

EAD 533 Developing and Empowering Instructional Leaders

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EAD 533: Identifying and Empowering Instructional Leaders

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June 27, 2023

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Analyze the Case

Being a first-year principal is challenging. One challenge can be managing a leadership team that is already established. In this case the leadership team consists of equal representation from each grade level, special areas, content areas, and special education. Currently, there are members who serve on the team that are tenured individuals who are resistant to change as well as less experienced, enthusiastic teachers who have served for one year. These positions have historically been hard to fill and get minimal compensation. The assistant principal has shared with me that the majority of the leadership team would prefer not to be on the team anymore.

It is very evident that something needs to change and action needs to take place. The first thing I would do is meet with the main stakeholder, the leadership team. I would create dialogue to try and understand and gain perspective as to why the members feel the way that they do. This would initially be a group discussion and would then become individual conversations. In the large group discussion, I would expect relatively surface level comments and then I would let everyone know that I will be following up with everyone individually because I want to improve the culture of this team and want each person on the team to feel valued and a sense of purpose. I would then talk with my AP and any other admin that has any background information they can share with me regarding past precedent and how things have operated in the past. After my admin meeting, I would begin meeting with each member of the leadership team and ask them questions such as “Do you enjoy serving on the leadership team?” “What do you like about serving on the leadership team?” “What are areas that could be improved?” “What would you like to see changed?” Meeting with each person individually will help me build relationships, and the questions will help me gain perspective on each individual and how they view the team.

After I meet with each individual, I would determine the next steps. I would consider what is best for students, what is best for the leadership team, how I can honor the past while moving towards the future, and what can realistically be done. Initially, I would like to see change within the first semester. However, depending on what all needs to be done and what steps need to be taken, it could take an entire year.

Identify the Larger Issues

When deciding what needs to change, it is important to remember to respect and honor the work done by the previous year's leadership team. I believe the best way to do that is to verbally express appreciation for the work that has been done. Even though changes may take place, that does not diminish the work that has been done. With that being said, I would still make the necessary changes. If I don't take action, the moral of the leadership team is likely to stay poor. The positions will still be hard to fill and the people on the team will prefer to not be on the team. The positives of not doing anything is that it is easier to not do anything. As a first-year principal, it's more comfortable to keep the status quo and not ruffle any feathers by making change. If I do take action, the negatives are it may be more work, some people may take offense, I may experience turnover amongst the team, and the changes could not work. The positives of taking action are that moral would potentially improve, people would want to serve on the leadership team, the leadership team will have a greater impact on teacher and student success. The other additional information I would need it perspective from the rest of the staff. How do they view the leadership team? Do I have staff members that desire leadership roles? There's extreme value in understanding how the rest of my staff views the team and what they expect from the leadership team.

Action Plan: Steps, Stakeholders, and Challenges

After meeting with everyone that I need to, I would allow any member from the team not wanting to serve the leadership team to resign their position. This will hopefully eliminate the people that have no desire to be on the team. If there are certain people who don't resign that I think should be gone, I would have a individual conversation with them and discuss how we will proceed. Either there are things that need to change, or I will remove them from their position on the team. The remaining people are at least people committed to being on this team. After that, I would communicate to the leadership team that I want them to be more involved in the decisions that are made within the school and I would empower them to change the culture of the leadership team. I would identify ways to make the leadership team attractive, so that other staff members would potentially want to serve on it. I would then create a formal process to become a part of the leadership team. That process would consist of writing a letter of interest describing why you want to be on the leadership team, two letters of reference within the school, and an interview process that would be conducted by myself and the current leadership team. By requiring a letter of interest, teachers will have to reflect on why they want the position to begin with, by requiring two reference letters from in school staff, the applicants must be in good standing with at least a specific group of people, and by undergoing an interview process, the current leadership team feels valued. I will make the final decision, but I will strongly consider the recommendations from the leadership team. One challenge that I may face is nobody wanting to join the leadership team. If that is the case, fine. We don't need to have a large leadership team to start. We will start with a smaller team that will allow for closer relationships and unique opportunities for the people that are on the team.

Action Plan: Support and Professional Growth

Once I address some of the challenges, I then will start the process of trying to make the position attractive to the staff by allowing the leadership team to be very involved in decision making and allow them to make minor changes that they want to make within the school. Once other staff members see the influence that the leadership team has, they may want to apply. My plan to release the current leadership team is to do it one on one and to be very respectful. I want them to know that they are valued, but I also want to put them in a position to be successful and I don't think that position is on the leadership team anymore. By removing individuals, the leadership team as a whole will hopefully feel liberated, and improve morale and culture. The people no longer serving may even feel a sense of relief that they no longer need to serve at a capacity that seems burdensome. PSEL standard 6 states "Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being." (NPBEA, 2015) Although this may be a difficult process, by making changes to the leadership team, I believe I will be accomplishing standard 6.

References:

National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015). Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015. Reston, VA: Author.