Core Function → School Leadership and Decision Making

Effective Practice → Establish a team structure with specific duties and time for instructional planning

Indicator: The Leadership Team serves as a conduit of communication to the faculty and staff. (43)

Explanation: A typical Leadership Team includes the principal, key administrators, and teacher leaders of Instructional Teams. The team serves as a means of communication among school personnel, especially in regards to school improvement efforts and everyone's role in them.

Questions: Is your Leadership Team constituted in a way that enables it to receive input from faculty and staff and to convey information to them? How is this communication handled? Are Leadership Team agendas and minutes made available? Is the evolving school improvement plan accessible?

Some decisions concern the general operation of the school and its continuous improvement. The typical system places those decisions with a Leadership Team that is headed by the principal and includes teachers and other staff. In order to facilitate communication and coordination among the grade levels and the departments of the school, a typical composition of the Leadership Team is the principal and team leaders from the Instructional Teams. The Leadership Team needs to meet twice each month for an hour each meeting. Less frequent meetings lead to drift and loss of continuity; less time for each meeting creates hurriedness and insufficient attention to the work at hand. Effective teams operate with agendas, keep minutes, stay focused, and follow through with the plans they make (Redding, 2006).

In the *Marzano School Leadership Evaluation System* (2013), Marzano places vital weight on the importance of school leadership and school leadership teams. It points out, "School leadership teams regularly analyze school growth data" (p. 13). "School leadership teams regularly analyze individual student performance" (p. 14). "School leadership teams regularly analyze the relationship between the written curriculum, taught curriculum, and assessments" (p. 21). "Teams regularly meet to discuss the progression and viability of documents that articulate essential content and timing of delivery (e.g., pacing guides, curriculum maps)" (p. 22). "The school leadership team has critical roles in facilitating school initiatives" (p. 25). "The school improvement team provides input to the leader regarding the school improvement plan" (p. 27).

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) Schools *School Leadership Team Handbook* spells out the functions of a School Leadership Team – with so much activity clearly requiring continuous communication: "Functions of a School Leadership Team (SLT): Facilitates the involvement of the school community in the development of the School Improvement Plan; Encourages, supports and creates opportunities for involvement from parents in the community; Contributes to the design of the School Improvement Plan; Monitors the effectiveness of the School Improvement Plan strategies" (p.1). Listed tasks include: Facilitates the development of the School Improvement Plan; Monitors, assesses and amends the School Improvement Plan; Advances policies and procedures that enhance achievement and meet educational, safety and parent involvement goals; Facilitates communication within the professional learning community; Builds the capacity of the school to address parent and staff concerns; and Builds the capacity of the school to

improve in the following areas: High Academic Achievement, Effective Educators, Adequate Resources and Facilities, Safe and Orderly Schools, World-Class Service, and Strong Parent and Community Relations. Team members are expected to "attend meetings regularly, represent the interests of constituent group (not just their own), determine how to engage stakeholders in meaningful ways in school affairs; commit to working collaboratively with team; bring issues and concerns of constituent group to team meetings and communicates the activities and decisions made by the School Leadership Team; and communicate information from the School Leadership Team to their constituent group" (p. 4).

Hollingsworth (2012) studied the evolving roles of the individuals on the school leadership team as a catalyst for innovation in instruction and classroom assessment. She said, "The creation of building level teams of teachers to serve as a community to advance teaching and learning inspired a unique approach to shared leadership in the spirit of instructional improvement" (p. 366). The research showed how one school leadership team "is serving new capacities in East High School. In this model, the change initiative is given priority, a clear vision, and a depth of understanding about what assessment for learning looks like in practice" (p. 368).

References and Resources

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. (2013). *School Leadership Team Handbook.* Charlotte, NC: Author.

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