

## A Snail Mail In-Basket Gets a Delivery Update

**Dr. Shelly Albritton**

### Introduction

In-basket exercises have been used for decades to hire, train, and evaluate mid-level managers in the world of business (York, Strubler, and Smith, 2005). School leadership pre-service programs have also employed in-basket activities to provide students a glimpse into a typical day in the principal's office. In-basket exercises are multi-faceted and can be used in a variety of ways to prepare students for school leadership. They afford students opportunities to explore such leadership skills as organizing and prioritizing tasks, managing time, making decisions, taking initiative, practicing interpersonal skills, delegating responsibilities, and monitoring and following up on actions (Nowack, 1993).

Traditionally, in-basket exercises include messages, memos, letters, and other communications that have been delivered to the principal's office and placed in the 'in basket' on his/her desk in which the principal must then take action (Gorton, Alston, & Snowden, 2007). During the simulation, the memos, letters, etc. are usually presented as paper-based items to an individual or to small groups in face-to-face settings, and as such, the delivery of the simulation simply does not reflect the actual work environment of today's school leaders.

In today's schools, communication through email has become the predominate means of communications. Messages, memos, notes and other communication are most often sent to school personnel through their school email accounts. Principals and teachers frequently send and receive email message to and from students, parents, and

community members. Educators network with one another throughout the school day using email communications. Oftentimes, state departments of education communicate information to school districts through email. School leaders report spending one to two hours a day handling incoming and outgoing email communications (Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Harmon, 2005).

With electronic communications in mind, the valuable lessons learned with in-basket simulations should replicate the real-world as closely as possible while providing students the experience of practicing leadership skills. In order to provide such a learning opportunity for students in a principal preparation program, the basic premise of the traditional in-basket remained intact, but the delivery of the in-basket was updated to reflect the way communication is practiced in today's schools; that is, to mirror as closely as possible a principal at his/her desk taking action on messages sent to their email inbox. Following is an examination of the process used to design the simulation, the modifications made after the pilot group of students participated in the simulation, and a discussion of the results from the second group of students that participated in the simulation.

#### Designing and Piloting the Principal's Inbox Simulation

The initial design of the Principal's Inbox Simulation drew upon two primary sources. The first is Gorton's, et al. (2007) in-basket items for a new principal (See Appendix B). Most of the items from the original in-basket exercise were replicated exactly as the authors had presented, but a few were revised and two new items were inserted to expand upon the pressing demands of the student's prioritizing and problem solving skills. One of the two new items that was added gave attention to a growing

problem in schools that practicing school leaders often experience. This particular item specifically addressed an example of an unsolicited SPAM message sent to the new principal's email account (see Appendix B, item #19). In their study, Sharp, et al. (2005) reported that nearly 70% of the principals that participated in the study indicated that emails containing pornographic content was a problem in their schools. Yet when asked if they were concerned about inappropriate email messages, approximately 20% indicated they felt strongly about this issue. Item # 19 was added to 1) provide an item that closely mirrors SPAM email activity found in some schools today, and 2) examine how the participants of the inbox simulation responded to an email message of this nature.

The second of the primary sources used in the design of the inbox simulation was Covey's (1989) time management quadrant. Three professors from a principal preparation program analyzed each of the inbox items in the context of the simulation and arrived at consensus where each item should be placed on the quadrant. These collaborative efforts resulted in a scoring key to assess the students' skill in prioritizing the inbox items (See Appendix C). The directions of the simulation instructed the student to place each of the item numbers of the inbox messages in the appropriate quadrant as follows: Quadrant 1, Urgent & Important; Quadrant 2, Not Urgent & Important; Quadrant 3, Urgent & Not Important; and Quadrant 4, Not Urgent & Not Important.

WebCT's quiz tool was the system utilized to deliver the Principal's Inbox Simulation. The first question entered into the quiz tool was the quadrant question where students could organize and prioritize the items before responding to the messages. The inbox messages were then entered into the quiz database and the short essay format was chosen to replicate the look of email messages as closely as possible. Item numbers were

assigned to each inbox to facilitate students' prioritizing and organizational skills. The quiz timer was set for 90 minutes. A nominal score of 1 was assigned to each of the 22 inbox items to assess prioritizing and time management. It was expected that some of the inbox items would not be a priority during the 90 minutes that the principal had set aside to respond to email messages, and with prioritizing and effective time management, some items shouldn't be addressed. If the inbox item was to be placed in either quadrant one or quadrant two, indicating the item was a high priority item and some action should be taken during the time set for the simulation, then a score of 1 would be desirable. Conversely, if the item was a quadrant three or quadrant four item, this was an item that did not need immediate action. For the quadrant three and four items, a score of 0 was the desirable score indicating that the student had managed their time well. In other words, there should have been a score of 0 for many of the inbox items if the student had prioritized well and used their time to focus on providing quality responses to the urgent and important messages during the 90 minutes allotted for the simulation.

In advance of the simulation, a short practice quiz, designed to look as closely as possible to the inbox simulation, was provided for an orientation to the WebCT quiz environment. This practice session allowed students to become familiar with the technical aspects of the simulation so that their focus for their time management skills would be on responding to the items placed in their email inbox rather than on trying to navigate through the technology. In advance of the simulation, documents were posted in WebCT for students to download, print, and use during the simulation. These included general information about responding to in basket items and a blank copy of Covey's (1989) time management quadrant.

Fifteen students participated in the pilot delivery of the inbox simulation. Evaluation focused on 1) the use of the WebCT quiz tool to deliver the simulation 2) the use of the quadrant to prioritize and manage time during the simulation, and 3) the quality of the students' responses to the messages. The students provided reflective feedback that was also used for evaluative purposes.

Based upon the feedback and the assessment of students' responses to the inbox items, several modifications were made. The initial inbox displayed each inbox item one at a time and only provided a date the message was posted. Students reported this did not reflect an actual email inbox. Most email accounts display a list of messages with subject lines, date, and the time the message was posted. To correct this, the WebCT quiz command, "show all items at once," was chosen so that when the participant opened the simulation, the participant could scroll through all of items in the inbox much like one would do when checking a real email account. In efforts to replicate an email message as closely as possible, a subject line was added, as well as the time the message was posted. Furthermore, the initial simulation had the quadrant question as the first item in the inbox. The WebCT quiz tool automatically gave this a question number, and this became Question #1. However, the first inbox message was named Item #1, but the quiz default system presented this as Question #2. This caused some confusion when students were placing the inbox item number in the quadrant as they were prioritizing the messages. To correct this, the quadrant question was placed at the end of the inbox quiz to keep the quiz's question number and the item number assigned to each message the same.

The students' responses to the inbox items in the pilot phase showed that even though they had used the quadrant to identify and prioritize items that were urgent and

important, the students attempted to respond to all of the inbox messages posted rather than focusing on quality responses to those they had listed as urgent and important in addressing during the time frame in which they had to work. As a result, the responses to the inbox messages lacked in depth, thoughtful decision making and often seemed insensitive to the needs of the sender. However, with the score assigned to each of the quiz items as a nominal score of 1, the score was only useful in measuring whether the item was one that needed to be responded to and did not allow the assessor the means to measure the quality of the response. It became necessary to develop a rubric that addressed the other important skills that an in basket simulation is designed to assess.

The primary source used for the development of the rubric for assessing the skills beyond prioritizing and time management was drawn from Nowack's (n.d.) work with in basket activities for assessing performance skills of managers. The scoring rubric was designed to assess the following skills:

1. Organizing and prioritizing tasks
2. Managing time
3. Making decisions
  - a. Problem Analysis
  - b. Judgment
  - c. Student focused
4. Taking initiative
  - a. Proactive
  - b. Range of interest
5. Practicing interpersonal skills

- a. Communication
- b. Sensitivity

6. Monitoring and following up on actions

Finally, the last modifications included the revision of the inbox simulation's background information and directions to clarify expectations (See Appendix A). This was posted in WebCT with the other handouts previously provided. The rubric was also posted in WebCT to provide students advanced knowledge for how the quality of their responses would be evaluated (See Appendix D). Providing the background information, directions, and rubric in advance were to assist the next group of students to not only use skills in prioritizing and managing time, but to place emphasis on the other skills that would lead to a higher quality response to the items identified as quadrant one or two items. The intention of providing the information in advance was to facilitate a shift in the students' focus from racing the clock in their attempts to respond to as many of the items as they could to providing more thoughtful responses to the items that they identified as a priority item.

Group Two: Results and Discussion

All appropriate responses to quadrant one and two items should result in a score of 1, but if a student did not respond to one of these items, a score of 0 was entered. All quadrant three and four items should not have received a response resulting in a score of 0, but if a student did respond to one of these items, a score of 1 was entered. Table 1 provides descriptive data of the second group of students' prioritization and time management as they responded to the inbox items. For all quadrant one and two items, the closer the mean score was to 1 could be interpreted that most of the students

prioritized and managed time appropriately demonstrating they recognized the items as being a priority item. For all quadrant three and four items, the closer to the mean score was to 0 could be interpreted that most of the students recognized the items did not require a response during the 90 minute simulation.

Table 1

*Students' Mean Scores for Inbox Items*

Students (n=13)			
Item # and descriptor	Desirable Score	M Score	SD
<u>Quadrant 1 &amp; 2 items</u>			
3—Supplies for class	1	.846	.376
4—Student discipline	1	.692	.48
6—Teacher evaluation	1	.100	.0
8—Substitutes lesson plans	1	.692	.48
9—Water cut off	1	.769	.439
11—C/O meeting, test scores	1	.769	.439
13—Family emergency	1	.846	.376
14—Leaving early on Mondays	1	.923	.277
15—Eliminate hall passes	1	.308	.48
16—Trash in hallways	1	.538	.519
19—All expense paid vacation	1	.077	.277
20—Family member hospitalized	1	.769	.439
21—Congratulations on new job	1	.308	.48
<u>Quadrant 3 &amp; 4 items</u>			

1—Parent council	0	.769	.439
2—Newspaper feature	0	.769	.439

Table 1 (continued)

---

Students (n=13)			
Item # and descriptor	Desirable Score	<i>M</i> Score	<i>SD</i>
5—Leadership study	0	.692	.48
7—Confidential information	0	.462	.519
10—Vandalizing flowers	0	.538	.519
12—Child abuse assembly	0	.692	.48
17—Children on vacation	0	.385	.506
18—Children absent in spring	0	.385	.506

---

As noted in Table 1, nine of the thirteen quadrant one and two items had a mean score of .769 and higher with the mean score of Item #6 at .100. At first glance, these results could indicate that most of the students prioritized appropriately for most of those items. It is interesting to note the mean score of Item # 19, the email that contained an inappropriate message. This item received the lowest mean score (.077) of all the items in the inbox supporting the findings from Sharp's, et al. (2005) study on the question that asked for principals' responses about inappropriate email messages. Of the eight quadrant three and four items, half of the items had a mean score of .692 and higher which ideally should be closer to a mean score of 0. Upon further scrutiny of the mean scores for all the items, it became apparent that most of the items that received the highest mean scores

coincide with the chronological order of the items as they were presented in the inbox simulation. This indicated that some of the students had either mistaken the priority of the item or many did not manage their time effectively by attempting to answer all the items in the order they were presented in the inbox. Figure 1. illustrates the latter scenario. This figure shows one student's WebCT time chart that details the order in which the student saved each of the quiz questions. Figure 2 provides an illustration of the student's response to Question #22, the quadrant question.

*Figure 1. One student's WebCT time chart.*

Quiz started	00:00	01:30:00
Quiz redisplayed	00:17	01:29:43
Quiz redisplayed	00:20	01:29:40
Save question: 22	05:35	01:24:25
Save question: 1	17:57	01:12:03
Save question: 2	35:55	54:05
Save question: 1	36:31	53:29
Save question: 3	41:07	48:53
Save question: 2	42:54	47:06
Save question: 3	42:58	47:02
Save question: 4	48:55	41:05
Save question: 5	57:28	32:32
Save question: 3	57:50	32:10
Save question: 2	58:12	31:48
Save question: 6	01:03:55	26:05
Save question: 7	01:11:45	18:15
Save question: 6	01:13:06	16:54
Save question: 7	01:13:14	16:46
Save question: 8	01:17:44	12:16
Save question: 9	01:22:28	07:32
Save question: 10	01:27:39	02:21
Save question: 11	01:28:11	01:49
Save question: 12	01:28:41	01:19
Save question: 13	01:29:07	00:53
Save question: 14	01:29:42	00:18

*Figure 2. One student's response to Questions 22 in the WebCT inbox simulation.*

---

Quadrant 1, Urgent & Important: #9, 13, 20, 14

---

Quadrant 2, Not Urgent & Important: #3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 15, 16, 18, 21  
Quadrant 3, Urgent & Not Important: #1  
Quadrant 4, Not Urgent & Not Important: #2, 5, 7, 10, 12, 17, 19

---

Note in Figure 1 that it appeared the student followed the simulation directions to scan, prioritize, and place the inbox item numbers in their appropriate quadrants. Five and a half minutes into the simulation, the student saved question 22. Figure 2 illustrates that the student had prioritized most of the inbox items appropriately in the four quadrants. Yet, the time chart in Figure 1 shows that the student saved fourteen inbox items in the order they were presented until time ran out indicating the student did not make the connection between using the quadrant to first address the urgent and important items listed, and as a result, did not manage time effectively.

The scoring rubric assessed 1) organizing and managing time, 2) making decisions, 3) taking initiative, 4) practicing interpersonal skills, and 5) monitoring and following up on actions (Nowack, n.d.). The rubric is arranged on a scale of one to three. A score of 1 indicates below basic, a score of 2 indicates basic, and a score of 3 indicates proficient. Table 2 presents the mean scores for each of the ten rubric items.

Table 2

*Students' mean scores of Principal's Inbox Simulation rubric items*

---

Students (n=13)		
<u>Rubric item # and descriptor</u>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1—Organize and prioritize in quadrants	2.231	.890
2—Managing time	1.577	.703
3—Analyze problem to seek information	2.0	.408
4—Use judgment with information provided	2.153	.376

5—Makes sound decisions	1.846	.689
6—Plans to engage self	2.231	.439

Table 2 (continued)

---

Students (n=13)		
Rubric item # and descriptor	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
7—Considers range of issues	1.538	.519
8—Demonstrates sensitivity toward others	2.423	.572
9—Communicates effectively	2.615	.506
10—Develops follow-up plan	2.077	.494
Overall mean score	2.069	.343

---

The overall mean scores of all the rubric items were slightly above the basic category on the rubric. Even though rubric item #1, organizing and prioritizing, had a mean score of 2.231, one of the lowest mean scores for the students was the rubric item for managing time (1.577). A full set of correlations was conducted between all rubric questions to analyze relationships (see Appendix E). At this point in data collection, the sample size is very low, so any conclusions about the relationships are unreliable. However, a correlation between rubric question 1 (organizing and prioritizing) and rubric question 2 (managing time) was conducted ( $r = .73$ ;  $p = .03$ ) indicating a strong relationship between the two variables.

The results of the student's behavior with the inbox simulation highlighted in Figures 1 and 2 were indicative of most of the students' behavior in this second group.

This group posted their reflections on a WebCT discussion board after they had completed the inbox simulation. While nearly all of the students agreed the inbox was an excellent learning tool and a valuable opportunity to practice emerging leadership skills, three themes consistently surfaced from the reflections. First, most of the students stated that class discussion to verbally go over the directions before engaging in the simulation would have been beneficial. Second, there was a sentence in the directions that seemed to confuse the students as to what they were expected to do. The statement in the directions read, "If you decide you don't need to do anything with the inbox item during this time, you should give a brief description of what you will do with it at a later date." Based upon this statement in the directions, many of the students interpreted this to mean they were required to respond to all the items. Third, many of the students did not access the handouts provided in a WebCT folder prior to the simulation, and they were not as informed as they should have been before engaging in the simulation.

### Conclusion

The first two administrations of the Principal's Inbox Simulation revealed both positive and negative aspects. The traditional, paper-based in-basket simulation was not only outdated and did not reflect the way communication is carried out in today's school settings, it was cumbersome to administer in a program that enrolls students from distant locations across the state. Updating the in-basket to replicate an email inbox provided a more realistic experience, and it also made the delivery of the inbox less complicated to administer. The traditional in-basket required copying 30 plus pages for each student. These packets would then have to be mailed to the students, or a central location would have to be found for all students to come together for the simulation. Utilizing an

electronic delivery system that could be programmed to open and close on specific dates provided students a certain amount of autonomy in selecting a time in which to engage in the simulation. However, this did have a drawback when students stated they needed more opportunity for discussion prior to engaging in the simulation. This can be easily corrected.

Even though a rubric was created in the attempt to strengthen the quality of the students' responses, it appeared the students' primary focus remained on the time factor. The results of the second group of students confirm the need to further refine the directions and make clear the expectations of the simulation.

Another issue emerged in the process to redesign the simulation. York, et al. (2005) observed that although in-basket exercises have been successful in evaluating and selecting managers, one drawback is the time it takes to develop and score them. Developing the Principal's Inbox Simulation required a considerable investment of time initially. However, selecting the WebCT quiz tool allows the inbox simulation to be easily revised and exported into other WebCT shells as new students enter the leadership program. The scoring does take a substantial amount of time especially when the rubric was added to the assessment process. On average, the assessor spent an hour-and-a-half to two hours to assess each student's inbox responses. With small groups of students this is possible but would not be feasible with large groups of students. The next round of revisions will need to focus on merging the rubric content into the scoring system found in the WebCT quiz tool.

Finally, future plans are to develop another inbox to provide students a second opportunity to practice leadership skills as they progress in the principal preparation

program. Results will be compared from the first and second inbox responses. Overall, redesigning a traditional in-basket exercise to simulate an email inbox as closely as possible proved to be worthwhile in providing emerging school leaders an opportunity to experience the work skills of today's principals.

## References

- Covey, S. (1989). *Seven habits of highly effective people*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Gorton, R., Alston, J., & Snowden, P. (2007). *School leadership & administration: Important concepts, case studies, & simulations (7<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Nowack, K. (n.d.). Administration and interpretation of the managerial in-basket simulation. Santa Monica, CA: Organizational Performance Dimensions. Retrieved June 21, 2006, from <http://www.stressinventory.com/reports/INBASKET.ppt>
- Nowack, K. (1993, May). Assessment center performance and basic skills. Paper presented at the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology National Conference, San Francisco, CA.
- Sharp, W., Malone, B., Walter, J., & Harmon, L. (2005, March). *E-mail use by school administrators: A help or a nuisance*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Eastern Education Research Association, Sarasota, FL.
- York, K. M., Strubler, D. S., & Smith, E. M. (2005). *A comparison of two methods for scoring an in-basket exercise*. Public Personnel Management. Retrieved September 3, 2006, from <http://72.14.203.104/search?q=cache:mdmCQYNYn3MJ:owl.ben.edu/mamgt/York.doc+A+comparison+of+two+methods+for+scoring+an+in-basket+exercise.&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=us>

## Appendix A

### **Directions to complete the inbox simulation: The New Principal.**

**Background:** You are Dr. Brown. You were approved by the School Board on August 11 to succeed Mr. Sanders as principal of Kennedy School who was forced to suddenly leave his position as a result of a critical health issue. Due to a death in your family, however, you were unable to report to Kennedy School until Tue., August 17. You have arrived at the school on Tuesday morning to respond to your email and start organizing things. It is 8:00 a.m. and you have an appointment with your superintendent at 9:45 a.m. Your teachers will report to work on the 19th for two days of in-services. Students' first day of school is Monday, August 23.

**Instructions:** 1. You will be given 90 minutes to read and take action on the items presented. You are not expected to merely describe what you would do, *but to do it*. For example, if you decide to respond to the email, then compose your message; then if further actions are needed on your part, outline below your message to the sender what you need to do to follow up on the issue you are addressing. If you decide to telephone a person or see someone for a conference, then outline your objectives, as well as the main points or questions that you will talk about. Again, if you need to do any follow-up actions, tell what you will need to do. In other words, develop your plan of action. If you decide you don't need to do anything with the inbox item during this time, you should give a brief description of what you will do with it at a later date. 2. You are to list each of the Inbox items on the quadrant information provided in the last question using just the Item numbers of each Inbox message. This is the time management tool that will list what you consider your priorities in the 90 minutes you have set aside to answer your email.

Although the Inbox items are numbered 1-21, you may deal with them in whatever sequence you think is necessary based upon how you have prioritized their urgency and importance (in regards to just this 90 minutes you have set aside to catch up on your email); however you are to indicate on your quadrant where you will place each item according to how you have prioritized the item: Quadrant 1, Urgent & Important; quadrant 2, Not Urgent & Important; quadrant 3, Urgent & Not Important; and quadrant 4, Not Urgent & Not Important.

(Gorton, Alston, & Snowden, 2007).

## Appendix B



### Principal's Inbox Simulation

---

#### Question 1 ⋮ (1 point)

##### ***Item #1; Parent Council August 19; 8:54 pm***

I am writing you to request a meeting to establish a Parent Council for the school. I was a member of the PTA that folded a couple of years ago because of a lack of leadership from the principal. What we need now is a new parent group with more responsibility and more enlightened leadership from the principal than we have received in the past. As someone with an advanced degree, I am sure you support parent involvement in education. I look forward to working with you. Sincerely, Peggy Supermom

---

#### Question 2 ⋮ (1 point)

##### ***Item #2; Newspaper Feature August 14; 9:30 am***

To Dr. Brown, The newspaper would like to do a feature on you as the new principal, and I need to set up a time for interviewing you and some of the teachers and students. Please respond as soon as you receive this email and let me know of a good time to come. Thank you, Tom Roberts, State Educational News

---

#### Question 3 ⋮ (1 point)

##### ***Item #3; Supplies for Classes August 12; 5:32 am***

Dr. Brown, I hope that things are going to be better this year on the first day of school than what they were last year. Last year, I had to begin classes without enough textbooks and some important supplies, like marker board pens, didn't arrive until the second week of school. I know you are new and you have a lot on your mind, but teachers think it is important that classes run smoothly on the first day of school. With your help, I hope we can get off to a better beginning. Pattie Quill

---

#### Question 4 ⋮ (1 point)

##### ***Item #4; Student Discipline August 15; 2:15 pm***

Dear Dr. Brown, First of all, welcome to Kennedy School. From all I have heard, you should bring some much-needed leadership to this school. The reason I am writing you (I tried calling, but your secretary said you had not reported to work at the time) is that I would like you to emphasize at the first meeting with the teachers the importance of consistently enforcing the discipline rules especially the rules on students being on time to class with appropriate materials to work with (you know, like pencils and paper-that kind of stuff) and the gum-chewing rule. The last two years things have been deteriorating and last spring was a real mess--too much teacher inconsistency! I don't like to complain about my colleagues, but something's got to be done before the kids take over the school. What this school needs is a real crackdown. I have heard that you are the type that is prepared to "bite the bullet" and in my judgment, that time has definitely arrived. Sincerely, Seth N. Stone

---

**Question 5** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #5; Leadership Study August 16; 8:56 am***

Dear Dr. Brown, The purpose of the email is to request your approval to conduct a study on the impact of new leadership at the school site level. This study would employ ethnographic methods--essentially, shadowing and interviews--of your first six months on the job. I am trying to ascertain the kind of impact a new principal can have on a school. Having a doctorate yourself, you value research, I am sure, and can appreciate the need for someone like myself, a doctoral candidate, to complete my dissertation. Thank you in advance for your interest and cooperation. I look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely, Bob Turtle

---

**Question 6** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #6; Teacher Accountability Evaluation July 16; 11:28 am***

TO: PRINCIPALS; FROM: ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT All principals should remind teachers at the first faculty meeting before school begins this year that *all* teachers will be evaluated using the new Teacher Accountability Evaluation instrument that the school board approved this past May. Also, principals should emphasize at this first meeting that teachers need to be more careful in using their sick leave days as there were apparent abuses last year.

---

**Question 7** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #7; Confidential Information August 11; 11:45 pm***

Dear Dr. Brown, I would like to have a confidential conference with you to discuss an urgent matter regarding another staff member. I have been reluctant to say anything until now, but I feel this is something you would want to know. I must, however, have your written commitment that you will keep all of this *strictly confidential* including the fact that I would be the one telling you this. I really don't want to be involved or implicated in any way. Ima Rumor

---

**Question 8** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #8; Lesson Plans for Substitutes August 15; 12:19 pm***

Dear Dr. Brown, You don't know me, but I have been a substitute teacher in this school form time to time for the last several years. I don't like to complain because I am really not that kind of person, and besides, I really like the school. But I feel there are a few things you should know about and maybe some improvements will result. My suggestions didn't work with Mr. Sanders, but I have heard that you are a real "take charge" person, and certainly there are some things about this school that need to be improved. I don't think this is the time and place to go into all of the various problems, but there is one thing I would hope you could change immediately, and that is the lack of lesson plans that substitute teachers encounter when they come to school. Rarely have I found (and I am not alone in this regard) an up-to-date lesson plan from a teacher who is absent for that day. And frequently I can't find any lesson plan at all. A substitute teacher job is tough enough, but without a decent lesson plan, it is terrible! As a parent with children in this district, I certainly have to wonder about the quality of planning by teachers and since Mr. Sanders didn't take any action, one also wonders whether administration really cares or is willing to take a tough stand with teachers. I hope that with new leadership at the school, something can be done about this deplorable situation. Sincerely, Mrs. Ruth Subby

---

**Question 9** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #9; Water Cut off August 16; 5:43 pm***

Dr. Brown, We may have to shut off the water for a short time during the first week of school to repair the main boiler. I know this is a bad time to be shutting off the water, and we hope it won't be necessary. Sam and I are trying to get the thing fixed ourselves, but we have to call upstate to

see if we can get it done. They can't get here until the week after the Labor Day weekend and even that is uncertain. I am trying to get them to come at night. I'll get back to you if anything changes.  
Al; Head Custodian

---

**Question 10** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #10; Vandalizing My Flowers! August 13; 6:30 am***

Dear Dr. Brown, I hope this year is going to be different! At least with a new principal there is hope. I live near the school and for several years now, I have had trouble with students vandalizing my flowers and my yard when they walk home from school. I have complained to the principal before, but Mr. Sanders only said he would look into it but nothing was ever done. I hope this year SOMETHING WILL BE DONE! Maybe you could say something to the students at the first assembly or maybe over the PA system. I know something's got to be done this year or else I am going to the school board on this. It's not right. I am a taxpayer who pays for these schools and I don't even have any kids. I want something done this year! Alice Snap

---

**Question 11** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #11; CO Meeting: Improve Test Scores July 25; 1:56 pm***

To: All principals; From: Assistant Superintendent. Please clear your calendars for Monday afternoon of the second week of school for a meeting at the central office conference room to discuss our efforts to improve student achievement test scores for each of your schools. Bring your school's goals and plans.

---

**Question 12** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #12; Child Abuse Assembly July 10, 3:20 pm***

Dear Mr. Sanders, I am president of the Council on Children's Problems, and we would like to present an assembly program to your students this fall on child abuse. As you know, child abuse is a very pervasive problem and all of us must do everything that we can to prevent this kind of problem from happening to any child regardless of age and regardless to who the abuser is. Our assembly program is very stimulating with many activities and experiences available. I look forward to hearing from you as to when it would be possible to present our program. Sincerely, Ted Allen, President, Council on Children's Problems

---

**Question 13** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #13; Family Emergency August 16; 5:31 pm***

Dr. Brown, I was so sorry to hear about your family's loss. I am writing this email to let you know that I will not be at work on your first two days due to a family emergency of my own. My husband has had a mini stroke and we have had to hire a nurse to look after him, but she won't be able to start until Thursday, so I have to stay with him until then. I had looked forward to getting started earlier on the plans for the teacher's two days of in-service, but with your family troubles and now mine, I won't be able to be at school for your first two days on the job. In the past, Mr. Sanders sort of "played it by ear" with the teachers' in-service days, but I was wondering if you had specific plans that I could get started on and help you with. I will be able to do some work from home if you wish me to get started on anything. Also, do you want to me to send any messages to the parents? Peg Albright, School Secretary

---

**Question 14** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #14; Leaving Early on Mondays July 25, 1:15 pm***

Mr. Sanders, I will need to leave school a little early each Monday this fall (10 minutes before

student dismissal) to get to my university class. I hope you will understand that I am trying to advance my education and need your support. I know that you have let other teachers leave early in the past, and hope this will work out for me as well. I will stay late other nights to make up for my early departure. Thank you, Mary Eager, Teacher

---

**Question 15** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #15; Eliminate Hall Passes! August 13, 11:36 am***

Dear Dr. Brown, We tried to get an appointment to see you Monday, but your secretary said you were going to be too busy to see people until the following week. Anyway, we would like to use this email to formally recommend that you eliminate hall passes for this coming school year. Hall passes are demeaning to students and reflect a lack of trust on the part of the faculty and administration toward students. We recognize that there are a few students who can't be trusted and they probably do need hall passes. But why should the rest of us be penalized for the few? We have been told that you graduated with a doctor's degree from one of the leading universities. We would hope that you would bring a more enlightened view of students to this school. Let's all start out fresh this year by trusting one another. Are you willing to take the first step? We have! Sincerely, Jack Stacker; Camilla Green; & Bill Elliot, Student Council Representatives

---

**Question 16** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #16; Trash in the Hallways August 9, 9:14 am***

Dr. Brown, I hope you can do something this coming year about the litter in the hallways and in the cafeteria during lunch. Maybe you could say something to the teachers during your first meeting with them. The last few years things have really gotten out of hand. We need to crack down on students and they have to take more pride in their school! Sam Clean, Custodian

---

**Question 17** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #17; Rosehip Children on Vacation July 15; 12:03 pm***

Dear Mr. Sanders: Jim and Alice won't be in school for the opening day because our family will not be returning to town from our vacation cottage until after labor day. I am sure you will understand. Sincerely, Mrs. Patricia Rosehips

---

**Question 18** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #18; Steele Children Absence from School July 18, 3:57 pm***

Dear Mr. Sanders, I am writing this letter to request permission for my children to be absent from school next March 15 to April 5 in order to be with me while I am attending an international law conference in the Union of South Africa. I am sure you recognize the cultural and educational benefits of such a trip. In addition, since I am a single parent and there is no one with whom I could leave my children, there is the practical aspect of my request. Furthermore, the trip will provide a nice change of pace for them, since they tend to get easily board around that time of year. Sincerely, Thomas Steele, Attorney at Law

---

**Question 19** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #19; All Expense Paid Vacation!!! August 1; 3:46 am***

CONGRATULATIONS! To express our gratitude for your recent interest in our exciting and tantalizing weekly specials at [www.bigbaloney/click&peep.com](http://www.bigbaloney/click&peep.com) you have won a chance at an all-expense paid vacation for two weeks in the beautiful and spacious Billings, Montana--BIG SKY COUNTRY! Your two week stay has been reserved for you and one other person for January 15-30. Go to [www.bigbaloney.com](http://www.bigbaloney.com) to claim your prize number and to sign up for more exciting offers like this

one. HURRY! Time is running out on your chance to WIN this exciting vacation in the magnificent BILLINGS! To thank you for your entering your name in the chance to win this exciting vacation, you will receive a free sample of "the little blue pill" to enhance your love life while enjoying your fabulous vacation!

---

**Question 20** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #20; Family Member Hospitalized August 17, 5:50 am***

Dear Dr. Brown, I know we haven't personally met, but I am writing to you about a family problem. My wife's mother has been admitted to the hospital and is in critical condition. We must go to Phoenix, AR to be with her and the family today. It doesn't look good for her and we could be in Arizona for quite a number of days. I will keep you posted as to what is happening. Thank you, Mr. Got. O. Go, Science Teacher

---

**Question 21** ⋮ (1 point)

***Item #21; Congratulations on New Job, August 12, 2:30 am***

Dr. Brown, Just a short note to congratulate you on being chosen as new principal of our school. As you can probably imagine, I would have been happier if the school board had chosen me, but I guess those are the break. After twelve years as assistant principal, they must figure that's all I'm good for. Anyway good luck. Tim Parker, Assistant Principal

(Gorton, Alston, & Snowden, 2007).

---

***Quadrant***

Place the Inbox item numbers in the quadrants where you decide they should be placed.

Quadrant 1, Urgent & Important:	<input type="text"/>
Quadrant 2, Not Urgent & Important:	<input type="text"/>
Quadrant 3, Urgent & Not Important:	<input type="text"/>
Quadrant 4, Not Urgent & Not Important:	<input type="text"/>



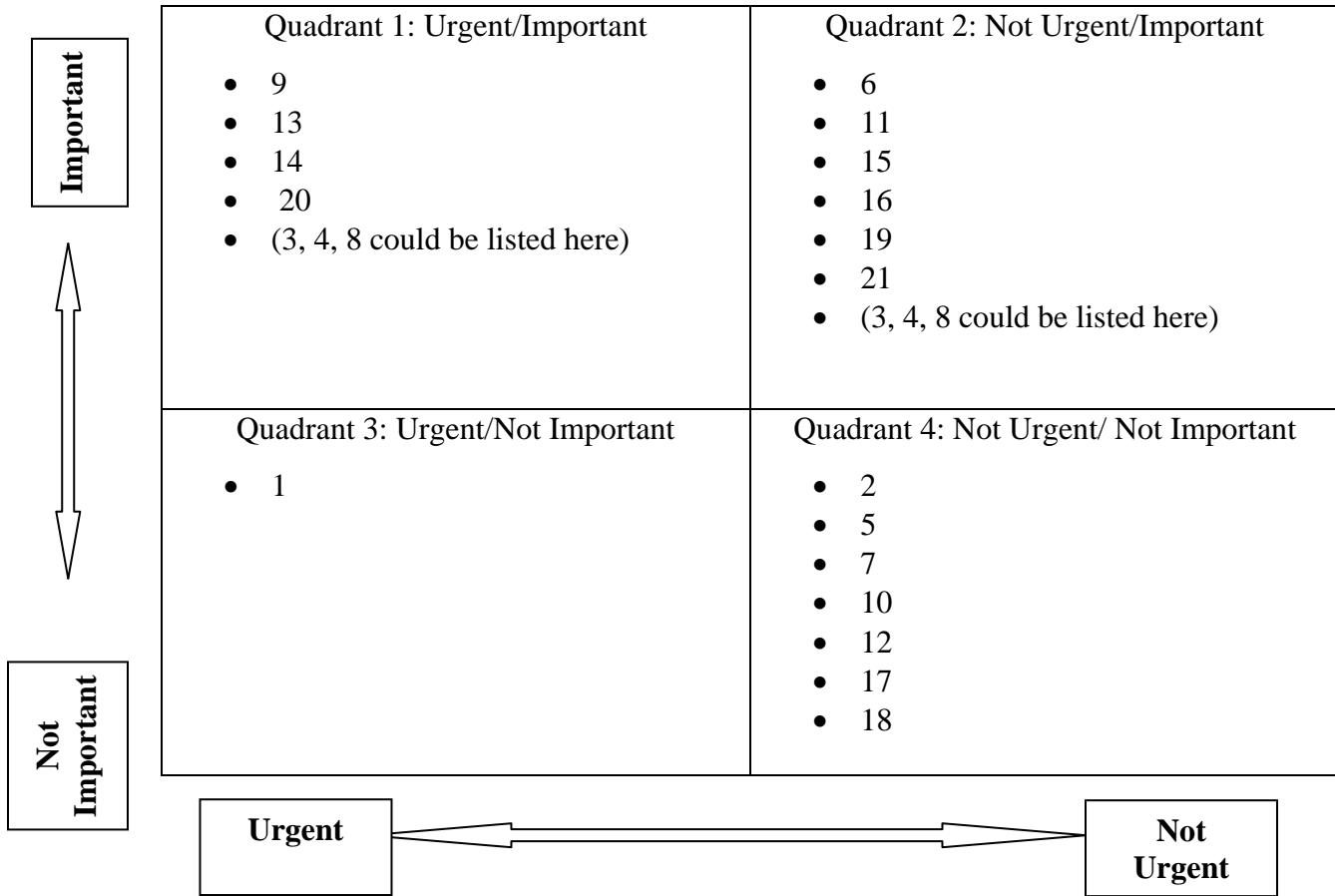
Appendix C

Inbox Simulation

Quadrant Tool

Answer Key

Decide which quadrant each Inbox item should be placed and write the Item # in the corresponding quadrant. Transfer the item numbers to the appropriate place on the last question in the WebCT Principal's Inbox Simulation.



(Covey, S., 1989).

## Appendix D

### Principal's Inbox Simulation Scoring Rubric

#### Organizing and Prioritizing Tasks/Managing Time

- The student demonstrates the ability to organize and prioritize tasks utilizing Covey's time management quadrants (note to student: simulation time is 90 minutes; it is expected that not all inbox items are to be responded to during these 90 minutes). (1.3a, b; 1.4a; 2.2c; 3.3a, c)

<b>3</b> <b>Proficient</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Basic</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Below Basic</b>
The student organizes tasks using Covey's time management quadrants placing a majority of the items in the appropriate quadrants in efforts to logically prioritize tasks to be completed in the allotted time.	The student organizes tasks using Covey's time management quadrants placing some of the items in the appropriate quadrants in efforts to prioritize tasks to be completed in the allotted time.	The student fails to organize tasks using Covey's time management quadrants and responds to items in order presented.

- The student demonstrates effective time management skills (3.1c; 3.2a, c; 3.3a, c)

<b>3</b> <b>Proficient</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Basic</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Below Basic</b>
The student manages the time allotted with in depth responses primarily to high priority items placed in Quadrant 1: urgent, important and Quadrant 2: not urgent, important in the time limit allowed in the simulation.	The student manages the time allotted by responding primarily to items placed in Quadrant 1: urgent, important and Quadrant 2: not urgent, important, but the responses are not in depth.	The candidate attempts to respond to all items in the inbox with no attention to the high priority items and responses are not in depth.

#### Decision-making

- The student demonstrates the ability to analyze problems and seek information needed that is relevant to the problems. (1.2b; 3.1a; 3.2a; 3.3a; 3.3c)

<b>3</b> <b>Proficient</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Basic</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Below Basic</b>
The student consistently analyzes the problems to determine important elements of the situation, such as important dates, and/or time, and seeks additional information relevant to the situations.	The student's analyses of the problems sometimes considers important elements of the situation, such as important dates, and/or time, and occasionally seeks additional information relevant to the situations.	The student does not analyze the problem to determine important elements of the situation, such as important dates, and/or time, and does not seek additional information relevant to the situations.

4. The student demonstrates ability to make judgments and reach logical conclusions/outcomes based upon information provided. (1.1b; 1.5a, b; 2.1a; 2.3a, b; 3.1b; 3.2b,c; 3.3a,c; 4.1a-h; 4.2a; 4.2b, c, d; 5.1a; 5.2a; 5.2c; 6.2a)

<b>3</b> <b>Proficient</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Basic</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Below Basic</b>
The student's judgment of the situation leads to logical conclusions and/or outcomes and high quality decisions or plans of action that address the needs of stakeholders.	The student's judgment of the situation leads to logical conclusions and/or outcomes but decisions or plans of action only partially address the needs of stakeholders.	The student's judgment of the situation does not lead to logical conclusions and/or outcomes and the decisions or plans of action do not consider the needs of stakeholders.

5. The student demonstrates the ability and willingness to make a sound decision when addressing the problem. (1.1b; 1.3b; 1.4a,c; 1.5a, b; 2.1a; 3.1a; 3.1b; 3.2b,c; 3.3a,c; 4.1a-h; 4.2a; 4.2b, c, d; 5.1a; 5.2a; 5.2c; 6.2a)

<b>3</b> <b>Proficient</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Basic</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Below Basic</b>
The student consistently recognizes when immediate decisions are required and respond/acts quickly with the information provided and, conversely, consistently recognizes when decisions must be deferred to gather more information.	The student sometimes recognizes when immediate decisions are required and respond/acts quickly with the information provided and, conversely, sometimes recognizes when decisions must be deferred to gather more information.	The student does not recognize when immediate decisions are required and does not respond/act quickly with the information provided and, conversely, does not recognize when a decision must be deferred to gather more information.

**Taking Initiative**

6. The student demonstrates the ability to proactively make plans without waiting for directions from others and a willingness to engage self in the issues. (1.1b; 1.5a, b; 2.1a; 2.3a, b; 3.1b; 3.2b,c; 3.3a,c; 4.1a-h; 4.2a; 4.2b, c, d; 5.1a; 5.2a; 5.2c; 6.2a)

<b>3</b> <b>Proficient</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Basic</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Below Basic</b>
The student consistently develops responses/plans of action that are proactive in preventing future problems and demonstrates a willingness to actively participate in the solutions/plan.	The student sometimes develops responses/plans of action that are proactive in preventing future problems and sometimes demonstrates a willingness to actively participate in the solutions/plan.	The student consistently does not develop responses/plans of action that are proactive in preventing future problems and does not demonstrate a willingness to actively participate in the solutions/plan.

7. The student demonstrates the ability to consider a range of interest/issues that a problems presents. (1.1b; 1.5a, b; 2.1a; 2.3a, b; 3.1b; 3.2b,c; 3.3a,c; 4.1a-h; 4.2a; 4.2b, c, d; 5.1a; 5.2a; 5.2c; 6.1b, f, g, h; 6.2a; 6.3a, b)

<b>3</b> <b>Proficient</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Basic</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Below Basic</b>
The student consistently demonstrates competency in addressing a variety of issues related to the problems presented, i.e., issues related to the educational, political, economic, demographic, and/or public relations aspects.	The student sometimes demonstrates competency in addressing a variety of issues related to the problems presented, i.e., issues related to the educational, political, economic, demographic, and/or public relations aspects.	The student consistently does not demonstrate competency in addressing a variety of issues related to the problems presented, i.e., issues related to the educational, political, economic, demographic, and/or public relations aspects.

**Interpersonal Skills**

8. The student demonstrates sensitivity to the needs of others. ((1.1b; 1.5a, b; 2.1a; 2.3a, b; 3.1b; 3.2b,c; 3.3a,c; 4.1a-h; 4.2a; 4.2b, c, d; 5.1a; 5.2a; 5.2c; 6.2a))

<b>3</b> <b>Proficient</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Basic</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Below Basic</b>
The student consistently considers the feelings and needs of others and responses/plans of action consistently express genuine interest and concern in addressing the needs of stakeholders.	The student sometimes considers the feelings and needs of others and responses/plans of action sometimes express genuine interest and concern in addressing the needs of stakeholders.	The student does not consider the feelings and needs of others and responses/plans of action do not express genuine interest and concern in addressing the needs of stakeholders.

9. The student demonstrates effective communication skills when responding to concerns. (1.4b; 2.1a; 2.3a; 2.3b; 3.2b; 3.3c; 4.2a; 4.3a; 5.1a; 5.2a; 5.3a)

<b>3</b> <b>Proficient</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Basic</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Below Basic</b>
The student consistently expresses ideas/content clearly and communication is appropriate for the differing audiences.	The student sometimes expresses ideas/content clearly and communication is usually appropriate for the differing audiences.	The student does not express ideas/content clearly and communication is usually not appropriate for the differing audiences.

**Monitoring and Following Up on Actions**

10. The student demonstrates the ability to develop procedures/plans to monitor and follow up on activities. (1.3a,b; 1.4b; 3.1a, b, c; 3.3a; 4.1f; 4.3c, d; 5.1a; 5.2a; 5.3a )

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b> <b>Proficient</b></p> <p>The student consistently presented procedures to follow-up on tasks/activities/delegated assignments/ other items not immediately addressed in the allotted time.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b> <b>Basic</b></p> <p>The student occasionally presented procedures to follow-up on tasks/activities/delegated assignments/ other items not immediately addressed in the allotted time.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b> <b>Below Basic/Unsatisfactory</b></p> <p>The student never presented procedures to follow-up on tasks/activities/delegated assignments/ other items not immediately addressed in the allotted time.</p>
--	---	---

Grading: The candidate must receive a “Proficient” rating in 8 of the above 10 categories and must not receive a “Below Basic” in any category.

Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Overall Score: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

### *Complete set of correlation among rubric items*

Correlation set	<i>r</i>	<i>p value</i>
Q1 and Q2	.73	.03
Q1 and Q3	.0	1.0
Q1 and Q4	.50	.49
Q1 and Q5	.27	.58
Q1 and Q6	.64	.26
Q1 and Q7	.45	.06
Q1 and Q8	.04	.17
Q1 and Q9	.37	.02
Q1 and Q10	.38	.75
Q2 and Q3	.29	.12
Q2 and Q4	.11	.02
Q2 and Q5	.46	.21
Q2 and Q6	.48	.002
Q2 and Q7	.33	.85
Q2 and Q8	.48	.002
Q2 and Q9	.44	<.001
Q2 and Q10	-.14	.07
Q3 and Q4	.11	.02
Q3 and Q5	.46	.21
Q3 and Q6	.48	.003
Q3 and Q7	.33	.85
Q3 and Q8	.48	.001
Q3 and Q9	.44	<.001
Q3 and Q10	.14	.07
Q4 and Q5	.01	.17
Q4 and Q6	.78	.34
Q4 and Q7	.39	.001
Q4 and Q8	.06	.17
Q4 and Q9	.35	.008
Q4 and Q10	.38	.58
Q5 and Q6	.13	.10
Q5 and Q7	.48	.10
Q5 and Q8	.18	.03
Q5 and Q9	.29	.002
Q5 and Q10	.04	.34
Q6 and Q7	.51	<.001
Q6 and Q8	.24	.29
Q6 and Q9	.43	.02
Q6 and Q10	.30	.34
Q7 and Q8	.15	<.001
Q7 and Q9	.54	4.46
Q7 and Q10	.48	.003
Q8 and Q9	.75	.10
Q8 and Q10	.42	.19
Q9 and Q10	.13	.01