through this process I learned how to effectively and efficiently been trained to observe, monitor, and collaborate with colleagues to identify building wide and district wide problems of practice.

In my two and a half years as an administrator I’ve been in hundreds of hours of meetings – weekly building administrator meetings, monthly secondary administrator meetings and quarterly ILT (all district administrators and central office administrators). Through these meetings, an immense amount of collaboration and learning occurred. Whether it was going through deep data dives (Artifact 4), brainstorming strategies in subgroups to identify a problem (Artifact 5), or general conversations with seasoned veterans of the group – I was learning daily “on the fly” while applying best practices as I learned them in the course or courses I was taking or had previously taken. I had only taken one course in the EDLD program prior to starting this position.

**Mastering Knowledge and Skills**

In this section I will demonstrate how I have mastered the knowledge and skills for this course’s learning outcomes/standards. I will show how I have used them in my role as assistant principal at Loy Norrix High School for two and a half years through various artifacts and examples. Each standard will be addressed separately and thoroughly.

**Learning Outcome/Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Improvement:**

I’ve previously stated that we have weekly building administration meetings (Friday’s at 12:30) that last anywhere from One and a half to two hours. One of our tasks during our first week back to school – which is the week before teachers arrive is to look at and modify (if needed) our schools mission/vision statement *(component 1.1)*. This year, collectively as a group we created a new statement *(Artifact 6)*. Our mission is posted on classroom posters and placed strategically throughout the building. Additionally, we have shared our mission on all our school social media platforms so that families, students, and staff have time to review and reflect on our new
As the co-leader of our buildings school improvement team, I’ve facilitated on numerous initiatives. The start of the school we identified areas that we wanted to look at as a whole (school). From there I would help facilitate discussions with the team – identifying areas of concern and how we were planning to explore them (Artifact 7). At follow up meetings, we would build on the areas of concern we identified – from there I helped to facilitate a needs assessment with the group. We identified data drops from our previous years’ ELA and Math scores as identified from the PSAT, SAT and MSTEP scores. Our first step was to look at the comprehensive results from all students who took the tests. We split the team into two groups, one looking at the math test results and one looking at the English test results. We split the time looking for areas of success and areas of problems – the whole process can be seen in Artifact 8. Through several other meetings we were able to identify seven building level goals to create our school improvement plan for the 2023-2024 school year with two research based strategies for each goal and activities to be implemented to support those goals Artifact 9 (component 1.2).

Additionally, this year our school was placed on the State of Michigan ATS (additional targeted support) list. Through this process we formed a sub-group from our school improvement team that was designated to complete the formal process (MICIP) to address and resolve the issue by the 2023-2024 school year. Our special education sub-group was performing substantially under the state average. We surveyed students in the areas of: Student/student relationships, student/teacher relationships, and student involvement Artifact 10. This data helped drive initiatives for our ATS plan as well as other areas that I will discuss later. In this process we were able to identify problems, perform and analyze our data analysis, perform a gap analysis, review, and complete a data summary, go through the 5-Why’s analysis, and identify the root cause and problem of practice. I then helped facilitate discussions to create goals and strategies to complete the process. After the process was completed and reviewed several times, we submitted it to the state for approval – which it was approved (Artifact 11).

Learning Outcome/Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms

Part of my role as an assistant principal is to oversee our restorative justice initiatives. At Loy Norrix, we have a restorative justice interventionist that I work closely with. This role has been established for two years. Last summer, before entering the 2022-2023 school year together, we made the decision that we needed to take the program to the next level. We already had initiatives in place for students – minimizing egregious behaviors and teaching students’ alternative methods in dealing with their issues – circles, mediation, etc. During the beginning of the year PD meetings for teachers, we were able to use two hours to start the next step – training teachers on restorative practices so that they would be able to use them in their classes. By teachers using the methods in their classes, they would be able to reinforce a building wide initiative – this would ensure that students would be hearing the same language and seeing the same reactionary responses from teachers in response to unideal behaviors. During this training we wanted teachers to be able to take away three key points: How could I use this activity in my classroom in response to behavior? How could I use this with my content? In what ways could students use this activity themselves to demonstrate learning/mastery? The theory behind our initiative was that equal opportunities would be available for all students (race, sex, religion).
Taking preconceived biases out of teacher responses to student situations and allowing them to not only teach but to learn proper and proven working methods. Artifact 15 shows the complete program that was completed by me and our restorative justice interventionist. This allowed for teachers and staff to reflect on and evaluate their professional biases and issues (Standard 2 – Component 2.1 & 2.2). Halfway though the year, I used one of our staff meetings and dedicated it to a restorative justice follow up. This meeting consisted of asking teachers to report out what is and what isn’t working for them regarding restorative practices. Many teachers spoke out about the positive culture and climate it had brought into their classrooms. This outcome has given me a sense of pride as it has formed a building wide level of ethical and effective practices (Standard 3 – Component 2.3).

Learning Outcome/Standard 3: Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness:

Loy Norrix has a very diverse population. As mentioned before in Artifact 10, I helped create a survey for our student body in several areas of our school’s climate/culture. It is the only true way to gauge the true feelings of the students. After the data was collected, I helped lead our team in analyzing it and deciding what we were going to do with it. Besides using it for our ATS report, we also used it for creating a more equitable student and staff handbook. Within our student handbook, I and the team wanted to ensure that our new building policies: no cellphones and no hats/hoods were equitable in both the way they were written, and the consequences associated with them. Artifact 12 (Dress code – page 23, cell phone policy – page 27) shows the results of the decisions made. Our African American/black students were responsible for 54% of the referrals last year and 64% of our suspensions – data I discovered from a previous course in the EDLD program informed me that our African American/black students make up 28.29% of our total population. To help reduce those numbers a more progressive discipline approach has been adopted, also noted in Artifact 12 (Standard 3 - Components 3.1 and 3.2). When looking at all the areas of the student handbook we had to ensure that all our policies are aligned with the Board of Education policies and procedures.

As an administrator, I am also a lead-teacher. In being that lead-teacher, it is my responsibility to be inside classrooms: observing – identifying strengths and weaknesses and consequently meeting and giving feedback to teachers. Prior to being in this role, the process was to document which day I met with and which day I conferenced with the teacher. This was an acceptable way of holding all administrators accountable for participating in walkthroughs. However, there wasn’t an equitable or consistent way of giving valuable feedback to teachers. Our administrative team and I decided that we were going to make the process more valuable to all. We spent several hours deliberating – it was decided that we wanted it broken down into two categories. What we wanted to see as administrators and what useable information the teachers could take from it. A ‘walkthrough’ form was created (Artifact 13) that was easily accessible, by cell phone and easily useable. Teachers knew that we could drop by anytime and any day and when I was in the classroom, it would only be for five to ten minutes. After the form is filled out, a copy is sent to the teacher of our findings and a short conference is scheduled. This has improved communication amongst teachers/teachers and teachers/administrators – common language is used, data for the next year will tell if this initiative is helping improve scores (component 3.3).
Learning Outcome/Standard 4: Learning and Instruction:

Previously, I mentioned learning about instructional rounds (Artifact 3): what they are and how to properly utilize them. After going through several days of classroom training and a few rounds of participating in rounds myself, I was able to learn and experience what the expectations were of the process. During this process, I was able to observe multiple classrooms/teachers at both the middle school and elementary level. It expanded my knowledge on being an educational leader. Half-way though the 2022-2023 school year, I was tasked with training some of our lead teachers on participating in the instructional rounds in hopes to becoming an educational leader. The objectives that I placed upon teachers were for them to be able to: identify critical problems of practice related to instruction, collect, and analyze classroom observation data to discern a school’s current level of practice, and use those insights to determine directions for subsequent instructional improvement efforts (Artifact 3 – slides 3-6). Five teachers have been fully trained as a part of the implementation process. Our goal and plan for the 2023-2024 school year is to have 50% of our teachers trained and 100% of teachers by 2024-2025 school year. Through this process, I was able to help evaluate our curriculum and academic system, also, was able to implement the strategies for improving academic practices in support of student learning (Standard 4 – components 4.1 and 4.2)

Data, I’ve learned since being in this role is multi-dimensional. By that, I mean that one set of data can be used for many different things, initiatives. For example, previous data that I introduced in Artifact 4 – which is longitudinal data for all of [redacted]. Highlighting the scores for [redacted], our SIP team met and discussed the data. Even though we saw growth in two of the four measurable areas – math, English, social studies, and science. I led a group of members from our school improvement team on discussions on how to provide additional supports. We had “after school tutoring” available for students if they had prior arrangements with teachers (additional pay for teachers) – that wasn’t getting utilized, in my opinion, to its fullest potential. We had no formalized way of tracking the number of students who attended these sessions. I proposed a more formalized system, and with several teachers being on the team – they liked the idea and brought it back to their department meetings. We then formed the AAC or Academic Achievement Center (Artifact 14) – which consisted of sessions being available in each core academic area, Monday – Thursday for one hour. Each tutoring session would be led by a teacher that is a certified teacher in the content area. This initiative went into place December 2022 and ran for the remainder of the school year. The data needed to show its effectiveness will not be available until the 2022 – 2023 test scores have been properly dissected (Standard 4 – components 4.3 and 4.4).

Reflection on Learning

The past two and a half years as being the assistant principal at [redacted] has been exhilarating, stressful, and overall, a truly fantastic experience – I love what I do. I started this role without any formalized (schooling) training – only my experiences from my undergraduate coursework and my experience in previous educational roles (teaching, coaching, director). Relying on my colleagues for advice and on the go training, I was able to fit into my role comfortably and overtime start applying my graduate coursework studies to implementing best practices. Based on teachers, supervisors, students, and families input and commentary, I believe I have been doing an exceptional job. Proof of this can be found in my most recent summative evaluation
given by the school’s principal (Artifact 16). I have received the overall rating of “Effective” in the domain areas of: Results, Leadership, Systems, Processes and Capacity. I have received the same rating all three years I’ve received evaluations. The major reasons for my success at [Redacted] are that for over 10 years, I’ve lived in and been a part of the community. I know the community struggles and concerns. I also have a great support staff of veteran colleagues that I leaned about for advice and guidance. Having the opportunity to take courses at Western Michigan University, while actively working the job gave me real time skills to apply best practices when implementing new initiatives. Everything noted within this portfolio demonstrates that I have earned PLA credits for EDLD 6793.

It is my belief that staying stagnant (in any facet of life) will never breed success. In relation to this courses’ learning outcomes/standards, one of my biggest areas for opportunity is in evaluating, researching data, and advocating for a more supportive and inclusive school culture. In a previous course, I was tasked with creating a survey. In this survey I chose to focus on climate and culture of the teachers/staff at our building. The survey consisted of 22 (out of 85+) teachers at our school. Teachers were surveyed on teacher/administrative relationship, leadership opportunities, and initiative efficiency and effectiveness. Through that process, I received viable feedback and through conversation with the school principal, I am ready to launch a much larger scaled version to the entire staff when they return to school. A copy of my survey can be found in Artifact 17. This data and information will provide me with the tools I need to best help our building climate/culture. If the data is as consistent as the sample population I’d like to first, adopt a policy that forces administrators to allow more time (One hour minimum) when going through the teacher evaluation process – giving both teachers and the evaluating administrator the time to explain and answer all areas or questions that may arise. Also, I’d like to poll teachers on what professional development opportunities they feel would best suit their wants and needs. From there I will review that data and collaborate with the administrative team to choose specific PD opportunities for them.

The 2023-2024 school year is going to be a great year. We have a new Superintendent who has many new district initiatives he is implementing. Along with the new best practices I am implementing this year, because of learnings in my most recent courses – I have no doubts that the climate/culture and overall pulse of our building will grow even stronger. Data for improvements on PD will not only help the teachers grow professionally but also will increase their investment levels. The results of the teacher survey will also give us the information needed to ensure that teachers are getting what they want and need out of the school day rather than what they are told they need. I am excited to see the results and start putting together some initiatives in place.

One of my greatest strengths is that I am good at building relationships with both students and staff. I have learned to draw the line between on the dynamics of the relationship’s: friend/supervisor and friend/principal. Relationship building is about trust, follow-through, and letting stakeholders know that you care and are there for them is one of the most important things you can do. Although I do a great job at establishing the relationships with staff and students, I can improve on relationship building with parents. It is my plan to take time each day and reach out to parents – specifically those of parents that traditionally, I make phone calls to when there are behavior issues with their students, I’d like to make more phone calls to those same parents when I’m seeing positive behavior. I highlight the students, who traditionally have behavior
issues when I see good things happening with them - I must also include these parents so that they can help reinforce the good things that are happening.

Lastly, I am going to make it the priority during our first SIP team meeting 2023-2024 school year to review the recently released SAT/MSTEP data to evaluate our current best practices and see if the need to adjust are there. Whether we need to adjust our academic support courses or adjust our tutoring opportunities, the data will tell. A deep dive into this data is necessary and imperative to improving our academic scores and removing us from the State of Michigan ATS list. Our new leader has made this one of the districts biggest targets this year, so it is vital that we analyze and implement the necessary practices to ensure its validity.

The reflections above simply connect to the learning outcomes/standards required for PLA credits for EDLD 6793 – they are not a full list of improvements that I am focused on for the upcoming school year. They, along with the rest of this portfolio provide enough evidence to earn the credits for this course.

**Appendix: Artifacts**

There are a large number of artifacts/evidence linked throughout this portfolio – they can be found here in this Google Drive Folder. All artifacts are listed below in numeric order.

**Artifact 1:** Artifact 1 - Example Administrative Team Meeting Agenda

**Artifact 2:** Artifact 2 - Example Leadership Team (SIP) Meeting Agenda

**Artifact 3:** Artifact 3 - Example of Instructional Rounds PPT

**Artifact 4:** Artifact 4 - Example of Longitudinal Data

**Artifact 5:** Artifact 5 - Example of ATS collaborations

**Artifact 6:** Artifact 6 - Mission Statement

**Artifact 7:** Artifact 7 - Needs Assessment

**Artifact 8:** Artifact 8 - SIP Agenda

**Artifact 9:** Artifact 9 - 2023-2024 SIP Plan

**Artifact 10:** Artifact 10 – Data Dive

**Artifact 11:** Artifact 11 – Comprehensive Needs Assessment

**Artifact 12:** Artifact 12 - Student/Parent Handbook

**Artifact 13:** Artifact 13 – Walkthrough form

**Artifact 14:** Artifact 14 – Tutoring Schedule
Artifact 15: Artifact 15 – Restorative Practices PPT
Artifact 16: Artifact 16 – Personal Summative Evaluation
Artifact 17: Artifact 17 – Example Survey