

A. Judgment and Problem Analysis

1. Identify the elements of a problem situation by analyzing relevant information, framing issues, identifying possible causes, and reframing possible solutions;
2. Demonstrate adaptability and conceptual flexibility;
3. Reach logical conclusions by making quality, timely decisions based on available information;
4. Identify and give priority to significant issues;
5. Demonstrate an understanding of, and utilize appropriate technology in problem analysis;
6. Demonstrate an understanding of different leadership and decision-making strategies, including but not limited to collaborative models and model appropriately their implementation.

School administrators, particularly principals, operate at the heart of both the urgent and systemic needs of a school. Their days are filled with constant problem-solving, managing everything from staffing and facilities to instructional leadership and student support. Through my internship experiences and coursework, I've seen how effective administrators must think quickly, lead equitably, and make thoughtful, student-centered decisions. Whether responding to immediate concerns or driving long-term change, school leaders play a critical role in shaping school culture and outcomes.

Administrators juggle many roles, especially principals. Before the school day even begins, their offices are often crowded with staff—teachers, paras, engineers, nurses—each needing immediate support. Though considered middle management by the district, principals are the go-to problem solvers in the school building. I saw this firsthand when I visited my principal about a classroom garden request and found her already handling multiple issues. I experienced a similar scenario in my Leadership and Organization course during an “inbox activity,” where I acted as the head principal and prioritized various school concerns. My list of items, and how quickly I responded to each can be [found here](#). The exercise underscored how essential quick thinking and flexibility are to effective school leadership. As an administrator, it is critical to prioritize and delegate in order to run a school effectively.

Not all challenges administrators face are immediate—some are systemic and require cultural shifts. At my middle school site in Roseville Area Schools, the Teacher Development and Evaluation system was found to be flawed, with practices considered racist and not in students' best interests. This district-wide issue, spanning preschool through graduation, led to the adoption of a new evaluation rubric, designed as a tool for professional growth and equity. You can find this new rubric, or curriculum, [here](#). Notably, Areas III and IV (Cultural Competence and Critical Consciousness) are rooted in Gloria Ladson-Billings' framework for culturally relevant teaching and align with the tenets of anti-racism. By shifting focus from evaluation to development, administrators are prioritizing equity and meaningful teacher growth. This new system aids leaders in making choices in their schools to better serve students.

At my high school internship, a major issue was the declining [graduation rates](#) in Saint Paul Public Schools, with a noticeable drop in 2023. In response, district and school leaders began exploring standards-based grading as a solution. Unlike traditional grading, this system moves away from letter grades and the 4.0 scale, focusing instead on whether students have achieved mastery of the content. It removes subjective factors like participation, extra credit, and attendance from the gradebook, relying solely on summative assessments. This approach provides a clearer, unbiased picture of student learning and aims to support more equitable outcomes. Other benefits to standards-based grading that are included in Joe Feldman's book *Grading for Equity*. His framework for standards based grading focuses on accuracy, bias resistance and providing motivation for students (Feldman, 2018). I read this book during my internship hours at Como Park High School to better understand how standards based grading works and how it can benefit our students. More notably in the [graduation rate data](#) collected by SPPS, you can see all racial groups, except American Indian, had a rise in graduation rates.

These experiences have shown me that strong school leadership requires both adaptability and a deep commitment to equity. From handling daily operational challenges to confronting systemic inequities in teacher evaluation and grading practices, administrators must make decisions that prioritize student success. Tools like inbox simulations, anti-racist evaluation rubrics, and standards-based grading help leaders stay focused on what matters most: creating schools where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

References

Feldman, J. (2018). *Grading for equity: What it is, why it matters, and how it can transform schools and classrooms*. Corwin.