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ABSTRACT
                Chapter 6 of a revised volume on school leadership,
this chapter defines and explains management teams and describes
several successful examples of team management. Superintendents have
come to rely on their management team's expertise to resolve
increasingly complex policy, administrative, and instructional
issues. Although team management has been variously defined, in this
chapter the focus is on a formally constituted group of experienced
central office and building level administrators committed to a
structured decision-making process endorsed by the school board and
the superintendent. Popular in the 1960s as a response to collective
bargaining, team management has proved effective in broadening
decision-making participation and improving administrative
efficiency. Since team management approaches differ, each district
must find a responsive model and modify it to meet district needs.
Management teams vary according to membership and organization type,
degree of power and trust, board-administrator agreement,
decision-making style, and evaluation method. Successful team
management demands strong commitment to trust and shared
decision-making among all participants. Team design is also crucial,
especially regarding communication channels. Successful team
management efforts in Yakima, Washington; Rio Linda, California; and
Attleboro, Massachusetts are described. All three examples feature a
strong superintendent possessing sophisticated organizational skills.
(MLH)

Chapter 6
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The need to solve increasingly complex and sophisticated problems has led to change in almost every field of human endeavor. To deal with increasingly complex policy, administrative, and instructional issues, superintendents have relied more and more on the expertise of their management teams. Nearly every school district boasts a governing council drawn from the administrative staff.

Team management has been used to describe a variety of shared or consultative decision-making arrangements among school personnel. In this chapter, the focus is on management teams that include both central office and building administrators. We follow Harold McNally's definition of the *management team* as "a group formally constituted by the board of education and superintendent, comprising both central office personnel and middle echelon administrative-supervisory personnel, with expressly stated responsibility and authority for participation in school system decision making." Thus the management team involves a cross-section of experienced administrative professionals in a structured decision-making process, endorsed by the school board and the superintendent.

A formal agreement to collaborate on decisions does not, however, mean that a management team is at work. "Although development of such an agreement may be a good place to start or a way to renew the board's and administrators' commitment to the team concept," says Mark Anderson, "the evidence from successful teams clearly shows that what is practiced is more important than what is on paper." By looking at the actual experiences of management teams, we intend in this chapter to emphasize the conditions that help teams to succeed.

The Appeal of the Team Concept

The practice of using a collaborative group to manage a school district is as old as democracy. Recently, however, a number of powerful causes have sky-rocketed the formalized management team into prominence. Each cause emphasizes either the concept's ability to redistribute power and promote power-sharing or its effectiveness as a management method.

Redistribution of Power

According to Bryce Grindle, the concept's surge in popularity is the

result of a three-part mandate to redistribute and share power: the attempts of teachers and parents to build a power base, the desire of principals to guard against intrusion into their traditional management prerogatives, and the recognition that a managerial team can quickly galvanize the ranks of administrators in times of crisis. As a solution to intermural alienation and dissension, the method first gained a popular following in the 1960s when teachers engaged in collective bargaining. It continues to quell antagonism in places such as the Hicksville, New York, School District, where, reports Wilber Hawkins, it dispelled "an atmosphere of hostility and distrust" by making "management problems and their resolution ...the concern of all administrators, and not just the superintendent," and by showing that "top management needs the ongoing consultation of middle management and vice versa."

In addition to instilling cooperation among educators, team management techniques can also encourage the formation of power-sharing coalitions. During the 1960s, when teachers associations sought to acquire powers formerly held by boards and administrators, superintendents saw their authority evaporating. "Early in the negotiations game," says Ray Cross, "it became apparent that teachers and superintendents, by the very nature of their respective roles, were on opposite sides of the table."

In response, superintendents "reached out to enlist all of the allies that they could get– particularly principals."

As legislatures passed laws allowing teachers to bargain collectively, state organizations of superintendents began claiming that principals should be considered managers and thus part of the school system's "administrative team." The rapid adoption of team management for purely political purposes subsequently gave the concept a bad image among principals. It is unfortunate, reported Robert Duncan in 1976, that the team management concept can find new life as a reaction to collective negotiations and not as the result of purposeful and rational deliberation by school boards and superintendents. With the right conditions, however, team management can be adopted for, and serve, rational purposes, as the experiences of many school districts during the past decade attest.

Advantages as a Management Method

Team management has proved to be an effective management method. Outlining a program in the Newark, Ohio, school system, William Bainbridge and George Evans claim that team management techniques can give everybody concerned about education, such as students, staff, community members, the P.T.A., and the board of education, a say in identifying and solving problems. Broad-based participation, reports the Ohio School Boards Association, yields improved communication between factions, a higher degree of trust, and higher quality decisions. Educators mention this last advantage repeatedly and with great enthusiasm. L. E. Scarr, noting that the wide variety of training, perspectives, and philosophies that administrators bring to their districts can often com-

plicate the decision-making process, concludes that team management might be "the single most effective way to deal with the problems currently facing public schools."

As a management technique, the team approach promises to coordinate and direct the decision-making process, fostering consensus where none existed before. But what seems ideal in theory can sometimes create as much strife as it is intended to dispel. This is the danger in a society that inspires initiative and ambition, warns Kathleen Hogan:

> Unless the superintendent can exercise a bit of dictatorial super-
> vision—and early on in the infant organization—the system won't
> work. If. . . the superintendent becomes structurally and morally
> bound to matrix management [by referring disputing administrators
> to each other and not to himself,] checks and balances will not exist,
> and team management may be lost.

Gene Geisert says that "school organizations whose personnel lack a common philosophical commitment will have problems with any management approach." But even where superintendents and boards have attempted to im-plement team management with honest intentions of sharing power and raising the quality of administration, the system sometimes fails. Because team management has become somewhat of a fad, some school districts have rushed to implement it without fully understanding the concept and without the com-mitment, trust, and training to make it succeed. The failure of a team—even when implemented with good intentions—can be a disaster for everybody.

Many school districts, however, have successfully used the manage-ment team to redistribute power or to increase the efficiency of management. Team techniques have solved problems thought to be insoluble. We will look at three successful teams later in this chapter. First we investigate several ele-ments that determine the effectiveness of a management team.

The Elements of Team Management

As a publication of the American Association of School Ad-ministrators notes, some team management approaches "work very well" while "others are merely labels attached to existing hierarchial structures." It is no surprise, then, that there is confusion about what team management really is. No one model fits all school systems. Each district must find a model that responds to its needs, and each must go through a period of examining and modifying the components of that model before it has a workable system.

What follows is an exploration of these models and components, as well as the often-conflicting opinions that accompany them. The first section, "Membership and Organization," describes the kinds of teams that researchers have found most successful. "Power and Trust," the second section, focuses on the team's creation of a new balance of power and the problems that accom-pany it. The next section, "The Board-Administrator Agreement," goes into the

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various ways that a team can define its authority and responsibilities. "Decision-Making," the fourth section, surveys the political remedies for the pitfalls of team management: the potential for becoming disjointed and unsystematic, the tendency to encourage dissension from within, and the problem of participants feeling that their voices carry no weight. Finally, "Evaluating the Team" covers the goals and methods that districts have used to review the effectiveness of team techniques.

These five sections are only brief surveys of the many papers and essays that have recently increased our insight into the techniques of team management. There is neither the time nor the space to discuss the groundbreaking studies such as Rensis Likert's *New Patterns of Management* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1961) and *The Human Organization: Its Management and Value* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967). For more information on specific aspects of team management, check the notes and bibliographies that accompany both older and current publications.

Membership and Organization

Like Shakespeare's Cleopatra, age cannot wither nor custom stale the infinite variety of managerial systems based on team techniques. Mandating membership quotas of anywhere between fifteen and eighty, these systems can be either uncompromisingly informal or highly organized. They can call for meetings that are informational and ritualistic, or productive and goal-oriented. Whatever shape they take, the decision-making process at their hearts needs to respond to the problems and the desires of the district.

Most proponents feel that the management team should include all central office and middle-level administrative personnel, including principals, assistant principals, and supervisors at the building level. In small districts, the entire team can work together at regular meetings. But in large districts, says Richard Schmuck, the term *management team* "usually refers to a *class* of administrative personnel including assistant principals, principals, and district-office administrators and not to a functioning *team*."

In larger districts, the total team must be divided into interlocking subgroups capable of getting useful work done; the larger group may or may not meet together as a "total team." What the total management teams in these districts resemble, then, is legislative bodies (though they rarely take votes), which assign the actual work to committees. We will see this strategy at work when, in the second half of this chapter, we look at three successful teams.

The best source for ideas on team organization is descriptions of successful team management systems. Another source is general team models, which have been proposed by a few writers.

Citing a desire to limit the number of team members in each working group from five to ten, Kenneth Erickson and Walter Gmelch describe three models that may be combined into a system of interlocking management teams. The "conventional" model includes three levels of administrators: a "policy

team" that includes board of education members and the superintendent; a "central management team" composed of the superintendent, representatives of the central office and staff, and all principals; and local teams that report to special area administrators, such as the business manager, the curriculum director, or the school principal. In large districts, principals are also members of other "interlocking" teams from their geographical areas.

The second or "cross-bred" model features two teams: a policy team similar to that of the conventional model and a management team responsible for planning, developing concepts, evaluating programs, and making recommendations to the policy team. This arrangement does away with the typical superintendent's "cabinet," replacing it with representatives of various special groups, such as teachers, classified personnel, principals, special education instructors, and community support groups.

The final or "cocoon" model again includes the policy team and management teams of the "cross-bred" model. But instead of having permanent representatives of specialized groups, the "cocoon" model adds teams of specially qualified people studying specific problems. These single-purpose cocoons (or ad hoc teams), which present alternatives and make recommendations to the management team, disband once their assignment is complete.

Meetings of the team may take place at a central site, or they may be rotated among all the district's schools. At one school district described by Mark Anderson, the team consists of a superintendent's cabinet (including central office administrators, the superintendent, and a principal representative) and principals (divided into three subcouncils for the elementary, middle, and high school levels). The superintendent's cabinet meets weekly, but it also attends the principals' subcouncil meetings, which are rotated among the schools. As the superintendent told Anderson, "holding the meetings in the various schools helps teachers and staff see central office administrators in their buildings and gives us the opportunity to interact face-to-face with people in their own setting."

Power and Trust

In team management systems, the "formal" power structure changes very little. The school board remains the primary policy-making and governing body of the district. The superintendent remains the one person responsible to the board for the district's proper functioning and retains authority for making the final decisions. Principals continue to perform their primary function of managing the local schools.

The changes that do take place in the power structure of team management districts are informal in nature and depend on the willingness of the superintendent and central office administrators to share their powers. Although principal participation may be mandated by district policy, the real extent of principal influence is up to the superintendent, who retains both final power and final responsibility for the team's decisions. Thus—unlike the "brute force"

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type of power redistributions caused by teacher unionization—changes to team management depend on "enlightened' boards and (especially) on superintendents who make them work.

Most proponents of team management, then, are not promoting a legal transfer of power to building administrators. Rather, they are calling on superintendents to open communications channels from the "bottom" to the "top" of the administrative hierarchy. They are, first and foremost, promoting the adoption of a structure that would enhance building administrator participation in the district's decision-making process.

The Importance of Trust

The success of team management, though, depends on more than a superintendent willing to share power. It also depends in large part on such factors as trust and commitment. Team members must trust the superintendent to respect and implement the team's decisions. Team members must also feel free to disagree with the superintendent without the fear of falling into disfavor. The superintendent, in turn, must have trust and confidence in the team to make intelligent decisions for the district. Each team member must trust that the others are working primarily for the good of the district.

A superintendent interviewed by Mark Anderson said he tries to develop rapport with team members on both a professional and a personal level. It is important, the superintendent said, to "build a good one-to-one relationship with each team member so they know that you are trustworthy, open, and not judgmental." He meets monthly with each team member at the administrator's work site to review goals, discuss building operations, and listen to the administrator's concerns, Anderson reports. The superintendent also schedules yearly team retreats that feature inservice sessions, discussions of district business, and social activities.

Another important factor that has fostered team members' trust in this superintendent, Anderson says, is an open agenda principals' meeting held "prior to the regular bimonthly administrative team meeting." Because of the open agenda, principals can bring their concerns directly to the superintendent before decisions are made at the superintendents' cabinet level.

The Principal's Commitment

Trust and commitment must extend in both directions. As highly visible administrators, principals must support the team's decisions, even those to which they make little actual contribution and over which they had little control. Patricia Wilhelm advises principals not to focus their attention too narrowly on their own schools. Even though a principal may not wish to spend much time on district politics, his or her attempt to influence the course of "decisions is a matter of appropriate self-interest at the very least." Political understanding and maneuvering, frequently a source of frustration, are unavoidable parts of the decision-making process.

Moreover, principals, by demonstrating their political power in the

management team, can add to their legitimacy in the eyes of faculty and staff. Principals who can attract district resources and influence policies that improve classroom conditions will, claim Lloyd Duvall and Kenneth Erickson, inspire greater morale and commitment in their teachers than those who cannot. If teachers feel that by working with their principal they are participating in setting district policy, they will truly be supportive of the management team.

In districts where strong adversarial relationships already exist between factions of the administration, team management will likely travel a rocky road and may end up doing more harm than good. This does not necessarily mean, however, that team management and principal bargaining units cannot peacefully coexist, as the management system of Attleboro, Massachusetts, demonstrates (see the section "Examples of Successful Teams").

Like school-based management, team management requires an increased amount of time and effort to make it work. It is always more difficult to make group decisions than it is for a lone administrator to make a command decision. But it is from this investment of extra time and effort that the benefits of team management spring. Thus, successful team management depends on the commitment of all team members to the system and on their willingness to spend the extra time and effort needed for shared decision-making. Yet in the end, states Grindle, "the responsibility to keep communication open belongs to the leader, who has the additional responsibility to demonstrate trust by delegating authority to others in the team."

The Board-Administrator Agreement

Mephistopheles, the agent of Lucifer in Christopher Marlowe's sixteenth-century play *Doctor Faustus*, cannot be sure that Faustus will sell his soul until he signs a written agreement. "But now thou must bequeath [thy soul] solemnly," he tells the Doctor, "And write a deed of gift with thine own blood,/ For that security craves Lucifer."

Four hundred years later, the need to formalize business relationships remains, though contracts tend to be written in blood more metaphorical than literal. Within the team management concept, agreements do not compel, but guide. A crucial factor in implementing a management team, says Lester Anderson in an essay on bargaining procedures, is the adoption of a formal structure that ensures "a system of open communication with all administrators." For school districts adopting the techniques of team management, written policies can lay a sturdy foundation for the concept, setting out both its philosophical principles and the specific details of its government.

Almost all educators who describe the successes of their management teams include some mention of the agreement between the board of education and its administrators. The thread that connects these contracts is the diversity of their subject matter. The agreement endorsed by the Ohio School Boards Association, for example, discusses points such as job descriptions; administrator evaluations, salaries, fringe benefits, and other compensations; and

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policy impact statements. According to Paul Salmon, an agreement should define the limits of its authority, its rights, and its responsibilities; the manner in which it will account for its actions; and the types of matters that may appear on its agenda. And Wilber Hawkins, writing about the Hicksville, New York, management team, discloses that their agreement calls for the administrators' involvement in budget development, policy formulation, and other management decisions. "One additional feature of the agreement designed to protect administrators from teacher pressure," he notes, is the statement that "all administrative assignments will be made by the superintendent and the board of education."

Hawkins' position recalls another aspect of the board-administrator agreement: its capacity to define the channels of authority, thereby ensuring the team unimpeded sovereignty in governing the district. Because the team approach usually curtails the discretionary powers of administrators, Grindle brings up the possibility of having an attorney on the staff. Under the new system, he writes, "administrators act *under* the law and are not *the* law."

Authorities agree that the finer details of the team's composition, structure, and decision-making processes should not be described in the agreement. According to the AASA, for example, the agreement "should not spell out operational details" but "should address the basic philosophical issues, leaving no doubt of the boards' commitment and the staff's obligations."

While a formal board-administrator agreement may be the best procedure to follow in some districts, numerous successful team management systems lack a written contract. Instead, these districts depend on trust, good faith, and informal understandings among team members. Whether or not a formal agreement exists, however, all team members should clearly understand the team's objectives, organization, and operating procedures. As we shall see in our review of successful teams, a list of unambiguous arrangements has often been the life-blood of an otherwise-doomed management strategy.

Decision-Making

Our forays through layers of structural and administrative concerns bring us finally to the molten core of the team management concept, the process of making decisions. This process determines the team's potential for establishing a consistent response to issues and for fostering an *esprit de corps* among the members. Numerous advantages—many documented by research—are thought to accompany the kind of shared decision-making present in team management systems.

For example, participation in decision-making increases job satisfaction for most (but not necessarily all) employees and gives them a sense of "ownership" in the organization. Decisions made by a group in most cases are likely to be better than decisions made by one person. Collaborative decision-making also increases the coordination of tasks and enhances the general quality of communications in an organization. These advantages and others will be dis-

cussed more fully in the next chapter.

Although middle-echelon administrators are involved in district decision-making in team management systems, they should not necessarily be involved in *every* decision that the district makes. Experts should handle some problems of a technical or legal nature. Routine decisions need not take up the team's attention unless they could significantly alter the district's operations.

The superintendent or a person delegated by a certain administrator could have the power to make some decisions. In the Attelboro team, the superintendent reserves the power to make decisions in special subject areas.

Even if the team is involved in decision-making, the decisions it reaches may not be binding. In almost all cases, the superintendent in team management districts retains the final veto power over team decisions. If the superintendent intends to let the team decision be binding, he or she should clearly communicate that to the team. If the team's role is to be considered advice only, that, too, should be clearly communicated.

Superintendents should be careful in exercising their ultimate power over the decision-making process. If they restrict it too severely or exercise their veto power unwisely, they will destroy the fragile trust that makes the team work. Its members may consider the team a fraud and withdraw their support, seeking other ways to gain influence in the decision-making process.

For these reasons, each member of the team must feel that his or her involvement is genuine and important. Respect for the individual is the keynote of the program described by Bainbridge and Evans. Parents, students, staff members, school board members, and other residents receive a survey each April that solicits suggestions for improvements in the schools. After analyzing the results, the management team develops a four-tiered set of objectives for the year's work. Covering districtwide and local goals, the members' enrichment of their administrative or leadership skills, and their fulfillment of daily tasks and routines, these objectives direct the team's every policy, regulation, and action. Each member of the team receives an individual contract, with the promise of merit pay, based on the four objective areas. The result, observe Bainbridge and Evans, is that "the administrative team expresses a willingness to evaluate its educational program and to report and interpret results openly to the public."

Even though a management team may publicly proclaim harmony and unity, dissension may erupt behind the closed doors of the meeting room. When members return to their own schools, disagreements can slip out between the cracks. James Cole provides an example: "A principal whose job is to convey a team decision to teachers introduces it by saying, 'I don't agree with this, but the superintendent wants us to . . . .'" Cole then suggests nine ways for principals to support the management team, such as keeping the superintendent informed about what people think about the team's decisions and being a "team player." The implication of an "informal" consensus is that all team members agree to abide by the decision of the team. Even though some may have reservations, for the success of the team they must agree not to work against its will.

The Ohio School Boards Association outlines a step-by-step process for preparing, implementing, and evaluating a decision-making policy and also provides sample documents that show how school districts have solved problems associated with contracts, salaries, and fringe benefits. In contrast to this highly structured approach, a system in the Deer Park, Illinois, schools, described by David Cavanaugh and Cynthia Yoder, employs a more flexible and adaptive process for making decisions. A goal of the system is to break down the barriers that consciously and unconsciously inhibit trust and cooperation among team members. Each year Deer Park's management team identifies and devises means for each member to accomplish specific goals and objectives, utilizing his or her particular talents.

In between these two options, the infinite variety of decision-making processes and their administrative structures pose a problem to most administrators: how to choose the one best system. Offering one way to get through the morass of options, Ray Jongeward, an exponent of team management, has published a three-session sequence of workshops. Complete with lecture notes and informational essays, Jongeward's presentation seeks first to introduce the benefits and the drawbacks of team management, then to help school district members "custom design" a management team and to plan and implement an effective evaluation procedure.

Those who initiate a team approach to management would do well to remember the paradox described by Duvall and Erickson. Although the democratic method and team management would seem to go hand-in-hand, these writers observe that the practice of voting on issues generally produces mediocre work and low satisfaction with decisions. It "represents a political rather than problem-solving perspective on issue resolution." More effective are the "Consensus Mode," in which a team wrestles with an issue until every person accepts one solution, and the "Centrist Mode," which has the team providing suggestions and reactions to the one who makes the decision. Following these processes, they add, "does not mean that every person will agree that the proposed course of action is the best," but as Shakespeare says of Cleopatra, they will be able to "make defect perfection."

Evaluating the Team

The universally recognized way to maintain an environment conducive to team management is to establish an evaluation system. In the face of accusations that the team is merely a label attached to the established hierarchical structure, evaluations can promote effective communication and greater trust in both team members and the system itself. As year-end reviews, they can help administrators draw up new objectives, strategies, and performance measures for the coming year. They can also show teachers that their voices have a significant impact in the decision-making process.

These last two uses of the year-end review, as guides to administrators and signs to teachers, appear in the Ohio School Boards Association's methodi-

cal process of evaluation and analysis. With the expectation that the review will be used in conjunction with a self-assessment survey administered at the beginning of each school year, Ohio teams are able not only to measure their successes or shortcomings, but also to see whether they are making decisions as a team and realizing the benefits of the team organization. Teams use the "discrepancy approach" to self-assessment, measuring the actual against the expected to reveal future possibilities and potential problems. By identifying discrepancies, they acknowledge a changing environment and purposely ask the question, "Is there a better way?"

Regular evaluations of the team enhance the ability of members to communicate with each other. This skill, say Bainbridge and Evans, is the management team's single most important ingredient: "We believe that the best decisions are made about the schools only when there is communication among all groups so that decisions can be based on as much information and as wide a breadth of expertise as possible." The result is better, more resourceful educational programs.

Examples of Successful Teams

Although the thoughts of organizational theorists are useful for providing general ideas about the structures and functions of management teams, working team management districts can supply the practical advice that organizational theorists miss. We summarize some of this advice in the following pages, as we describe three districts with successful management teams.

After obtaining our information from published sources and telephone interviews, we found that each team is unique in its organization and operation. Yet all have certain features in common, including a superintendent dedicated to the concept, the division of the team into working subgroups, the lack of a written board-administrator agreement, the separation of principal welfare issues from other district decision-making issues, a decision-making process based primarily on consensus, an organizational structure open to input from all members, and an atmosphere of professionalism and trust that permeates the team.

Yakima, Washington

Over a decade after team management techniques substantially reorganized the Yakima School District (1986-87 enrollment about 11,300 students in 24 schools), educators continue to be quite pleased with the system. "Most educational theories are just that—theories," says Lai _ Petry, the district's assistant superintendent. "We have a management team that works, even though people are always making improvements to it." Born of the need principals felt

after being excluded from negotiations with teachers in the mid-1970s, the Yakima managerial team now provides ample opportunity for principals and other administrators to influence the district's decision-making and policy-development processes.

In its organization, the team resembles a legislative body, with many small groups doing most of the work. "The best-qualified people work on problems in their field," Petry explains. "With, say, curriculum people handling only curriculum problems, we don't have unqualified people making decisions, and we don't have anyone who's bored."

Once a group makes its recommendations, the entire team, composed of seventy-two certified and classified managers, reaches a decision by consensus. Votes on issues are rare. The superintendent reserves the right to make the final decision.

The team prepares salary schedules with a formula that ranks them in the middle of twenty-six Washington school districts, half with a larger student population, half with a smaller. By discovering the average salaries of the twenty-six districts, they can compete effectively in hiring the best educators, and they have a basis for adjustments to their present employees' salaries. "We've developed this formula over the last five or six years," says Petry. "It gives us a good defense against charges from the community that we are paying certain educators too much or too little. And it includes the entire team in salary discussions."

Another technique that encourages the team to participate in policy-making is the use of "position papers." According to Warren Starr, the superintendent who founded the Yakima team, a position paper is a formal, three-part statement that anyone can write on any subject. An opening declaration describes the problem and the philosophy behind the proposed solution. The second part details the solution, and the final section proposes a means to evaluate it. For example, one position paper outlines the process of working out agreements on salaries, working conditions, and related issues. A sample paper on administrative hiring is part of Starr's 1978 article in the *NAASP Bulletin*.

After more than a decade, however, the district has standardized its opinions on most subjects that lend themselves to position papers. "There are fewer position papers these days," Petry says, "but we are constantly revising the old ones."

Part of this revision process is a steady dialogue between subgroups of the team and central office managers. Says one observer: "We deal with the board on an informal basis and use position papers to give us guidelines for our total operation."

Yakima's relatively large, somewhat iconoclastic management team employs techniques that keep it flexible and responsive. Its channels of communication are wide open. "If I were to interpret how a management team ought to operate," remarked a former principal and administrative assistant to Yakima's superintendent of schools, "we would be as close to it as anything

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I've run into so far."

Rio Linda, California

The Rio Linda Union Elementary School District (1986-87 enrollment about 8,000 with 18 schools) started its move toward team management in 1975, when Nick Floratos began his superintendency. As he and several other members of Rio Linda's management team described in a 1978 article, one of his first actions was to appoint a committee of principals and central office personnel "to develop an organizational structure and process that would allow our district administration to function as a management team." Twelve years later, the team's fundamental guidelines remain basically the same.

The organization of Rio Linda's team resembles that of Yakima, with various small groups doing much of the real work and presenting their suggestions to the larger team. When the entire forty-member team gets together, writes Floratos, there is a chance for the "presentation of concerns, questions, and problems"; "decision making by consensus"; and "dissemination of information and sharing of ideas."

There are three types of smaller groups. The most numerous, "area councils," include the principals, vice principals, coordinators, and psychologists of a specific geographical area. The superintendent, deputy superintendent, directors, area council representatives, and classified management make up the "cabinet." And people representing special interests, such as funded programs and curriculum personnel, form councils that identify problems and propose solutions. The meetings of these groups serve, according to Floratos, as a setting for both inservice training and "the support of individuals."

When a problem arises that needs special attention, the management team appoints a "study committee" to examine the situation and make recommendations. Composed of one representative from each area council and one from the cabinet, study committees deal only with problems "that people are committed to," says Assistant Superintendent of Personnel William Murchison. "Since we've learned to separate problems that affect only our own jobs from those that affect the jobs of others, over the years we've had fewer problems to solve. If you bring up a problem, you'll be sure to be on the committee to solve it, and you might even be its chairman. It's a lot of work."

This process, according to Principal Jay Baumgartner, means that the team never votes on issues. But decisions are not based strictly on consensus either. The team, he says, simply "works toward a solution" until they reach a general agreement. "Every member has a voice in the process," adds Murchison. "The solutions are better in general, and better for managers in particular."

Conflicts—when they do occur—are caused by a breakdown in the team's well-defined decision-making process. "The only time we've had problems was when, for some reason, that process was bypassed," says Baum-

gartner. "If the process is working as it should, the study committee's report is not really news to anyone."

A similarly informal system guides the handling of salaries and budgetary concerns, Baumgartner explains. "The superintendent asks for input once a year from the area councils regarding building administrators' needs and concerns. Then he comes back to the councils and says, 'Here's what I can live with and what I plan on giving the board. Do you have any problems with this?'"

The superintendent could never have asked that question before team management came to Rio Linda. Baumgartner and other administrators had to meet on their own "because we didn't feel that we were being involved in decision-making. But that group has disbanded since we've gone to the team," and the district now has no union for administrators.

Of course, teachers have a collective bargaining unit, and one of the management team's most important tasks is to define the district's relationship with the bargaining unit. The team's negotiating group includes a psychologist, two principals, the director of personnel, and the assistant supervisor of maintenance and operations.

When the bargaining unit makes a proposal, the board of education and the district's legal counsel review it first, and then pass it to the area councils. They, in turn, bring up specific concerns to the entire management team. Finally, the negotiations team develops counterproposals, which, after the board reviews them, are presented to the teachers. Following each negotiations session, each member of the management team receives a written summary of the proposals, counterproposals, and decisions.

Once both groups reach an agreement, the negotiations group "provides each member of the staff with a written interpretation of each article to help further clarify the meaning of the terms of the contract," writes Floratos and his colleagues. The group also provides inservice training on contract management and grievance processing. "The end result of this process is a n-tract which has been developed and reviewed by all the management team."

Such well-established channels of communications are, says Murchison, an essential part of the managerial system. Administrators continually ask for the reactions of both individuals and the various subgroups to the decision-making process, and answers receive weighted numbers that help to prioritize future decisions. While some people might feel that the most important result of better communication is better decisions, Murchison believes that it is the atmosphere of greater trust. "We can solve problems more quickly and in more detail," he says. "But even more importantly, the largest group of people, principals, understand our decisions better now."

Another key to the success of team management at Rio Linda is support from the school board. "The importance of an supportive board cannot be overestimated as an imperative in the building of a management team," Floratos stresses. The board must be actively interested in the district's staff and must consistently support the team's decisions.

Both   Murchison and Baumgartner acknowledge that the team

management system requires extra time and effort from each of its members. Principals comfortable just to follow orders may be discouraged by such a process. But that species is unknown at Rio Linda. As Baumgartner concludes, "I could not name one principal in this district who is truly dissatisfied with the system."

Attleboro, Massachusetts

On the surface, the team management system of the Attleboro School Department (1986-87 enrollment 5,500 students in 9 schools) seems to resemble that of Rio Linda. The districts are about the same size and follow about the same rationale in dividing the larger team into small, issue-oriented groups. But that is where the similarities end. Whereas administrators in Rio Linda value their well-defined avenues of communication, Attleboro's management team has succeeded because of what Curriculum Coordinator Ted Thibodeau calls their "low-key" approach. With a roster of only twenty-five members, the team has deliberately cultivated an atmosphere that emphasizes open discussion over process. "It has become," says Thibodeau, "a way of operating."

The team was founded by Robert Coelho in 1969, the year he became superintendent. He had worked in the department for fourteen years as a teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent and had had the opportunity, as he wrote in a 1975 essay, "to observe the system's growth mechanisms" and to formulate some plans for changing its organization.

With two other members of the central administration, Coelho "analyzed the organization's planning, organizing, staffing, directing, control-ling, and evaluating processes against the system's human abilities to communi-cate, make decisions, and solve problems." Coelho and other members of the "central office team" read widely about organizational development, "organic models of organization," and related topics, and they enrolled in courses on human relations, organizational analysis, and decision-making.

Then the team sought "the expertise and use of outside consultants," which was "probably the most strategically advantageous decision by the central team during its early stage of development." The consultants held a series of training seminars on group dynamics, team development, and related topics for building administrators and the central office team.

Coelho emphasizes the importance of this kind of training in develop-ing a climate that encourages new ways of thinking. Training strategies "must aim at changing the entire system, not merely one part of it," he writes. Unless "the culture of the system" is changed to "allow for new ideas and technologies to be introduced and examined, the people and their problems will still exist: the same communication blockages will persist and the same clinging to staid, security-bound values will tend to keep the system" from becoming the adap-tive organization it needs to be.

Coelho's ideas and efforts have grown into a team composed of six subgroups: five councils and a central office team of the superintendent and his

assistants. There is one council—made up of principals, assistant principals, and building administrators—for each of the traditional groupings of grades: K-4, 5-7, 8-12, K-8, and K-12. Every week the central office team meets with one of the councils, while the other four meet by themselves or with each other, as needed. The organizational plan, according to Ted Thibodeau, is "still a success."

Teams conduct their meetings in the same manner. A chairman assembles and organizes the members, a "process observer" attends to the way that they are interacting, and a "recorder" writes out the transactions on an easel so that all may see. Members share these duties to encourage participation and to emphasize the meetings' democratic nature.

Although decisions are made by consensus, the superintendent retains the final authority for them. As Coelho explains, the superintendent "has to answer to the board as the chief executive." Claiming the need for a system-wide view of special subject areas—such as guidance, physical education, art, music, and athletics—Coelho also reserves the right to make unilateral decisions about these areas.

The management team at Attleboro coexists with a principals' bargaining unit, which has existed since the 1960s. At the time of the team's founding, there was no friction between the principals and the central office, and today the relationship is still quite positive. Observers attribute the harmony to the principals' professional attitudes and their desire to deal separately with the issues of working conditions and decision-making.

Choosing not to bargain directly with the principals' group, Coelho leaves this responsibility to other central office administrators. No salary or workir ; condition issues have ever come up at regular team meetings, even though members can place any item on the agenda.

Another sign of the Attleboro team's cohesiveness is that it has never needed a formal agreement between administrators and the board of education. "We never got into the policy statement as a method of operation," Coelho remarks. During the budget cuts of the 1981-82 school year, brought on by the property tax limitation measure known as "Proposition 2 1/2," a tacit professional agreement among Attleboro's educators helped the team work out problems together. It was a "good faith effort of all of us working together to develop the system," observes Coelho.

Conclusion

For decades, reform-minded educators have promoted shared school district management as an alternative to the traditional hierarchical arrangement of district governance. In a few scattered districts, shared management has been a reality for many years, usually due to the leadership of a superintendent who is convinced of the merits of shared decision-making.

In team management systems, the superintendent continues to be the

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one person responsible to the board for the team's decisions and also retains final authority in decision-making. Thus. team management is highly dependent on a superintendent who is honestly interested in sharing decision-making power with middle-echelon administrators.

Beyond these few observations lies territory that, although often mapped, looks different to each new traveller. We have seen many differences in this chapter, not only between theories but between theories and practice as well. Perhaps the main truth that we can glean from the studies and explanations that appear here is that a team can succeed only if its members trust one another. Unfortunately, it takes a long time for that kind of trust to develop, and a school district needs specific plans and strategies to cope with the wide variety of problems that require its employees' immediate attention.

Each of the three districts we have surveyed has a special strategy that nourishes such trust. Yakima has its participative innovation, Rio Linda its highly structured channels of communication, and Attleboro its climate that encourages team thinking and cohesiveness. Other districts no doubt have other ways of supporting the team concept. The strong superintendent who possesses sophisticated organizational skills is one frequently cited example.

The design of the team management system is another important factor in its success. As Lester Anderson states, the extent to which the concept is implemented depends on the skill with which the superintendent and his or her staff design a structure that ensures "a process of open communications among all administrators in the decision-making process." Successful implementation may thus require substantial training of team members in the communications skills required for shared decision-making, a topic addressed more fully in chapter 11.

Beyond all these strategies, however, lies the need for trust and, allied with it, the freedom to depend upon one's intuition. A leader's skillful use of intuitive insights can make a management technique obsolete, or it can lead him or her to implement one that has never been tried. Team members can understand problems more thoroughly if they can intuit the responses of other people to their plans. And the person who wants to experiment with team techniques, even after perusing all the research and all the descriptions of successful teams, must trust his or her coworkers and depend upon his intuition until, together, they discover a system that works for them.