Core Function	School Leadership and Decision Making		Effective Practice	Focus the principal's role on building leadership capacity, achieving learning goals, and improving instruction

Indicator: The principal participates actively with the school's teams. (4379)

Explanation: Active participation doesn't mean that the principal attends every team meeting, but the principal certainly attends some team meetings. And for teams on which the principal is a member—Leadership Team and School Community Council, for example—the principal is a regular attendee. Beyond attendance, the principal ensures that teams have ample and regular time to meet and stresses the importance of the work of the teams. The principal provides guidance for the work products to be produced by the team and reviews the work to offer feedback.

Questions: Is your principal a strong advocate for productive teaming? Does the principal attend the meetings of teams on which the principal is a member? Does the principal attend some meetings of other teams (for example, teacher Instructional Teams)? Does the principal provide and protect team meeting time? Does the principal review and provide feedback on the work of the teams?

The principal's major role is to act as the guardian of sound practice, encouraging others to do likewise. The principal shares leadership while building the leadership capacity of others in the school. The principal schedules and convenes decision-making team meetings, and executes their plans. (Redding, 2006).

According to Marzano (2003), "one of the common misconceptions about leadership at the school level is that it should reside with one individual--namely the principal" (p. 174). While the principal should be the one to keep everyone focused on improving student learning, leadership should be shared among teachers, support staff, parents, and, in some cases, the students themselves in order to achieve that objective. Marzano explains that "effective leadership for change is characterized by specific behaviors that enhance interpersonal relationships" (p. 176). Helping teams function effectively is part of this important aspect of the principal's job.

Brough (2012) agrees with the importance of collaborative leadership, stating, "Such leadership overtly values the voices of staff, students, parents, and community members. Healthy schools where educators, parents and community members, and students embrace change and view learning as a joyful endeavor are places where extraordinary relationships have been purposefully built and maintained. Leaders in these effective schools realize that they can't—and shouldn't—be responsible for it all." An award-winning middle level principal summed it up nicely: "During my first year as a principal, I ran my building. In the second year I worked with my staff and that has made all the difference in the world" (Bergmann & Brough, 2007, p. 89). This principal established study groups consisting of faculty members, parents, and students, his only directives being that their decisions had to be in compliance with school and board policy and be based on what was best for young adolescents (Bergmann & Brough, 2007).

Brough (2012) lists eight indicators of collaborative leadership: (1) a forum to elicit input (data collection) from all stakeholders and an evaluation system to assess practices, programs, and policies in place; (2) professional learning communities or teams; (3) parents who are visible and involved (in many schools parents have a dedicated space); (4)

educators who regularly discuss professional literature; (5) peer coaching that is ongoing and valued; (6) celebrations of pride that are well earned; (7) students who are involved in responsible positions; and (8) communication mechanisms that help to keep everyone informed.

According to Brough (2012), the key to designing and implementing these critical indicators is the development of trusting relationships where all the stakeholders feel valued and integrally involved. Such relationships require proactive nurturing, requiring the principal to demonstrate that he or she values input, dialogue, and honesty, including soliciting information on what is going right and what needs attention.

A new concern in schools is the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). According to Jenkins and Pfeifer (2013), the principal and the Leadership Team should not request that teachers study the CCSS and teach to those standards, as this will not help the teachers nor will it result in any significant change. Leadership Teams can do the heavy lifting required by the new standards by creating cogent, focused transition plans that identify specific steps, including timelines, professional development initiatives, and accountability structures. The principal and the Leadership Team also must consider key components of change management as they develop their transition plans. If one or more components are absent or misunderstood, then confusion, resistance, and frustration may result.

For Special Education

In this era of comprehensive school reform, special education presents one of the major challenges facing principals. Schools must provide disabled students appropriate access to the general curriculum and effective instructional support. Student progress must be monitored closely and demonstrated through participation in assessment efforts. Research suggests that the principal's role is pivotal in the special education process (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).

Warger, Eavy & Associates (2010) have some suggestions for ways in which the principal can support novice special education teachers: (1) engage them in orientation sessions that are designed to help them understand the school's policies and procedures; (2) observe them and offer non-threatening feedback about their teaching; (3) protect them from difficult situations (e.g., large

numbers of challenging students, extensive nonteaching duties, etc.); (4) provide mentors who are capable of meeting new teachers' needs; (5) provide time to plan with colleagues, observe other classrooms, and meet with other new teachers for peer support; and (6) provide resources (e.g., curriculum materials, professional development, suitable classroom space, etc.) (p. 1). Principals can also support these teachers by promoting a schoolwide philosophy of joint responsibility for all students and ensuring that necessary structures (e.g., discussions about inclusion as part of professional learning communities, sufficient time for collaboration among teachers who work with the same students, etc.) are in place to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities.

References and Resources

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