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CASE STUDY

Jefferson Elementary School K-8 Suburban School

As you read this case, consider these two questions:

1. How should the principal of Jefferson Elementary prepare to address the administrative team regarding the Superintendent's directive to promote student success?
2. Just as the understanding and analysis of goals are an important element of success, student performance data is an essential component of working toward these goals. How would a principal use this data to promote effective instructional practice and student success?

Jefferson Elementary School serves 620 students in grades kindergarten through eight. It is one of four schools in the district and its eighth grade students transition to the local high school.

Jefferson provides a comprehensive program that includes School Improvement, Title I, English language development, Gifted and Talented, and an array of special education services that include resource specialists, a special day class (grades 4-8), a speech and language pathologist, a part-time occupational therapist, and a part-time adaptive therapist for physical education.

Students in grades K-3 enjoy a class size of 20 and each class has a full-time certificated teacher and a one-hour para educator to support the core academics. Students in grades 4-8 have class size averages of 29.5 with a certificated teacher and a 1.5 hour para educator.

Throughout the county this school has the reputation of being well-organized with facilities that are clean and well kept, and a community that honors education. The school has little to no vandalism, enrollment includes a high rate of incoming transfers, and the teaching cadre is proud to be in the field of education. The community acknowledges Jefferson with high regard and local realtors are zealous about opportunities to feature the school as a strong positive in their regular advertisements.

In spite of the many positives and "good feelings" about Jefferson Elementary, there are questions about the academic growth and achievement gains of its students. A data review of the scores in the areas of total reading, mathematics, and language have displayed a flat profile over the last three years. Almost all student groups, beginning in grade 2, have hovered between the 28th and 39th percentiles. Curriculum committees and school leadership reviews assert that the lack of growth is the result of change in adopted curriculum materials, higher level of students with a primary language other than English, and the fact that standardized tests allow for such normal curve expectations at various standard deviations.

DOCUMENT 1: ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM

memo . . .

March 20

To: Administrative Team

From: Superintendent of Schools

Recently, I was reading a book entitled *Leadership Jazz: the Art of Conducting Business through Leadership, Followership, Teamwork, Voice, and Touch* by Max De Pree (1993). It addressed the issue of the quality of life. It brought to my attention how each of us, as educational leaders, bring about change and improvement for our schools. Do we have a direction, a vision for our schools and programs? How do we evaluate this notion of quality and when do we adjust our path?

As we work towards our educational mission and goals, I want each of us to identify areas we prize that represent leadership qualities and how your school, staff, students, parents, and community demonstrate these characteristics.

I know that each of you understand the importance of providing your school with a focus that communicates how we are committed to the adherence of high student expectations, that there is convincing evidence that this focus is embedded in all of your educational programs, and that there is evidence that this commitment is shared by all.

Essential to this notion is that all information is based upon a variety of sources and that student data is an essential component that informs and directs this path.

Beginning at our next administrative meeting each of us will present our points of view on how we promote student success throughout our school programs and how we demonstrate our responsibility to all members of our community.

As we learn how to define our vision we will progress to the stages of implementation, communication, and evaluation.

I look forward to working with you to discover the *leadership jazz* within each of us.

memo . . .

To: Principal of Jefferson High School
From: Curriculum Advisory Committee
Re: Curriculum Review

In our review of the strategic plan for our current school year, we have noted that there are many areas of pride and success for our staff, school, and community. Many of our school success indicators have met expectations and have become a positive direction for our entire school.

However, in a number of areas we realize that there has not been growth and that we need your support and direction. The following areas have been identified:

Strategic Goal Area #1: Student Education

- 9th grade student achievement scores for total reading, mathematics, and language have not met their targets for each of their quartiles.
- 9th grade English language learner students did not meet their level of fluency targets.
- Gifted and Talented education program has not conducted transition meetings for students who were promoted from the 8th to 9th grade.

Strategic Goal Area #2: Professional Practice

- Collaboration between Jefferson Elementary and Jefferson High School has not demonstrated successful communication or articulation of curriculum goals and needs.
- District initiated staff development to increase collaboration among 8th and 9th grade teachers has not been completed following invitations from the high school team.

DOCUMENT 4: JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL—
SCHOOL SITE COUNCIL

memo . . .

Jefferson Elementary School
SITE Council

March 21

Thank you for your letter. We enjoyed the opportunity to talk about how we can improve the communications among parents, staff, and our high school programs.

We realize that we need to improve and become more consistent with how our community views us. At first the Site Council was defensive and wondered why the high school is not communicating with us, but then we asked ourselves how we can improve and be a part of the solution.

The Jefferson School Site Council has a major responsibility and role in school improvement. In this regard we are wondering if there is something we can do to improve how we are viewed in our community.

In this regard, we will begin discussions in the following area:

- Principal to meet with entire faculty to discuss and brainstorm schoolwide goals.

PRINCIPALIA

rudimentary response

The Jefferson Elementary School Principal is feeling positive about his first year. Staffing schedules that include library, computer lab, motor development, music, yard supervision, and the after-school extended day clinics are continuing to offer good monitoring of students and have reduced the number of conflicts on the playground. Teacher and substitute assignments during the first two trimesters met expectations and resulted in few scheduling conflicts or changes for students.

Textbook and material orders were delayed, however, with staff sharing and adjustments in unit presentation (particularly with science and history), the back order delays did not interrupt student instruction.

Staff meetings were without comment and, based on a review of faculty meeting minutes, the issues appear to have been met with satisfaction. The review of minutes highlighted the following areas: materials and ordering procedures, parent pick-up and drop-off locations, Penmanship Fair, Back-To-School Night, spirit and activity days, copy and reproduction schedules, need for faculty volunteers for afterschool events, and student safety. The principal was very proud of his communication with teachers. His Principal Advisory Council was very active and provided leadership in a variety of areas. The Council provided assistance with the allocation of the annual discretionary funds to staff (\$250.00 for each teacher), review of duty assignments, review of faculty meeting agendas, purchase of risograph equipment, and the selection of staff members for advisory councils and curriculum representation. These school leaders were the most experienced and respected teachers in the school, and the principal acknowledged their support and admiration for his leadership.

The Jefferson Elementary principal is passionate about his new position and is proud of his ten to twelve-hour days. He feels empowered that he is able to support his teachers' instructional programs and facilitate their needs as their recommendations are presented through his advisory or curriculum councils. His monthly parent bulletins have recognized exemplary student projects and supported positive citizenship practices within the school and community, reminded the community of noteworthy activities that they should attend, and used the bulletin as a communications tool about safety, energy conservation, study tips, and the need for volunteers in the library and computer lab.

(Note: He wonders why the parent teacher organization wants to publish future editions. He is pleased about their support and feels they are accepting responsibility to help the school.)

Upon receipt of the Superintendent's memorandum (Document 1) the Jefferson principal is looking forward to presenting his vision of what his school values and how he provides the leadership to represent those values. In preparing for this presentation to the administrative team, the principal believes that his major role is to support and facilitate instruction. To accomplish these goals, his beliefs are that he should:

- be the leader of the school's instructional program, and it is his role to facilitate its success in whatever manner is necessary

PRINCIPAL B accomplished response

Begin with the end in mind

Does Jefferson Elementary believe that the education of every student to acquire knowledge, skills, and values to become successful adults is of primary importance?

Does Jefferson Elementary foster a climate of continuous improvement?

Does Jefferson Elementary build its commitment to high standards of learning for all students?

Does Jefferson Elementary facilitate the development of successful instructional practices to improve instruction?

Does Jefferson Elementary have a strategic plan that focuses on student learning that draws upon relevant achievement and demographic data to inform instruction?

Does the staff at Jefferson Elementary collaborate and believe in the development of a community of learners and leaders?

Does the community at Jefferson Elementary involve itself in the realization of the schoolwide vision?

A definitive "Yes!" is the response the school leader at Jefferson Elementary would give to these questions that he believes aptly characterize his school. Every moment of every day he is modeling and promoting this attitude of direction, purpose, and commitment. He is governed by the belief that every student will achieve success and that every teacher will facilitate the success. The

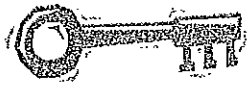
- portfolio of student work samples
- attendance report
- current intervention modifications (such as tutoring, after-school program, reading and/or math clinics, homework clubs, parent-student reading partnerships, computer lab for writing skills)
- recommendations for individual students (such as an intervention plan and/or screening/assessment, or referral)

A major purpose of these meetings is to collaborate with and empower teachers. These meetings emphasize student data, and, through modeling and collaboration, teachers are taught to use data to inform their instruction. It is during these conferences that the leader at Jefferson communicates a focus of success for all students and recognizes the teacher as a major stakeholder in this process. These professional collaboration sessions will determine areas of professional need, topics for staff development, material acquisition, areas of curriculum strength, and areas in need of improvement.

During these meetings the principal can collaborate with the teacher and learn about his/her process of analyzing instructional improvement. It is at these meetings that the school leader and teacher can, together, analyze how specific teaching practices lead to student learning and, ultimately, success.

Encouraging all stakeholders to be introspective and reflective about what they need is critical to student success. A schoolwide team that is collaborative and shares the process of improvement will support schoolwide goals. Regularly scheduled collegial sharing meetings are held three times each month. It is important to note that these meetings are voluntary, held after school on Thursdays, last no longer than 45 minutes, and have no published agenda. The guiding focus of these meetings is that all discussion is specific to student instruction and beneficial to all staff members. Typical meeting foci: successful strategies for the English language learner; establishing successful practices for the teacher and parent relationship; developing writing rubrics; using technology to develop a student assessment database; articulation (Jefferson Elementary and Jefferson High); developing staff collegiality; successful teaching ideas; using the Internet for student research; successful writing traits; alternative strategies for the reluctant learner in math; and integration of science into the curriculum.

The principal believes that the vision of Jefferson Elementary is committed to student learning and continued growth. The vision is and will continue to be developed by the entire Jefferson community and monitored through a strategic plan that allows for specific achievement using demographic data reflective of each student and his/her family. The principal's goal is to delegate responsibility at Jefferson and develop a community of leaders.



KEYS FOR IMPROVED PERFORMANCE

DIFFERENCES IN PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE

PRINCIPAL A

rudimentary response

Belief that his role is to support teachers and staff in their instruction.

His effectiveness is due to efficient scheduling and consistent discipline.

Effectiveness supported by efficient staff meetings as evaluated by participants with no comment or controversy.

Focus on day-to-day activities and events: schedules, ordering, duty assignments, reports, etc. in order to assist teachers in focusing on instruction.

Belief that he is working at capacity as twelve-hour days are full and parent support is positive.

Parent and staff surveys will give information to help develop vision.

School communication is provided by Principal Advisory Committee, comprised of leaders with senior

PRINCIPAL B

accomplished response

Belief that his role is to promote excellent instruction, growth, and student success.

His effectiveness is due to communicating vision, allowing for input, analyzing student achievement and demographic data.

Challenges values and promotes discussion and dialogue on beliefs and vision. This principal seeks to stimulate positive and critical discussion to stimulate improvement.

Focus on improved student instruction. Model analysis of student data, seek ways to improve instruction, communicate with parents, collegial sharing with staff, identify staff development focus.

Goals are to develop leadership in others, delegate responsibility, create shared commitment of high standards for all.

School leader must arrive with passionate belief that the priority is student success. The vision is to be developed through dialogue, using relevant sources of information from within and outside of school.

Communication is required to be broad based and include representatives from all constituency groups.

In-Class Activities

1. The ISLLC Standards inform a contemporary approach to practicing the art of leadership. List the functions of the standards and describe the meaning of each function in terms of how it informs leadership behavior in a school situation.
2. The standards' movement has emerged to ensure that 21st century school leaders have the capacity to lead. Write a statement describing the meaning of leadership capacity as defined by the standards.
3. Select one (1) of the thirteen (13) core competencies and discuss it in the context of school leadership.
4. Have each student conduct a series of self -assessment activities for the purpose of acquiring an assessment in the following areas:
 1. Interest
 2. Personality
 3. Leadership
 4. Writing Skills
 5. Oral Skills
 6. Technology Skills
 7. Other
5. List each of the standards and identify an artifact from your school experience that will serve as evidence that you have engaged each standard in a practical school situation.
6. Require students to develop and submit a self-assessment paper containing the results of an analysis of their leadership style. Then, have each student use the results to prepare an individual program of studies that denotes courses and leadership activities that will enhance his/her leadership potential during his/her tenure in the leadership program.
7. Define one of the thirteen core competencies and give an example of a person in a leadership role who exhibits that competency.