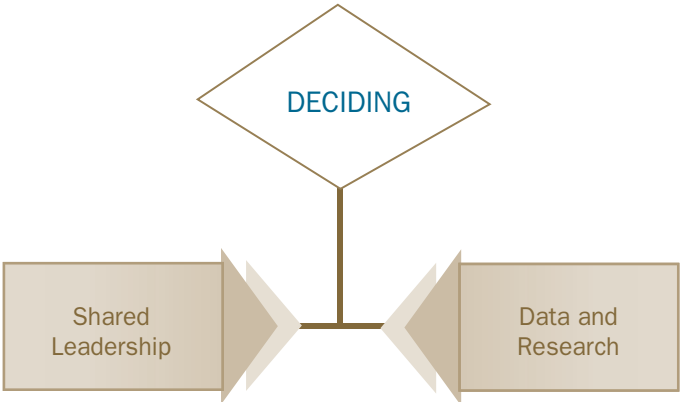


CHAPTER TWO

Deciding—The Executive Function

Decision-making in schools is both shared and hierarchical. The idea of “shared leadership” is that leaders make decisions, and some decisions are best made by folks playing a variety of roles in a school community. To share leadership is to distribute decision-making among the constituencies of the school community, to place decision-making in the appropriate hands rather than to embed it within an organizational position. A desired consequence of shared leadership is to make the school community immune to the disruptions caused by changes in personnel, to provide continuity in the pursuit of goals, and internalization of values, purpose, and practice. Shared leadership contributes to a distinct school culture, broad understanding of and participation in the school’s direction, and access to all the human and social capital that reside within the school community.



Today, states make the ultimate decision about what students should know and when they should know it, at least at the level of minimum expectation expressed as learning standards. Districts make decisions about the basic materials and other resources available to the teacher and the general conditions under which they teach. Districts also flesh out the state’s content standards with their own curriculum guides. Districts and schools together decide how to sort students into programmatic categories, how to cluster and place them. Within the borders of these hierarchical determinations, teachers and their instructional leaders are best equipped to design the instructional process, form and refine specific learning objectives, establish criteria for mastery, plan learning activities, and monitor student learning day to day. To accomplish this requires time for teachers to meet, discipline to stay on course, and external standards to mark their effectiveness. Data-based decision-making (DBDM) includes schedules for teacher collaboration, guidelines for their productivity, and encouragement for them to tap and pool their individual talents. A team structure meets these purposes, again hierarchically, with a leadership team tending to the overall functioning of the system and the continuous improvement of the school, and instructional teams building and monitoring the basic units of instruction. To focus on the engagement of parents in student’s learning, a third type of team includes parents along with teachers.

Computers, databases, software-based management systems, the internet, instructional software, e-mail, and technology-based modes of presentation are tools that make DBDM efficient. They help put the right information in the right place at the right time. They are not the information itself, but a means for organizing, presenting, and analyzing the information.

The Mega System describes three interrelated aspects of decision-making—shared leadership, data, and research. Like the good engineer, those charged with managing and improving a school’s “system” know when to call on researchers for guidance, when to listen to the various constituents within the system (teachers, students, parents), how to understand each part of the system in relationship to the whole, and what data to examine to inform their decisions.

**ASPECTS OF
DECISION-MAKING**

The Mega System describes three interrelated aspects of decision-making—shared leadership, data, and research.

Shared Leadership

Shared Leadership

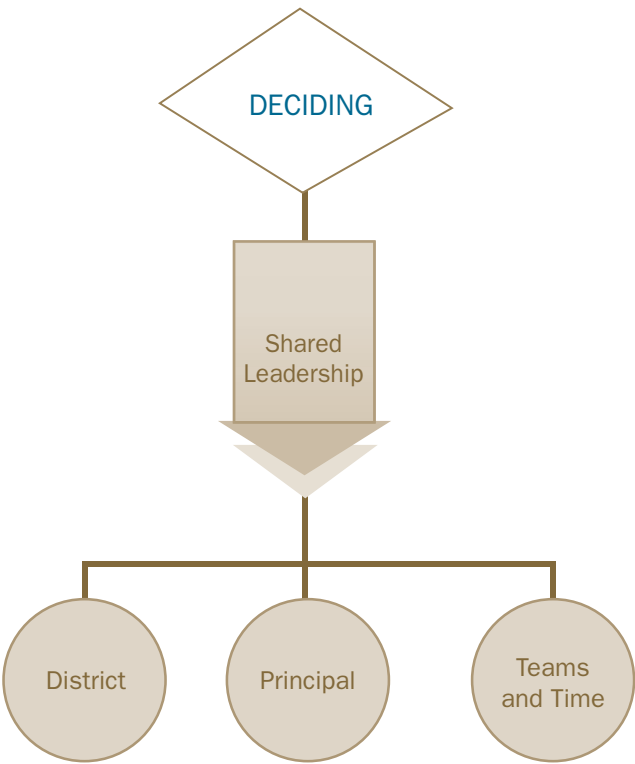
LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

Three leader characteristics critical to building personal relationships that are conducive to effective reform efforts:

- 1) optimism
- 2) honesty
- 3) consideration

Leadership could be considered the single most important aspect of effective school reform.

Robert Marzano (2003)



Robert Marzano (2003) points to leadership as the *sine quo non* of school improvement. “Leadership,” he writes, “could be considered the single most important aspect of effective school reform” (p. 172). Wherever leadership resides—with the principal, team leaders, committee chairs, or central office staff—some personal characteristics are associated with effectiveness in school improvement. As a result of their survey of more than 1,200 K-12 teachers, Blasé and Kirby (2000) identified three leader characteristics as critical to building personal relationships that are conducive to effective reform efforts: 1) optimism, 2) honesty, and 3) consideration. Optimism provides hope during the difficult times that inevitably come with change initiatives. It is defined as the power of nonnegative thinking. The leader acknowledges obstacles but does not portray them as insurmountable. Honesty is characterized by truthfulness, but also by a congruence between words and actions. To sustain a change effort, teachers and parents must have a sense that what they are told is accurate and that there are no important things occurring about which they are not

informed. Consideration is a trait that refers to “people orientation” or a concern for people. Blasé and Kirby note that “considerate principals were viewed as non-discriminating; they show concern for all teachers. They express interest in their teachers’ lives during both happy and sad events” (p. 110). It might be said that these characteristics, which are such crucial components of school climate, are as important as the more technical aspects of school improvement.

As the conductor of culture, the principal attends to both the human elements of the school community and the organization’s pursuit of goals. “The new culture of schools should encourage and expect that a leader will orchestrate a program that includes measurable goals, as well as regular praise and celebration of progress towards those goals” (Schmoker, 1996, p. 105). This mixture of personal support for all the players and focused attention to systemic goals, especially improved learning, is a balanced view of leadership. Marzano advocates for a strong instructional leadership *team* consisting of the principal and a dedicated group of classroom teachers who work together on curriculum and instruction issues. This leadership team also serves as a conduit for communication, ensuring that the views and concerns of all members of the school faculty are represented in decisions. It is his view that “leadership for change is most effective when carried out by a small group of educators with the principal functioning as a strong cohesive force” (p. 174).

The efficacy of team leadership is touted by other education scholars as a means to effectively share leadership and achieve organizational goals. The effective principal works with a school leadership team, sometimes called a site management or learning support team, (Lambert, 2003), to structure school improvement conversations based on the investigation of data that describes present and desired student achievement. Out of this analysis comes goal-setting for the school. Schmoker (1996) encourages schools to set small, measurable goals that can be achieved monthly, quarterly, or annually. Small, measurable successes are the seeds of large-scale success, and can release optimism and enthusiasm, or “zest” as Schaffer (1988, p. 52) calls it. A teaching staff can use this zest to maintain energy for reaching further goals. “Immediate success is essential if people are to increase their confidence and expand their vision of what is possible” (Schaffer, 1988, p. 60). So, a principal’s task is to help the instructional staff focus the goals for both short-term and long-term student achievement. In so doing, the principal also demonstrates skills that help build leadership capacity among teachers.

Shared Leadership

Immediate success is essential if people are to increase their confidence and expand their vision of what is possible.

(Schaffer, 1988, p. 60)

School personnel—teachers, support staff, parent leaders—like everyone else, respond to sincere praise, public recognition, and reward or celebration of accomplishment, both individual and team. The balanced coupling of clear expectations with recognition for accomplishment is essential to effective school leadership (Blasé & Kirby, 1992; Evans, 1993; Lortie, 1975). Leaders who understand motivation know that success and improvement are “every bit as social as they are structural” (Schmoker, 1996, p. 104).

Starting at the Top: The District Connection

Most schools are members of districts or other such larger organizations, and so clarification is needed about which decisions are made at the district level and which decisions are made within the school. The Mega System for continuous school improvement begins when the district and the school construct a letter of understanding. A school is not an island unto itself. District policies and support affect a school's ability to initiate and sustain a system of continuous improvement. Many attempts at school reform have gone awry when the well-intentioned initiatives of the district compete with the earnest efforts of the school for time, resources, and allegiance. The district is most helpful to a school's continuous improvement when:

- The superintendent regularly reports to the school board the progress of individual schools, and each school regularly reports and documents its progress.
- The district designates a central office contact person for the school, and that person maintains close communication with the school and an interest in its progress.
- District policies and procedures support site-based decision-making and clarify the scope of decision-making granted the school.
- District and school decision-makers meet regularly (at least once a month) to discuss the school's progress.
- The district has translated national and state standards/expectations into a cohesive district curriculum.
- Staff development is built into the school schedule by the district, but the school is allowed discretion in selecting training and consultation that fit its current needs.
- Staff development is offered to support staff (e.g., aides, clerks, custodians, cooks) as well as classroom teachers.

- The district provides the technology, training, and support to facilitate the school's data management needs.

A letter of understanding between the central office/district and the school addresses the items listed above and related matters.

The Principal

The principal's role is not only to share leadership, but to build the leadership capacity of others in the school. The principal provides the organizational attention to the school's teams to keep them focused and productive. The principal is the guardian of sound practice and challenger of questionable teaching, but also teaches and encourages others to do the same. The principal is the scheduler and convener, making it possible for teams of decision-makers to meet and perform. The principal is the executor of plans laid by decision-making teams. The principal, most of all, takes time (at least half of the principal's time) helping teachers improve their teaching. The effective principal helps everyone in the school maintain focus and energy in continuously improving student learning. To do that, the principal sets short-term objectives leading to longer-term goals, builds the leadership capacity of teachers, staff, and parents, facilitates the operation of decision-making and work-producing teams, and provides regular and timely recognition, reinforcement, and reward, including celebration for goal attainment. Big job. Sharing leadership is hard work.

The principal, of course, is the “chief” leader in the school, by virtue of organizational position, so the sharing begins with the principal reassessing the nature of that position. This is not always an easy assignment. Depending upon the era in which the principal was trained for the position, the nature of the job was described by graduate school professors in ways that do not necessarily fit well with shared leadership. The position of principal has traditionally been described in purely managerial and bureaucratic terms, one of the hierarchy in “school administration.” Bus schedules, budgets, building maintenance, and careful adherence to the intricate statutes and procedural guidelines of public education were paramount. By the 1980s, the principal's role was taking on a human resources dimension that was, while still managerial in its conception, more attentive to the human capital that resides in the teaching faculty (Flanigan, 1990). More recently, the principal has been portrayed as the fire carrier for the school's vision, the central character in instructional planning, and a collaborator who brought teachers and even parents into discussions about the school's operation (Lambert, 2003).

The principal's role is not only to share leadership, but to build the leadership capacity of others in the school.

Shared Leadership

One of the common misconceptions about leadership at the school level is that it should reside with one individual—namely the principal.

Marzano (2003)

With the rise of accountability, the principal’s role took on a sharper focus—get results. Getting results meant improving test scores. Placing the emphasis on test scores turned the manager into a reformer, and reform was first sought through “restructuring.” Enthusiasm for restructuring abounded. Sashkin and Egermeier (1993) believed that a focus on accountability and the restructuring necessary to get results would make the technical skills and knowledge of the principal highly valued. Restructuring, they wrote, “involves changes in roles, rules, and relationships between and among students and teachers, teachers and administrators, and administrators at various levels from the school building to the district office to the state level, all with the aim of improving student outcomes” (p. 14).

Others, including Michael Fullan (1993), are less enthusiastic, calling restructuring “tinkering,” when what public education needed was “reculturing.” “Reculturing involves changing the norms, values, incentives, skills, and relationships in the organization to foster a different way of working together. Reculturing *does* make a difference in teaching and learning” (p. 9). Schlechty (1990) also agrees that the task for schools of the future is reculturing:

Social structures are embedded in systems of meaning, value, belief, and knowledge; such systems comprise the culture of an organization. To change an organization’s structure, therefore, one must attend not only to rules, roles, and relationships but to systems of beliefs, values, and knowledge as well. Structural change requires cultural change. (pp. xvi-xvii)

Much is expected of principals today. They are expected often to disregard their own professional training and adopt new definitions of their role. How, then, is the principal to know what is fad and what is essential? In fact, as new tasks for the principal are emphasized, old ones are not eliminated. While the principal may now be expected to restructure, reculture, and reform, she must still see that the buses run on time, the gym floor gets waxed, and the pop machines are filled.

Saying that the principal is the “instructional leader” of the school has become cliché. What exactly does it mean? Marzano (2003) points out that “one of the common misconceptions about leadership at the school level is that it should reside with one individual—namely the principal” (p. 174). It seems, however, that one aspect of the contemporary principalship is not disputed: The principal is the

focus keeper, consistently pointing to improved student learning as the central objective of the school. With that understood, leadership is shared among teachers, support staff, parents, and, in some cases, the students themselves in order to achieve that objective. In addition to setting the climate of high expectations for student achievement, 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.

Teams and Time

Leadership within the school requires *teams* and *time*. That is, decision-making groups must be organized and given time to plan and monitor the parts of the system for which they are responsible. This is an immense challenge in most schools, where teachers are available for very little time beyond the hours for which they are responsible for teaching and supervising students. Finding time for a group of teachers to meet is not easy, but it is essential. Different groups or teams of school personnel have different needs for the amount and distribution of time required for them to attend to their responsibilities. Guidelines are provided below for the minimum amount of meeting and planning time required for each team. Additional time is needed for professional development.

The Leadership Team

Some decisions concern the general operation of the school and its continuous improvement. The Mega 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 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.

Leadership within the school requires *teams* and *time*. That is, decision-making groups must be organized and given time to plan and monitor the parts of the system for which they are responsible.

Shared Leadership

PURPOSES

Instructional Teams need time for two purposes:

- 1) meetings
- 2) curricular and instructional planning

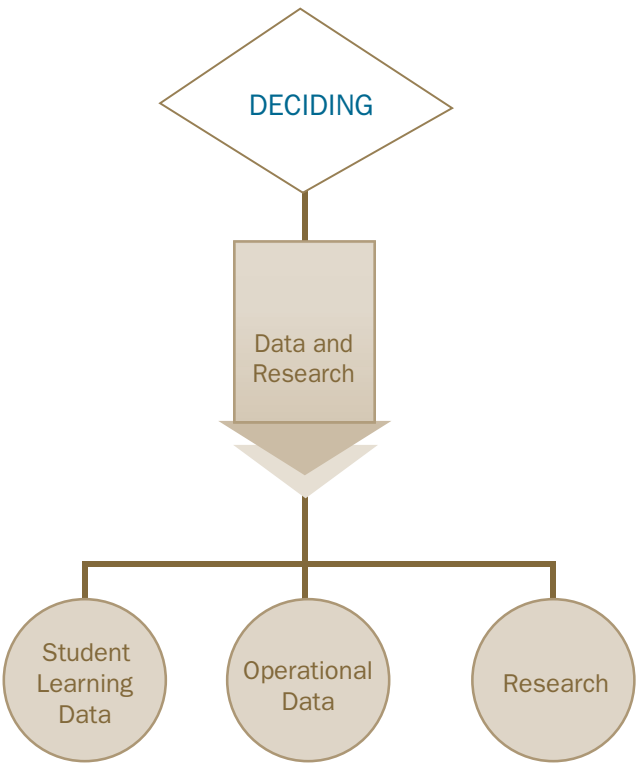
Instructional Teams

Some decisions are best made by the teachers responsible for particular groups of students—grade level teams or subject area teams, which we will call “instructional teams.” Instructional Teams are manageable groupings of teachers by grade level or subject area who meet to develop instructional strategies aligned to the standards-based curriculum and to monitor the progress of the students in the grade levels or subject area for which the team is responsible. Instructional Teams need time for two purposes: 1) meetings, and 2) curricular and instructional planning. A 45-minute meeting twice a month is ideal for maintaining communication and organizing the work at hand, operating with agendas, minutes, and focus. In addition, a block of 4 to 6 hours of time once a month is necessary for curricular and instructional planning, and additional whole days before and after the school year are a great advantage.

School Community Council

A third category of decisions addresses the community of the school—administrators, staff, teachers, students, parents, and volunteers—and focuses on the areas of overlapping responsibility among these people, their relationships to one another, and their allegiance to common educational values. We suggest a “school community council” (SCC) with the principal, counselor, social worker, teachers, and parents as the majority of members. The SCC meets twice each month for an hour each meeting. Because the SCC is a planning or steering committee, it has no staff to carry out its plans. The school designates a professional staff person as “parent education facilitator” to help execute the plans of the SCC alongside the principal. The Parent Education Facilitator typically receives a stipend for assuming these extra duties. Like the other teams, the SCC knows its scope of responsibility and operates with agendas, minutes, and focus.

Use of Data and Research



Information. A teacher can have too little of it or too much of it. A team can spend too much time raking through information that yields no helpful understanding. Timely, pertinent information (data) is necessary to team decision-making and to teacher decision-making. The school improvement plan is the central and coordinating document for organizing information and making good decisions. We distinguish among three types of information: 1) student learning data, which tells teams and teachers what students know and can do; 2) operational data, which tells teams how the system and subsystems are functioning, and how the school improvement plan is being carried out; and 3) research, the evidence gathered from outside the system from the study of published education literature, visits to other schools, and participation in education conferences. Teams, in analyzing both operational and student learning data, in fact, conduct their own research, which also informs the system.

Use of Data and Research

The mind of the teacher, what we call “human capital,” that reservoir holding years of training and experience, is a school’s principal asset.

PURPOSES OF DBDM

Data-based decision-making (DBDM) is a companion to the teacher’s mental artistry, and it serves two purposes:

- 1) to stock the teacher’s pool of knowledge
- 2) to reduce the teacher’s chance of error

Student Learning Data

Within each school on any given day, teachers make thousands of decisions that, in their aggregate, determine the school’s effectiveness in advancing its students’ learning. These decisions are made in real time, on the fly, as teachers mix the inflowing flood of data from their classroom with their own mental storehouse of content knowledge, tactical options, and seasoned savvy to respond to a student’s question, interpret a student’s expression, or assess a student’s work. These decision points are measured in microseconds, their calculation never recorded, their consequences immense. The mind of the teacher, what we call “human capital,” that reservoir holding years of training and experience, is a school’s principal asset.

Data-based decision-making (DBDM) is a companion to the teacher’s mental artistry, and it serves two purposes: 1) to stock the teacher’s pool of knowledge, and 2) to reduce the teacher’s chance of error. Beginning at the essential nexus of teacher-student-content, data (reliable information) help the teacher answer the question: What does a student know? A well-structured system of data analysis places in a teacher’s hands (indeed, in her head) maps with boundaries, limiting the field of the unknown. What do we expect a student to know? What does a student know? What teaching strategies will best serve this student?

State learning standards and their grade-level benchmarks, when sufficiently explicit and rigorous, in part answer the question “What do we expect a student to know?” State assessments based on these standards provide some evidence of what a student knows. But standards and state assessments are far removed from the daily decision-making of classroom teachers. Standards are also better at establishing a floor of expectation for all students than in opening the doors of possibility for a particular student. The school’s own system of data-based decision-making helps fill this gap, netting together the various levels of curriculum content, instructional strategy, individual student mastery, and individual student potentiality.

A good DBDM system harnesses the human capital held by teachers, organizes information for the teacher, monitors the teacher’s practices, and engages the teacher in the continuous improvement of the system itself. For this reason, a DBDM system is more than the information it holds; it is also the structures and processes of decision-making that include the teacher at their center.

Alignment of Standards, Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction

Schools have invested heavily in curriculum alignment, mapping their curricula to standards, benchmarks, and specific items of standards-based assessment. The resulting alignment is a set of data, a body of information carefully organized, that helps answer the question “What do we expect a student to know?” The challenge that lies ahead for most schools is to draw further connections between the aligned curriculum, the taught curriculum, the most efficacious instructional strategies, and the mastery evidenced by the individual student. This must be done in a way that ensures that all students achieve the expected level of mastery while allowing each student ample opportunity to soar beyond that minimum expectation. The linkage from curriculum to instruction is tenuous in many schools, and insufficient systems are in place for capturing information about what is taught, how it is taught, and how it might best be learned by an individual student.

Instructional Practices

The research literature provides a wealth of information on instructional practices, but the usefulness of this information cannot be assumed from its abundance. Matching particular practices to the subject area, grade level, and students’ prior learning can be a massive undertaking, leaving too much unproductive chaff in the bushel of productive grain. In the end, the teacher must hit the target where content, instructional mode, and learner requisites optimally meet. A DBDM system can help a teacher hit the target. Monitoring the application of targeted learning strategies by teachers can help a school refine its professional development processes and improve its teachers’ effectiveness.

Operational Data

Operational data helps the Leadership Team monitor the functioning of the school’s systems. Operational data include:

- **Documents** such as the school’s policies and procedures, schedule, programs, and improvement plans;
- **Evaluations** of the school’s programs;
- **Observational data** collected from classroom observations;

- **Perceptions data** such as surveys of teachers', parents', and students' perceptions about the school; and
- **Proceedings of teams**, including their agendas, minutes, and work products.

The school improvement plan is a good beginning point to establish coherent streams of data to facilitate decision-making. For example, the school improvement plan might include an objective to improve reading achievement by adopting a strategy of reading across the curriculum. Professional development will be provided for teachers to improve their skills in teaching reading across the curriculum. Was the training provided? Who attended? How did the participants evaluate the effectiveness of the training? Do minutes of Instructional Team meetings show that teams carried the training into their discussions and plans? How does the school assess the degree to which teachers changed practices as a result of the training? How does the school determine the effectiveness of the changed practices? Putting all these pieces together depends upon first instituting standard practices and procedures that: (a) link the improvement plan to subsequent activities, such as professional development; (b) maintain records of participation in trainings; (c) gather participant evaluations of trainings; (d) require minutes of team meetings; (e) gather information from individual teachers on changed practices; (f) gather information about short-term effectiveness of changed practices, such as teacher ratings; and (g) determine improvements in student learning that might result from particular changes in practice.

While each of these procedures might be in place, a more common problem is that each is carried out in isolation from the others. Only by bringing the data together, succinctly, in one report or a coordinated set of reports can the Leadership Team put the pieces together and judge the merits of the undertaking. This can be managed by developing for each item in the school improvement plan a brief flow chart that links together the information that will be necessary to make sound decisions about that item. The team might then designate a team member to follow through, collect the information, and prepare a succinct report. In this way, each Leadership Team member shares a piece of the data collection chores, and the team is able to make decisions from sound and focused information.

Use of Data and Research

Research

A good school improvement plan links each of its objectives to evidence of its appropriateness to the situation, its potential efficacy, and its predicted results. In other words, the plan begins on firm footing. The search for evidence begins not with the objective, however, but with the problem that gave rise to the objective. Continuous improvement is a cycle of trying and testing, trying and testing. Each test of an intervention invariably produces a mixed-bag of results, and the difficulties and disappointments become problem statements for new attempts at refinement or replacement of the intervention. Each problem statement requires a review of the research literature. Visiting schools to see, first-hand, how a possible intervention might work is part of the research. Conversations with teachers and administrators from other schools might serve the same purpose. Once the evidence has been gathered, a menu of research-based options is produced. The team selects from this menu, creates an objective and a plan to achieve it, determines the criteria for measuring the success of the plan, and collects the information necessary for making sound judgments.

Having the research conveniently at hand is essential. A file is created for each section of the school improvement plan, and as administrators and teachers find articles pertinent to that section, the articles are placed in the file. When staff members attend professional conferences, they return with satchels of documents that can be culled to select the most convincing evidence to be placed in the research file. Then when an objective is set or modified, or a new problem is detected, the research file provides a starting point to select sound options. The research file should be kept in a place where it is accessible to teachers but can also be kept organized and circulation monitored. The library or school office may be such a place, with someone assigned to maintain the file.

Chapter Summary

Shared leadership requires the appropriate distribution of decision-making among the constituencies of the school community; attention to the human element; the internalization of values, purpose, and practice within a distinct school culture; and business-like proceedings of the various teams. When leadership is shared, the leadership capacity of all the participants must be nurtured. Time for decision-making is essential. While organizing teams and distributing decision-making among them is a structural first step, the principal retains a central role in coordinating the teams’ activities, maintaining focus on the school’s goals, and fostering a culture in which values, purpose, and practices are embedded and not dependent upon the particular players who occupy roles in the school community.

Making good decisions depends upon access to timely and pertinent information—data and research. The principal serves as the keeper of a system of data collection, organization, and presentation, with each team playing its part in the process. Data fall into two categories—student learning data and operational data. Research is tied to identified directions and problems which are often expressed in the school improvement plan.

Putting Decision-Making Components in Place

The forms on the following pages may be used to assess the current status of key elements of a decision-making system and to plan for the development of the missing pieces. A Leadership Team can work through these forms, develop a plan of action, and monitor the progress. For items checked “No” on the assessment of the current situation, primary responsibility is assigned to a person or team, with an expected date for completion of the task.

Decision-Making Indicators

| Assessing the Current Situation | | Adding the Missing Pieces | |
|---------------------------------|----|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Yes | No | Primary Responsibility | Target Date for Completion |
| | | | |

A. Shared Leadership

The District

1. District policies and procedures support site-based decision-making.

2. District policies and procedures support site-based decision-making.

3. The district provides training and support for site-based decision-making.

4. The district provides training and support for site-based decision-making.

B. Data and Research

Student Learning Data

1. The school tests every student annually with the same standardized test in basic subject areas so that each student's year-to-year progress can be tracked.

2. The school tests each student at least 3 times each year to determine progress toward standards-based objectives.

3. Teachers receive timely reports of results from standardized and objectives-based tests.

4. The school maintains a central database that includes each student's test scores, placement information, demographic information, attendance, behavior indicators, and other variables useful to teachers.

5. Teams and teachers receive timely reports from the central database to assist in making decisions about each student's placement and instruction.

6. Yearly learning goals are set for the school by the Leadership Team, utilizing student learning data.

Decision-Making Indicators

| A. Shared Leadership | | Assessing the Current Situation | | Adding the Missing Pieces | |
|--|--|---------------------------------|----|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| The District | | Yes | No | Primary Responsibility | Target Date for Completion |
| 1. District policies and procedures support site-based decision-making. | | | | | |
| 2. District and school decision-makers are connected by frequent interaction, two-way communication, problem solving, mutual coordination, and reciprocal influence. | | | | | |
| 3. The district has provided the school with a “letter of understanding” about the school’s continuous improvement system and the district’s support for it. | | | | | |
| 4. The district has assigned a contact person for the school to serve as a liaison between the central office and the school to advance the school’s continuous improvement. | | | | | |
| Teams and Time | | | | | |
| 1. A team structure is officially incorporated into the school improvement plan and school governance policy. | | | | | |
| 2. A Leadership Team including the principal and teacher leaders from each Instructional Team is in place. | | | | | |
| 3. The Leadership Team meets regularly (twice a month or more). | | | | | |
| 4. The Leadership Team seeks the input of others not on the team, in order to represent all faculty/staff. | | | | | |
| 5. The Leadership Team serves as a conduit of communication to the faculty and staff. | | | | | |
| 6. The Leadership Team shares in decisions of real substance pertaining to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development. | | | | | |
| 7. The Leadership Team regularly looks at school performance data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement needs. | | | | | |
| 8. Teachers are organized into grade-level, grade-level cluster, or subject-area Instructional Teams. | | | | | |
| 9. Instructional Teams meet regularly (twice a month or more) to conduct business. | | | | | |
| 10. Instructional Teams meet for blocks of time sufficient to develop and refine units of instruction and review student learning data. | | | | | |
| 11. A School Community Council including the principal, teacher representative(s), counselor, parent liaison, and parents is in place. | | | | | |

Decision-Making Indicators

| A. Shared Leadership <i>(continued)</i> | | Assessing the Current Situation | | Adding the Missing Pieces | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|----|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Teams and Time | | Yes | No | Primary Responsibility | Target Date for Completion |
| 12. A majority of the members of the SCC are parents of currently enrolled students who are not also employees of the school. | | | | | |
| 13. The SCC meets regularly (twice a month or more). | | | | | |
| 14. The SCC is organized with a constitution and by-laws. | | | | | |
| 15. All teams prepare agendas for their meetings. | | | | | |
| 16. All teams maintain official minutes of their meetings. | | | | | |
| 17. The principal maintains a file of the agendas, work products, and minutes of all teams. | | | | | |
| The Principal | | | | | |
| 1. Principal makes sure everyone understands the school’s mission, clear goals, and their roles in meeting the goals. | | | | | |
| 2. Principal leads and participates actively with the Leadership Team. | | | | | |
| 3. Principal participates actively with the SCC and shows support for its significance. | | | | | |
| 4. Principal monitors the work of the Instructional Teams and helps to keep them focused on instructional improvement. | | | | | |
| 5. Principal monitors curriculum and classroom instruction regularly. | | | | | |
| 6. Principal helps poorly performing teachers to improve. | | | | | |
| 7. Principal spends at least 50% of his/her time working directly with teachers to improve instruction. | | | | | |

Decision-Making Indicators

| B. Data and Research | | Assessing the Current Situation | | Adding the Missing Pieces | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|----|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Student Learning Data | | Yes | No | Primary Responsibility | Target Date for Completion |
| 1. The school tests every student annually with the same achievement test in basic subject areas so that each student’s year-to-year progress can be tracked. | | | | | |
| 2. The school tests each student at least 3 times each year to determine progress toward standards-based objectives. | | | | | |
| 3. Teachers receive timely reports of results from periodic, standards-aligned tests. | | | | | |
| 4. The school maintains a central database that includes each student’s test scores, placement information, demographic information, attendance, behavior indicators, and other variables useful to teachers. | | | | | |
| 5. Teams and teachers receive timely reports from the central database to assist in making decisions about each student’s placement and instruction. | | | | | |
| 6. Yearly learning goals are set for the school by the Leadership Team, utilizing student learning data. | | | | | |
| 7. The Leadership Team monitors school-level student learning data. | | | | | |
| 8. Instructional Teams use student learning data to assess strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. | | | | | |
| 9. Instructional Teams use student learning data to plan instruction. | | | | | |
| 10. Instructional Teams use student learning data to identify students in need of instructional support or enhancement. | | | | | |
| 11. Instructional Teams review the results of unit pre-/post-tests to make decisions about the curriculum and instructional plans. | | | | | |
| Operational Data | | | | | |
| 1. The Leadership Team maintains an accessible file of key documents including the school improvement plan, policies and procedures, schedules, and program descriptions. | | | | | |
| 2. The Leadership Team maintains an accessible file of evaluations of the school’s programs. | | | | | |
| 3. The principal compiles reports from classroom observations, showing aggregate areas of strength and areas that need improvement without revealing the identity of individual teachers. | | | | | |
| 4. The Leadership Team reviews the principal’s summary reports of classroom observations and takes them into account in planning professional development. | | | | | |

Decision-Making Indicators

| B. Data and Research <i>(continued)</i> | | Assessing the | | Adding the Missing Pieces | |
|---|--|---------------|----|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Operational Data | | Yes | No | Primary Responsibility | Target Date for Completion |
| 5. The school routinely (at least every 2 years) surveys parents, teachers, and students (middle and high school) to determine perceptions about the school and their connection to it. | | | | | |
| 6. The Leadership Team maintains an accessible file of the agendas, minutes, and work products of the Leadership Team, Instructional Teams, and SCC. | | | | | |
| 7. The school improvement plan’s objectives are linked to action statements with follow-up monitoring of progress. | | | | | |
| Research | | | | | |
| 1. The Leadership Team maintains an accessible file of research on topics tied to the school improvement plan. | | | | | |
| 2. Teachers report on what they have learned at conferences and submit relevant information for inclusion in the research file. | | | | | |
| 3. Representatives from the school visit other schools to see programs of interest, report their findings, and include the report in the research file. | | | | | |
| 4. Instructional Teams investigate topics of particular interest and report their findings, including reports filed in the research file. | | | | | |
| 5. Teams and individual teachers use the research files to inform their decisions. | | | | | |

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