

Research Brief

Goal setting for School Site Administrators

Question: What should be considered in setting realistic goals for curricular and building goals?

Summary of Findings:

“The principal is the instructional leader of the school” has been reiterated and restated repeatedly in the past 30 years. Theoretically this concept is the idea, however, the reality of building administrators’ lives seldom leave appropriate time to plan, let alone implement reasonable curricular and building goals. When an administrator is new to a building, they must immediately learn about the culture and climate of the school as well as get acquainted with the faculty, staff and community leaders. This is a tall order for anyone, yet there are many outstanding site administrators who manage to do it all exceptionally well, make it look effortless and their students make impressive academic gains.

How do they do it?

- Take the time to analyze and write down your beliefs and values about education then share them with the staff, faculty, students and community.
- Review the school’s vision. When was the last time it was analyzed and revamped? Is it an accurate reflection of the current situation and will it successfully guide the school into the future?
- Spend time talking with each faculty and staff member about the culture and climate of the school to gain an historical perspective of the reasons why things are the way they are. This will also help determine what is and is not hallowed ground.
- Ask yourself and faculty essential questions such as: “What obstacles (e.g. schedules, materials, facilities issues, transportation, etc.) are costing us time, energy, and money and are keeping us from operating as efficiently as we can?; How well are we working together as a staff? What can the principal do to help make this a place where everyone feels his or her contributions are important?; What student initiatives has the

school been working on, and what have been the results?" (*The essential leadership model*); What are the stress levels of the recent implementations?; What are the different levels of concern and awareness that staff have?; What are the needs of the faculty?; and What are the needs of the students?

- Make open communication a high priority. Provide ample opportunities for teachers to meet together and share thoughts, ideas and concerns. One suggestion is to have a survey that is completed by the staff and faculty of the good things that happened during the week, issues, concerns and questions. Each Monday a summary sheet of what was submitted is compiled and disseminated to the staff and faculty. These responses can be excellent indicators of the staff's frame of mind regarding specific issues.
- Ascertain and analyze the data on student achievement, attendance rates, discipline referrals, programs, etc. Determine how these meet and do not meet the school's vision, then establish a realistic profile based on the data.
- Determine the next steps based on the profile and establish a realistic timeline where the information has been scaffolded with a rationale for any changes.
- Implement the timeline with frequent yet a realistic review of the programs. Modify as necessary, remembering that substantive change takes three to five years.

Online Resources:

- Brain compatible secondary schools: The visionary principal's role
Considerations for providing leadership to follow a brain compatible learning model are provided in this piece.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200312/ai_n9305201/print
- Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement
This is a descriptive book review on building leadership capacity in schools.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200312/ai_n9305193/print

- Leading schools of excellence in academics, character, and social-emotional development
“In the 21st century, students' character, social-emotional skills, and academic competencies will define school excellence. This article describes characteristics of visionary leadership for such schools based on settings already characterized by strengths in EQ + IQ = Best Leadership Practices for Caring and Successful Schools.”
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200312/ai_n9305218/print
- Making change happen: Share vision, no limits
This book review highlights a few strategies used by a principal in CO to work with the school's stakeholders to bring about lasting and substantive change.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200503/ai_n13453564/print

- Mentoring the organization: Helping principals bring schools to high levels of effectiveness
This piece describes different levels in the change process and issues of which to be aware.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200312/ai_n9305193/print
- The essential leadership model
This article provides a thorough description of a leadership model that moves from meeting the basic needs of a school to making deeper and substantive changes.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200603/ai_n16452258/pg_1

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