PLA Portfolio # 1: EDLD 6794 Principal Internship II

My name is [REDACTED] and I became the middle school principal at the [REDACTED] (a private international school located in northern Mexico) in January 2023. I previously taught Social Studies and English Language Arts (ELA) at [REDACTED] for four and a half years prior to taking over the principalship. Since I have already completed all coursework—except for the internship course—in the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership program and I am already working full-time as a principal, I am submitting this portfolio to seek prior learning assessment (PLA) credits for EDLD 6794. My work experience as principal during the last four months clearly demonstrates that I have already mastered the knowledge and skills established as the course’s learning outcomes/standards.

Course Learning Objectives/Standards

Below are excerpts of the EDLD 6794 learning outcomes/standards because the complete learning outcomes listed on the course’s PLA website are multiple paragraphs. Additionally, more specific details—and substandards—for each learning objective/standard can be found in this NELP document.

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

**Learning Outcome/Standard 5: Community and External Leadership:**
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 engage families, community, and school personnel in order to strengthen student learning, support school improvement, and advocate for the needs of their school and community.

**Learning Outcome/Standard 6: Operations and Management:** 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 improve management, communication, technology, school-level governance, and operation systems to develop and improve data-informed and equitable school resource plans and to apply laws, policies, and regulations.

**Learning Outcome/Standard 7: Building Professional Capacity:** 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 build the school’s professional capacity, engage staff in the development of a collaborative professional culture, and improve systems of staff supervision, evaluation, support, and professional learning.
Sources of Learning/Experiences

Starting in the summer of 2022, the school’s director (equivalent to superintendent) informed me that I would become the middle school principal in January 2023. Until then, the director would act as the middle school principal and would work closely with my vice principal and me as I begin my transition from teaching to administration. Although teaching full-time placed restraints on my time, from August to December I met with the director and vice principal weekly where I became actively involved in the decision-making process. My first contribution as related to this course's standards was in raising the alarm regarding a lack of time in the schedule for much-needed faculty meetings to develop teachers’ professional capacity and collaborate for continuous improvement (Standard 7). The only time for such meetings to occur was originally only once per month during the school’s professional development day. Thus, I communicated this concern both verbally, and in writing, (Artifact 1) and ultimately gained the director’s approval for an early release day for students once per month (Artifact 2). The incorporation of these early release days allowed for middle school faculty meetings to occur twice per month instead of only once per month.

Beginning in October 2022, I began my involvement in the middle school’s hiring committee as we needed to find an experienced, qualified teacher to take over my teaching position in January 2023. We also needed to hire a teacher for another position that would be open in January because the previous teacher only signed a contract for half of the school year due to family issues bringing him back to the U.S. Both the director and the director of learning trained me in utilizing the school’s recruitment databases and conducting interviews following the director’s interview process and questions (Artifact 3). This allowed me to gain further experience related to Standard 7 prior to becoming principal as Standard 7 “includes building professional capacity through engagement in recruiting, selection, and hiring.”

At the end of December 2022 and during the Christmas break, I gained more experience related to this course's standards prior to officially taking over the principalship in January. After my new position was officially announced to the [school name] community at the end of December, I sent a brief message introducing myself to parents and students as principal and wishing the entire community a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year (Artifact 4). This simple message relates to Standard 5 as it acted as my first official communication with the school community and was the first step in building the positive relationships needed for effective two-way external communication. Over the Christmas break, I began the onboarding process for our two new teachers. Since [school name] did not have an official onboarding process specific to the middle school, I created my own based on the guidance I received from the former middle school principal who on-boarded me when I first arrived at [school name] in 2018. Artifact 30 shows one example of my onboarding communication. I also created my own guides linking important documents containing school policies, handbooks, and curricular resources (Artifact 31). The
implementation of this onboarding process and the creation of these hyperlinked guides relate to *Standard 6* and *Standard 7*.

Once I officially became principal in January, the sources of my learning have come mostly through my own learning by applying the best practices I have learned about in all of my previous coursework—and, of course, adjusting my practices based on feedback. That said, the director has still been advising me during our weekly meetings and I have had time to collaborate with—and learn from—the early childhood, elementary, and high school principals and the school’s director of learning during the director’s weekly Admin Cabinet Meetings. Additionally, I have been closely collaborating with the school’s director of learning who has recognized my skills and potential and has thus made herself available as a mentor. Another source of learning—that is related to *Standard 7*—was completing training to become certified in the use of Cognia’s elect 2.0 observation tool (Artifact 9). In this section, I will not describe all of the learning experiences I have had from the aforementioned sources because if I do, it will blend too much into the subsequent section where I describe how I have applied my learning. Thus, I will demonstrate how I have mastered the knowledge and skills for this course’s standards and applied them in practice in the following section.

**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 and have applied them in practice in my role as the middle school principal at the [ ] ( ). Each standard will be addressed separately, and various artifacts will be referenced as evidence of my learning.

**Learning Outcome/Standard 5: Community and External Leadership**

As already discussed briefly with Artifact 4, in order to lay the groundwork for effective community engagement based on two-way communication with the school’s families, I began establishing regular communication with parents immediately after the announcement of my becoming principal. Starting in January, I instituted the practice of sending a weekly message—or a mini-newsletter—to students and families every Friday afternoon. Artifact 23 is a copy of the master document I used to write these weekly messages; however, this document itself is not sent to parents. Instead, I send the message to parents via email. For longer newsletters, I send the English version within the text of the email and link a Google Document with the Spanish version—an example of how it is linked can be seen here. Shorter weekly messages contain both the English and Spanish versions together in one email—an example would be copying and pasting a message like this directly into the email. In addition to my weekly messages to parents and students, I also sought to engage the school community in two-way communication by emphasizing shared decision-making, shared responsibility, and mutual accountability in the “Principal’s Message” I wrote for the school’s website (Artifact 24).
I also communicated my commitment to working together, with parents and students, to bring the school’s mission to life.

After sharing my principal’s message with the community, I quickly began to demonstrate my commitment to what I wrote through my actions. First, I asked parents to provide the school—and myself—with feedback by responding to an anonymous questionnaire via Google Forms (Artifact 25 is a PDF of the English version). This survey was shared with parents in January in two of my weekly messages/newsletters and my assistant also shared it via parent WhatsApp groups. Parents will take this survey again at the end of the year. After analyzing the collected data, I then communicated to both parents and students the steps the middle school would take to address the main areas for improvement identified in the data—see this message. In addition to engaging middle school families by opening a two-way channel for communication via the parent survey, I also held parent focus groups to further collaborate with parents to support the school’s improvement. In order to determine which parents would participate in the focus groups, I asked parents to respond to an interest form (Artifact 26) that I linked to my weekly messages. Additionally, my vice principal, counselor, and I met to brainstorm a list of influential parents that my assistant would call to personally invite to the focus groups. Ultimately, we held one focus group with 6th and 7th-grade parents and another focus group for 8th-grade parents. My vice principal, counselor, and I facilitated the discussion during the focus group and used the questions listed on Artifact 27 as a guide. In addition to these focus groups, I also sought to engage the families of new students and get them involved in the school community by holding a breakfast meeting specifically for them (Artifact 28). After breakfast, we placed parents into three smaller groups where the counselor, vice principal, and I facilitated a focus group—the discussion questions can be found here.

One way that I utilized resources within the community was by reimplementing the middle school service-learning program. For this year’s service-learning project, students are fundraising for, planning, and organizing a party for underprivileged students at a public school. Since students are extremely affluent, students are using their privilege and the connections within our community to throw a free, exciting party for those of low socio-economic status. The purpose of this project is also to expose our students to the realities that most other students their age face and for our students to interact, and have fun, with people they normally do not. Artifact 29 shows the information for this project—all of which were created by two teachers.

The component of this learning outcome related to engaging school personnel and members of the internal community are outlined in more detail in the subsequent two standards because it overlaps with the school’s operations and management and building professional capacity. That said, Artifact 17 shows my weekly faculty email document, which is an effective written/digital internal communication strategy that I have implemented as principal. Additionally, Artifact 22 is an example of the anonymous student perception survey that I developed to gauge the school
climate and seek student feedback on how the school can improve. This survey not only provided us with data for continuous improvement but acted as a two-way communication channel for students and school leadership.

Learning Outcome/Standard 6: Operations and Management

I began working on the middle school’s master schedule for the 2023-2024 school year in January. I worked on it primarily by myself; however, my vice principal and the school’s director of learning also supported me during the process. The elementary and high school principals and I also met to coordinate our schedules so that there were no overlaps for breaks and lunch periods because we share the same cafeterias. My vice principal and I sought feedback on the schedule from teachers during faculty meetings (Artifact 6). Additionally, I received feedback from the school’s current and incoming director. The proposed middle school program of study, which includes various potential options for the following year’s schedule can be seen in Artifact 15. Artifact 15 also includes potential teacher assignments, course offerings, top needs, and analysis for the director and director of learning to consider. The final middle school master schedule can be found here on Artifact 15, and a screenshot of the master schedule spreadsheet for all middle school teachers can be seen in Artifact 16. The schedule was designed so that common planning times for subject area departments are built into each teacher’s schedule. An effort was also made to ensure common meeting time for grade level teams by having an entire grade level have the same block for Arts and Physical Education classes; however, this was not possible for all teachers as some teachers teach multiple grade levels.

As principal, I began to implement a weekly faculty email/mini-newsletter. Every Monday, I share announcements or reminders for the upcoming week with teachers. These announcements and reminders are added each week to the same Google Document, which is then emailed to teachers on Monday morning (see Artifact 17). Teachers are expected to respond to each of these emails to indicate that they read and understood all of its contents. This new system for communicating with teachers also aids in the management of the school’s operations as teachers have one place where they can find new policies and important linked resources or materials. Teachers have commented that they find the increased structure helpful in ensuring that all teachers are up-to-date on new initiatives and are following the same processes.

As principal, I also began to coordinate more closely with subject-area department heads in their department’s data analysis for continuous improvement. Each department is expected to set goals based on diagnostic/baseline data, implement an action plan to address gaps, collect and analyze further data throughout the year, and then adjust their action plan accordingly. Artifact 18 is a screenshot of the master document where each department has linked its goals, data tracker spreadsheet, and action plan. Additionally, the middle school’s technology coach provided support in data analysis to the Science and Spanish departments, and I provided data analysis support for the ELA and Social Studies departments. The Math department did not need
significant support in data analysis; however, I still made myself available to support when needed.

In addition to the data analysis conducted by the subject area departments mentioned earlier, I also implemented the collection and analysis of student perceptual data in order to support the school’s continuous improvement. Artifact 22 shows the questions I developed for the anonymous MS Climate & Learning Survey given to students. Some of the survey items were taken from surveys utilized in middle school and high school in previous years; however, others I wrote myself. The collected data was then collaboratively analyzed by teachers during a faculty meeting, which can be seen on slides 15-27 of Artifact 6. I compiled the data into graphs and charts to make the data more easily accessible for teachers to collaboratively analyze by using the guiding questions—shown on slide 17—to aid their analysis. Not all of the graphs and charts found in Artifact 6 are viewable to protect confidentiality. In addition to this survey, teachers are also expected to give students a course evaluation survey so that each individual teacher can make improvements to their class based on the perception of their students.

I also collaborated with the subject area departments in determining which curricular resources to purchase for the 2023-2024 school year. Additionally, I collaborated with the school’s director of learning and chief financial officer in determining which resources/textbooks to order. Artifact 19 is a screenshot from the middle school’s first book order for the following year, and Artifact 20 is an example of the form departments complete to review new resources/textbooks before deciding whether to purchase them for the following year.

Once I became principal, I immediately saw that our students needed more social-emotional, academic, and behavioral support than our teachers, counselor, and vice principal could provide by themselves. I brought this up in a meeting with the school’s director of learning and she agreed—even floating the possibility of hiring a second counselor. Fortunately, the high school principal knew of someone with experience working with middle school students who may be interested in a position. Although this candidate was not a psychologist or counselor, she had a master's degree in family sciences and had experience in supporting students socially, emotionally, academically, and behaviorally. Thus, when my vice principal and I interviewed her, we asked her what she could provide the school and our students. We then collaborated with the middle school counselor to write a job description based on the discussions we had during the interview for a new position we decided to call a “student support advisor.” Artifact 21 outlines the job description and responsibilities of both the head counselor and student support advisor. Although the student support advisor only recently joined our team at the beginning of March, she has already demonstrated her value in providing extra support to our students, counselor, vice principal, and me.

Learning Outcome/Standard 7: Building Professional Capacity
Fortunately, my first official day as principal in January coincided with a staff development day without students. Thus, I held a middle school faculty meeting with the purpose of laying the foundation for the creation of a collaborative professional culture focused on continuous improvement. Related to this, the meeting also focused on forming positive relationships based on mutual trust and shared leadership—as these relationships are essential for the formation of a collaborative professional learning community. What occurred during this first faculty meeting can be seen in the meeting agenda and minutes (Artifact 5). Slide 6 communicates an overview of my leadership vision, which focuses on the creation of a collaborative learning community in which everyone has a shared responsibility to continuously improve their practices by learning together. It also notes that drop-in/informal observations will be conducted for the purpose of providing formative feedback aimed at helping teachers improve their teaching practices. Further, slide 7 notes my main expectations for teachers, with the first expectation being that teachers are committed to continuously improving their teaching practices and growing professionally. Although this meeting by itself does not create a collaborative professional culture focused on continuous improvement, it was an essential first step in doing so.

As was noted earlier, my school’s schedule for this year does not allow for frequent faculty meetings; thus, opportunities to provide teachers with synchronous professional and full-faculty collaboration time have been limited. That said, Artifact 6 contains the agendas/minutes for all meetings that I led since December 2022. Some of the contents of these meetings relating to Standard 7 are that I reinforced my expectations of our shared responsibility for continuous professional improvement (slides 34-35, 8), led a collaborative activity unpacking the Teacher Performance Standards (slides 40-41), guided teachers in analyzing both student and parent perceptual data regarding the climate and learning taking place in the middle school (slides 17-27, 10-13), and facilitated teacher discussions to reach shared decisions regarding the school’s areas for improvement (throughout slides). During the teacher performance standards unpacking activity (Artifact 7), teachers reviewed the standards and their indicators, discussed why the particular practices are considered important for student success, and brainstormed teacher and student “look fors” that one might see if these practices are being implemented. After discussing all of this in small groups, we then discussed everything as a full faculty. Additionally, I utilized some faculty meeting time for teachers who attended professional conferences during the year to teach each other what they learned (slide 43).

Prior to my principalship, middle school leadership did not regularly conduct drop-in observations to provide teachers with formative feedback. Artifact 8 displays some examples of the feedback provided to teachers from drop-in observations. Additionally, Artifact 10 is a formal teacher observation report I wrote for EDLD 6793 in which I detail my understanding of—and reflections on—the teacher observation/supervision process.
In addition to providing teachers with formative feedback focused on continuous professional growth, I also designed and implemented a Professional Improvement Plan based on resources and suggestions provided to me by the school’s current and incoming director (Artifact 11). The improvement plans are focused on two to three high-priority areas for improvement based on the school’s performance standards. Unfortunately, the middle school has three underperforming teachers who needed to be placed on an improvement plan this year. I have personally met with these teachers numerous times to provide them with feedback and guide their reflection and professional growth. Artifact 12 is an example of a teacher’s Professional Improvement Plan, including the teacher’s own reflections—the teacher’s name and personal information have been redacted. The teacher on the Artifact 12 improvement plan has made improvements to her practice based on the feedback provided both in the plan as well as drop-in observation feedback.

As has already been discussed briefly, I was able to get experience in the recruitment, selection, and hiring process prior to officially becoming principal. However, since becoming principal, I have had extensive experience—and success—in recruiting teachers for the 2023-2024 school year. Artifact 13 contains various screenshots used during the recruitment process. The first spreadsheet was utilized to communicate my progress with the director, director of learning, and high school and elementary principals. I conducted some interviews by myself; however, my vice principal and I would conduct the interview together when possible. Following an interview with the middle school leadership team, the candidate would have a second interview with the director of learning if we thought the candidate would make a good fit in the middle school. The second spreadsheet was used by the school’s director of learning to share potential candidates with all of the building principals. In addition to the director of learning passing along potential candidates, I also utilized the school’s recruitment databases and attended virtual job fairs to find teacher candidates (Artifact 13b). Screenshots—instead of the actual spreadsheets—are included as much of the information is confidential. Artifact 14 outlines the school’s interview process and the questions my vice principal and I used during the interviews. I was able to finish all of myhirings for 2023-2024 by early March—hiring three new international teachers and one new local teacher.

Reflection on Learning

This school year has been the busiest, and yet most exciting, of my career. Becoming a principal mid-year without first having an internship experience has been both challenging and rewarding, and I am extremely grateful that my school entrusted me with this responsibility at a relatively young age. Based on the comments I have received from parents, students, teachers, the director, and the director of learning, I believe that—so far—I have done a great job as a new principal. Evidence of this can be found in my mid-term performance evaluation from the school’s director, in which he states that I “have exceeded expectations in taking on leadership and responsibility for” the middle school (Artifact 32). I think that a major reason for my success is that I had such a long time to think about, and prepare for, becoming principal, which I did mostly by tailoring
all of my graduate school coursework to address the challenges I was observing at my school. Thus, when I became principal, I was able to implement the best practices that I learned about in my coursework at Western Michigan University. I believe that everything outlined within this portfolio demonstrates that I have earned the PLA credits for EDLD 6794. In what follows, I will discuss some areas for improvement.

Related to this course’s learning outcomes/standards, I believe one of my biggest areas for opportunity is in fully utilizing the school’s community and external partners to further enrich student learning. The school community is made up of many prominent individuals such as doctors, business owners, CEOs, CFOs, engineers, architects, philanthropists, and local, state, and national politicians who could potentially enrich the middle school curriculum. In the coming years, I would like to potentially organize a “career day” or bring in alumni guest speakers to help get our students excited about all the possibilities open to them after graduating from [school]. Additionally, I would like to institute a middle school parent advisory council or committee in which the leadership team can involve them in the decision-making progress. Although the whole school has a parent’s association, there is currently no parent organization specific to the middle school.

Overall, I am looking forward to the start of the 2023-2024 school year because I will be able to begin the year as principal. I have many new initiatives that I would like to develop and implement such as—but not limited to—a formal multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), a structured process for peer observations, and a data team that delivers quarterly data presentations/reports. Although I think I have done a decent job of laying the groundwork for the creation of a culture of collaborative professional learning, this is an area in which I see much room for improvement. Only being able to meet with all teachers together a maximum of twice per month is an insufficient amount of time for deep professional development and collaboration; thus, I am excited to have time devoted to collaboration and professional growth built into next year’s schedule. We will have an hour of collaboration time per week for each of the following: faculty meetings, grade-level meetings, department meetings, and data/intervention meetings.

Although I believe one of my strengths is in my internal and external communication, I would like to improve the means through which I communicate digitally. I currently rely too heavily on email, and I have received feedback that a good number of parents do not check their email or do not read my messages. I think one way to address this could be by opening a business WhatsApp account for the middle school where I can share important announcements and links to newsletters directly to parents via a middle school WhatsApp group for families. A WhatsApp business group allows only the business to send messages, so the school would not need to worry about parents spamming the group. I would also like to utilize a spreadsheet to keep track of the feedback I provide to teachers because my current method of sharing feedback via email is not very organized.
Additionally, I would like to require parents to attend a minimum number of “School for Parents” events throughout the year. This would require approval from the school’s incoming director; however, a major concern brought up by parents during the focus groups was that the actions and/or attitudes of some parents sometimes can negatively affect other students such as allowing underage drinking in their home, allowing social media access at all hours of the night, attempting to social engineer their child’s friendships, allowing their child to do whatever they want without any consequences, etc. These parents noted that most of these topics have been included in “School for Parents” conferences, but the parents who need to hear these talks the most never attend. This issue has also been noticed by the director of learning and the other building principals, so I am hopeful that we will be able to include some type of attendance requirement in the school-wide handbook/contract parents sign at the start of each year.

Although the above reflections on what I would like to improve on for the following school year are not comprehensive, I believe that they—along with the rest of this portfolio—provide ample evidence to obtain the PLA credits for EDLD 6794.

**Appendix: Artifacts**

Due to the number of artifacts and their complexity, [all artifacts have been uploaded to this Google Drive Folder](https://drive.google.com) and linked throughout the portfolio. Inserting screenshots of—or copying and pasting—each artifact into this document would be an unorganized way to display the evidence and would be needlessly time-consuming. That said, all artifacts are listed below:

**Artifact 1:** Advocating More Time for Faculty Meetings (*prior to principalship*)

**Artifact 2:** [Early Release Day for Students - Schedule](#)

**Artifact 3:** First Recruitment Screenshots (*prior to becoming principal - October 2022*)

**Artifact 4:** First Message to Parents & Families

**Artifact 5:** First Day as Principal - Faculty Meeting

**Artifact 6:** [MS Faculty Meetings 2022-23 (December 2022 - March 2023)](#)

**Artifact 7:** Unpacking Teacher Performance Standards

**Artifact 8:** Screenshots of Some Feedback Given for Drop-In Observations

**Artifact 9:** [eleot 2.0 Observation Training Certificate](#)

**Artifact 10:** Formal Teacher Observation Report
Artifact 11: Template | Professional Improvement Plan
Artifact 12: Copy of Teacher's Reflection | Professional Improvement Plan
Artifact 13: Recruitment Spreadsheets
Artifact 14: Copy Interview Protocol 23-24
Artifact 15: MS Program of Studies 2023-2024
Artifact 16: Master Schedules
Artifact 17: Weekly MS Faculty Emails
Artifact 18: Subject Area Department Data Analysis
Artifact 19: MS Book Order 1
Artifact 20: Textbook/Resource Review Document
Artifact 21: Head Counselor & Student Support Advisor | Job Descriptions & Responsibilities
Artifact 22: Student Perceptual Data (Screenshots of Survey)
Artifact 23: Weekly Parent Messages
Artifact 24: MS Principal's Message 2022-2023 (copy w/ website screenshot)
Artifact 25: Middle School Parent Survey (January 2023)
Artifact 26: Parent Focus Group Interest Form
Artifact 27: MS Parent Focus Groups - Feb 2023
Artifact 28: 2023 Agenda - New Admission Parents Breakfast
Artifact 29: Service Learning Proposal 2022-2023 (copy)
Artifact 30: Example of Teacher Onboarding Email
Artifact 31: Screenshots of Example of Onboarding Guides
Artifact 32: Mid-Term Preformance Review (by Director) - Feb 2023