IMPLEMENTING CHANGES IN INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

By

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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 2012, administrators at a small, rural elementary school of about 80 students sought to implement change. The proposed changes in how instruction was to be delivered left many gaps in teacher/staff communication because they were implemented the week before school started. Faculty began school without understanding the new system and were unprepared for its implementation. This project explored how schools have historically delivered instruction. It also examined business models on how to implement change within organizations. The project resulted in a set of recommendations for schools seeking to implement change in how they deliver instruction.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction of the Project

The purpose of this project was multifaceted. First, to review the research that has been done examining the relationship between how education is delivered in an elementary school, grades pre-K through sixth, and student success. Second, to review current business practices for successfully implementing organizational change. Third, to determine the best method of implementing change in organizations seeking to improve educational outcomes; and, finally, to recommend a process to best ensure a smooth transition.

Rationale of the Project

As schools face budget cuts, they are also confronted with the challenges associated with the recent emphasis on student outcomes and teacher accountability. The way schools are organized has become vital in maximizing limited budgets, maintaining optimal classroom size, increasing teacher effectiveness, and improving student achievement. Therefore, examining how elementary schools are organized to deliver instruction will better inform those charged with making administrative decisions.

Elementary settings generally use a self-contained method where one teacher instructs students in all subject areas. Departmentalization is an organizational structure whereby a team of teachers share the duties of teaching core classes. Dropsey (2004) argues that departmentalizing is a viable approach as long as professional development and in-services are scheduled for teachers and staff. The changes need to be sustained long enough for documentation of effectiveness. Chan and Jarman (2004) also comment that varying degrees of departmentalization have been attempted giving a firm foundation for successful implementation of a full elementary departmentalized structure.

Hood (2009) argues elementary schools are looking at departmentalizing their approach in the hopes of increasing test scores. As testing outcomes become more important for school achievement, administrators are placing highly qualified teachers in the core subject areas to ensure depth of learning in content area material. Documentation of adequate yearly progress (AYP) is a measure that holds schools accountable and demonstrates students are achieving higher standards. In this era where students are tested at increasingly younger ages, the question has arisen whether elementary teachers have the academic knowledge and background to teach students in all academic areas. The rationale is that state certified teachers are highly qualified, therefore, the students will benefit by receiving better instruction from those teachers. All teachers generally have specific areas of strength and interest. Teaching in their area of expertise tends to create enthusiasm about the subject matter. That enthusiasm becomes contagious

and students become excited to learn. Dropsey (2004) contends teachers can be most effective when teaching in areas of strength.

Guiding Questions

The following questions served to guide the review of the literature.

Research Question 1.

What does the history of American education tell about educational reform and making changes in program structure to meet the needs of children?

Research Question 2.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of a self-contained vs. departmentalized elementary structure?

Research Question 3.

What do business models recommend for organizations seeking to make fundamental changes?

Research Question 4.

What steps might be recommended for those in elementary schools seeking to implement organizational change?

Significance of the Project

Teachers/administrators and parents of any elementary school considering program changes need to have a step-by-step process to guide them. Using research based information regarding the proper methods of implementing organizational change in the elementary setting, a process plan will be developed. The results of this project will provide valuable information to stakeholders who anticipate making changes to an existing elementary program structure. The goal

is to provide a better understanding of the benefits and detriments of existing elementary school structures, provide a plan of action to decrease miscommunication, and increase chances of successful implementation using evidence-based best practices.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was twofold. First, to examine the history of schools in the United States and how American education has evolved based upon politics, economics and social concerns. The recent emphasis on high-stakes testing in the current system warrants an in-depth examination of historical change in school structure. Second, to review best practices for implementing organizational change in businesses. The paradigm for schools has changed and schools are now viewed as a business; therefore, applying current research is relevant and appropriate.

Ebert and Culyer (2011) have provided a detailed overview illustrating how the American educational system has evolved throughout the centuries. Educational laws were enacted in response to the perceived needs of the country. For early Americans, providing children a religious education was the driving force of schooling. The textbook was the Bible; students were taught proper conduct and religious devotion. As the nation's needs changed, education evolved and became more secular in nature. Common schools were then

introduced to include poorer working class children. The setting of education continued to change from one-room school houses to primary and secondary schools into elementary, intermediate and high school settings.

The first education law was enacted by the Massachusetts General Court requiring parents and guardians to "make certain their charges could read and understand the principles of religion and the laws of the Commonwealth" (Major events, N.d.). Schools in early Colonial America were sponsored by many different religious organizations because of the belief everybody, primarily boys, needed an education to get closer to God. By 1855, English academies were prevalent throughout the country: however, they were private schools that charged tuition (Ebert & Culyer, 2011).

Even though religion still influenced education, the school curriculum was emerging to provide young men with a more practical education focusing on developing business oriented skills (Ebert & Culyer, 2011). Most 19th century American schooling was in a one-room school house with students of various ages and abilities. One teacher would have the responsibility of 10-30 students in grades one through eight (Turner, 2010). A movement began to expand education to poorer working class children known as common schools (Ebert & Culyer, 2011).

The ways that schools have been organized has continued to change as school administrators considered how to best achieve their objectives. With an influx of immigrants, one-room schoolhouses were consolidated into larger common schools. The responsibility of schools was not only teaching Reading, 'Riting and

'Rithmetic (the three R's), but also becoming responsible citizens (Ebert & Culyer, 2011). In response to this evolving focus, Horace Mann introduced "age-grading" in Massachusetts in 1848. Students were assigned to grades by age regardless of ability differences (Turner, 2010). Schools were organized into primary and secondary levels, grades one through eight and nine through twelve respectively, referred to as the 8-4 plan (Lutz, 2004).

It was suggested in 1888 by Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University, to reorganize this 8-4 plan to "improve college preparation, curtail the high rate of school dropouts, and introduce vocational training at an earlier age" (Lounsbury, 1998, as cited in Lutz, 2004). As a chair serving on the National Education Association's *Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies*, Eliot was instrumental in bringing this idea to fruition. In 1894, the committee proposed secondary education begin in seventh grade. This idea was endorsed by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. Finally, in 1918, the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* advocated the 6-6 plan. Six through twelve year-old educational needs would be better met in an elementary setting allowing for meeting 12-18 year-old needs in a secondary setting (Vars, 1998, as cited in Lutz, 2004).

With the 6-6 plan, it was discovered adolescent educational and developmental needs were not adequately addressed. Wide-ranging individual learner differences were found especially at the seventh, eighth and ninth grade levels (Lounsbury, 1992 as cited in Lutz, 2004). Students at these ages are transitioning into adulthood and would be better served in an environment

structured specifically to their needs. Secondary schools were further divided with a new organization of a 6-3-3 plan. In 1909, junior high schools were introduced in Ohio and California (Lutz, 2004).

Scholars began to question the effectiveness of the 6-3-3 plan in terms of achievement. It was discovered that transition services were not needed as much for the ninth grader as it was for the seventh and eighth graders. Middle schools were then designed utilizing the supportive features of the junior high to address the needs of a younger age group (Lutz, 2004). In the 1950's, some middle schools emerged designed to meet pre-adolescent needs geared for grades six through eight (Manning, 2000).

Just as middle and secondary schools are designed to specifically meet the needs of their respective age groups, the elementary school also had a focus. Many schools chose the traditional self-contained model because "it fit the needs of a simple curriculum and a graded school organization" (Dawson & Lindstrom, 1974, p. 204). Woods (1959) and Lobdell & Van Ness (1963) define a self-contained classroom as one teacher acting as a generalist and having the responsibility of teaching the curriculum to one group of students in a given grade. The self-contained elementary classroom structure continues to be the primary model for American schools today. The main reason being, with one teacher, children could be in a safe nurturing environment.

Chan and Jarman (2004), Dropsey (2004), Lamme (1976), McGrath and Rust (2002), and Woods (1959) cite similar advantages of a self-contained structure. All agree it: 1) promotes a child centered environment; 2) is a more nurturing

environment; 3) helps teachers to acquaint themselves with individual student strengths, weaknesses, personality traits, and learning styles; 4) has flexibility in scheduling; 5) allows for less transition time and therefore more instructional time; and, 6) provides more evenly distributed assignments.

Woods (1959) and Lamme (1976) found that students schooled in a self-contained classroom tended to score higher on standardized tests than those who were not. For instance, Woods (1959) observed up to one year and eight months more growth in grade equivalency. Lamme (1976) argues teachers in a self-contained classroom can have a deeper impact on student reading achievement. McGrath and Rust (2002) looked at not only academic achievement, but transition and instruction time. Their findings agreed with Culyer (1984) and Elkind (1988) that self-contained classroom students spend less time transitioning (as cited in McGrath & Rust, 2002). Woods (1959) found a self-contained classroom more unified because assignments were more evenly spread among subjects.

As with all approaches, there are disadvantages with self-contained classrooms: 1) strained student/teacher relationships; 2) lack of sufficient male role models; and, 3) unrealistic expectation that teachers have expert knowledge in all subjects.

A strained relationship between a teacher and child would not provide a nurturing environment. Then it would be beneficial to have different teachers a good part of the day. It could also provide male students with a male role model during their elementary career, at least for one class (Anderson, 1962).

Those who support the self-contained classroom have always assumed teachers are strong in all disciplines (Anderson, 1962; Chan & Jarman, 2004; McGrath & Rust, 2002; and Woods, 1959). This is not usually the case. According to Ackerland (1959), all teachers do not have a deep understanding of all subject areas (as cited in Anderson, 1962). He reported there were only three areas where over 70% of the teachers felt they were competent in content and method: math, English, and spelling. "Only four of the 260 teachers considered themselves well prepared in all the subjects they taught" (as cited in Anderson, 1962, p. 253).

Most recently, educators have begun to question whether or not educating elementary students in a self-contained classroom is the best way to ensure maximum student achievement. In 1983, a report, *A Nation at Risk,* was released. The authors cited statistics showing a need for an improvement in quality education. The commission recommended schools adopt more "rigorous and measurable standards," and have higher expectations for student performance (Editorial projects, 2004, para. 5). One outcome indicated a need for increased emphasis in standardized testing (Ebert & Culyer, 2011).

In 2001, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was passed, which increased the accountability of public schools to show students meet or exceed grade level standards. This act mandated that schools must meet the academic as well as the social-emotional needs of each child (Rogers, 2012). In an effort to meet this challenge, there has been an increasing shift at the elementary level toward a departmentalized structure. Several studies have been conducted to determine if

there was a relationship between achievement scores and program structure. If the way schools are organized has a relationship with academic achievement, then careful decisions need to be made before changing the program structure.

With this more vigorous focus on academic achievement, some elementary schools are looking to restructure into a departmentalized organization. Over the years, the definition for departmentalization has varied, but in general, departmentalization means students have different teachers for each content area (McGrath & Rust, 2002; Welbourn, (2005). For the purpose of this project, the definition of a departmentalized school is a group of three to five teachers sharing instruction of core classes in grades third through sixth. The remaining classes are the responsibility of the homeroom teacher. Special classes, such as music, art, Spanish, and library are taught one day per week by part-time instructors.

Benefits of departmentalization were noted by several researchers. Andrews (2006), Dropsey (2004), Hood (2009), McGrath and Rust (2002), Welbourn (2005), and Yearwood (2011) advocate this type of organization by stating it: 1) provides students with different teaching styles; 2) covers more of the standards; 3) provides students with more accurate and knowledgeable information; 4) provides teachers with more intense planning time; 5) allows teachers to keep up-to-date in one or two areas of expertise; 6) allows students to get up and move more frequently; and, 7) develops independent and self-reliant students.

The mandates of NCLB provides rationale for changing from a traditional elementary to a departmentalized structure. In response to this legislation, administrators have to make important staffing decisions. Hood (2009) reports

Tennessee is adding algebraic concepts to the state achievement test for fifth-grade. Therefore, the superintendent of schools, Irving Hamer, is looking closely at his district's math qualifications. Out of 351 district fifth-grade teachers, not one had majored in math. This was a vital concern. Because of this, they are trying to determine if they should implement departmentalization to ensure the subject is being taught by highly qualified teachers. Hood continues to report there is an increase in departmentalization across the country to meet the demands of standardized testing. She quoted Steve Peha, an education consultant, as saying, "It [departmentalization] will continue to grow, as the need for high scores in tested grades and subjects increases" (Hood, 2009, para. 4).

To improve overall state performance, principals are paying attention to test scores and reassigning teachers based on their subject matter expertise. In Florida, Cohen-Vogel (2011) found administrators are "staffing to the test" (p. 491). Ten schools were studied and three were changing their self-contained structure to a departmentalized structure in the hopes of improving student performance on test scores, especially in reading, science, and math.

Initial results are promising. Yearwood (2011) concluded her results would add "to the existing body of research on organizational structures" by showing students who are taught by a content specialist can achieve higher scores on standardized tests (p. 119). Hood (2009) describes schools that have made complete turnarounds using departmentalization. A school in Miami went from "a D to an A on the state's school rating system" after implementing a departmentalized structure (p. 3).

Student achievement is not the only factor to consider. Adult/child relationships are also important. Parents and teachers are the primary caregivers of young children according to Yearwood (2011), and their sense of safety and belonging is influenced greatly by these relationships which also affects their cognitive development. She based this statement on the social constructivist theory of Vygotsky elaborating that "the quality of the teacher determines the pattern and rate of cognitive development" (p. 33). The departmentalized setting gives students the chance to relate with more than one adult specialist which promotes learning.

A third factor to consider is transition time. It was assumed because of more transition time in a departmentalized setting, students are losing instruction time. Contrarily, McGrath and Rust (2002) "found no meaningful differences between departmental and self-contained situations for instruction time" (p. 42). Even in self-contained classrooms, teachers and students have to transition from one subject to the next. Both situations allotted the same amount of time for the five major subjects.

Disadvantages of departmentalized classrooms cited by Woods (1959), Welbourn (2005), Lamme (1976), and Anderson (1962) are: 1) lack of communication between teachers resulting in inconsistent workloads; 2) cross curriculum planning is difficult; 3) teachers do not get to know each student well; 4) loss of student materials in transition; and, 5) lack of consistency in discipline.

Woods (1959) studied two similar elementary schools, one using a self-contained structure and the other a departmentalized structure. In the

departmentalized system, it was noted that student workload was not evenly distributed because teachers did not coordinate their lessons. Furthermore, the lack of coordinated lessons also makes cross curriculum planning difficult (Welbourn, 2005). It is a common belief among educators that knowing the child well is of utmost importance. Because teachers are in contact with many students in the departmentalized setting, it is assumed teachers do not get to know every child well (Anderson, 1962). Which may or may not be the case.

Departmentalization may not be a perfect solution, but the benefits are strong enough to look at this educational system as a viable option for academic improvement. There is no conclusive evidence citing departmentalization as the clear best practice. However; the question is not specifically whether to departmentalize or not. The question is: If a need has been identified for change, then, from a business perspective, what are the recommended steps for a smooth transition?

Daft (2007) describes organization as: "1) social entities that; 2) are goal directed; 3) are designed as deliberately structured and coordinated activity systems; and, 4) are linked to the external environment" (p. 12). Many internal and external forces are challenging businesses to seek organizational change and schools are no different. Research indicates common themes related to successfully executing change within organizations. Viewing schools as organizations, what can school administrators learn from the business world in terms of implementing change?

Any organization attempting to implement change needs to follow the same basic procedures. Vaughn (2012) describes three factors that are critical for success when implementing change: 1) engaged employees; 2) effective leadership; and, 3) have business system characteristics that are right for the change. Some characteristics include: supportive organization structures, aligned management plans, and shared data. Kotter (1996) presents an 8-step model consisting of: 1) creating urgency; 2) forming a powerful coalition; 3) creating a vision for change; 4) communicating the vision; 5) removing obstacles; 6) creating short term wins; 7) building on the change; and, 8) anchoring the change into corporate culture. According to Daft (2013), "Smart managers approach the change process mindfully and consistently, planning for implementation and preparing for resistance" (p. 462).

These business models emphasize that management plays a critical role in preparing all stakeholders. They "have to provide direction, create the conditions for effective peer interaction, and intervene along the way when things are not working as well as they could" (Fullan, 2008, p. 49). They should expect some resistance from stakeholders and create an atmosphere of collaboration. Fullan (2009) and Spector (2011) report six reasons employees may resist change: 1) uncertainty; 2) concern over personal loss; 3) groups resistance; 4) dependence; 5) trust in administration; and, 6) awareness of weakness in the proposed change (as cited in Lunenberg, 2010). Delegating duties and creating change teams are just a few ways they can overcome these behaviors. Daft (2013) describes using a *bottom-up approach* whereby leaders can obtain useful ideas from the most

invested stakeholders. It is management's responsibility to be sure all stakeholders are on-board with the change and be open enough to listen to concerns. The make-up of any organization is its people and their relationships. Policies and procedures are nothing if the people working within these parameters are not moving toward a common goal (Daft, 2007).

Historically, the American educational system was required to adapt in order to keep pace with the changing goals of the times. Based on politics, economics, and social concerns, changes are continuing in the educational structure of schools. Schools, as organizations, can learn best practices to implement change by following accepted business practices. Internal and external forces place significant pressures for businesses to seek change. The same holds true for education. Currently, NCLB and high-stakes testing are the reasons administrators are seeking new changes. The stakes are high for everyone involved to improve student achievement and teacher accountability while staying within budget constraints. Administrators are forced to evaluate their programs and implement changes that will make the most improvement in academic performance while not sacrificing student social/emotional development. Implementing change is a difficult process and is often met with resistance. The goal here is to help make those transitions as smooth as possible for everyone involved by learning from one school's experience.

Chapter 3

Case Study

A small, rural school in the Midwest attempted to make the transition from a self-contained to a departmentalized structure during the 2012-2013 school year. A thorough review of research related to this new instructional format had not been conducted. The first year under this new structure was unorganized and chaotic due to the lack of preparedness. Budget cuts were the driving force behind the decision to make the change. In addition, there were other pressures on school administrators to increase student achievement. The need to be held accountable at the federal, state and diocesan levels also influenced the decision to re-allocate resources.

The private Catholic elementary school examined was a pre-K through sixth grade comprised of local school district and parish community members, in a small, rural town with a population of approximately 3000 people. The parish was one of 82 Diocesan parishes which served the catholic community in 11 counties. Within these parishes, there were 25 elementary schools and four high schools. The surrounding area of this particular parish school was comprised of

three public elementary schools, a middle school, and high school. During the 2012-2013 school year, approximately 80 students from 50 different families were enrolled. Due to the low number of students, third and fourth grade and fifth and sixth grade were combined and assigned to the same homeroom. The faculty and staff consisted of an administrator/principal, six teachers, three part-time special teachers and seven support staff including four classroom aides. Additional services required coordination with the local public school system. Faculty and staff were required to follow diocesan rules for curriculum content and minimum number of days of attendance. Due to small school size and limited resources, they relied heavily on the local Intermediate School District (ISD) and public school for transportation, food services, and special services, such as Title I and teacher consultant support.

Prior to 2012, the school had been using a limited departmentalization approach, whereby teachers in grades two through six would trade rooms for one subject. This came about because one of the teachers was a non-catholic. Diocesan rules required that religion class could only be taught by Catholic faculty members. At first, another teacher would take her religion class and she would teach that teacher's science class. Being strong in science, the faculty recognized the benefit of having her teach all science classes and the other teachers took on her other core classes. Initially, behavior issues arose because the teachers were exchanging classrooms and the students remained in the homeroom. A better use of school aides eliminated this problem by having them

monitor rooms during the switch. This is how the school began using individual strengths of teachers for one class per day.

A continual drop in enrollment had occurred over the last ten years, which made it necessary for administrators to combine some grades and eliminate staff. This particular school year enrollment was down 10% mostly for economic reasons as families moved from the area for better employment. Based on student/teacher ratios, the superintendent of the diocese was pressuring the principal to make additional reductions in staff. Continuing with the idea of using the strengths of the individual teachers, the principal recommended in the spring of 2012 that the school adopt a more departmentalized approach the following fall. This would help eliminate uneven class sizes. Now teachers would have the responsibility of teaching specific core classes to combined multiple grades. As classrooms were already combined, the principal decided teachers would departmentalize and share responsibilities to save a position.

Meeting over the summer to discuss expectations for the new structure was neither provided nor encouraged by the principal. Since no research or planning had been done, the teachers had many questions as to how this would work. There were many scheduling issues that had to be considered, but no discussions or collaboration between faculty members ensued until the week before school started. The principal simply expected the teachers to work it out among themselves. As teachers attempted to work out the details, many strong debates resulted. The decisions were not unanimous and there was some confusion about how the whole process would work.

Two decisions were ultimately made: students would transition from room to room and a letter would need to be sent to parents explaining that students would each need an 8-pocket folder to aid organization. In the past, students had experienced difficulty being prepared for class. Therefore, it was suggested students use an eight pocket folder so papers would not get lost in desks. This seemed like an even better idea now that the students were changing classes: they would have all of their assignments with them as they moved from room to room. Classroom aide duties also changed dramatically with this new structure. Instead of working in one specific classroom, they worked with multiple grade-levels within the school.

Once the school year began, a feeling of resistance developed as the three teachers involved were struggling with implementing this process. A chaotic atmosphere was present the first weeks of school for teachers and students alike. This request for an 8-pocket folder was to be communicated to the parents via the homeroom teachers; however one of the teachers did not communicate with the parents until the second week of school. Consequently, during the first two weeks, students were constantly asking to go back to their homeroom to retrieve missing assignments. Teachers were also scrambling to obtain the needed materials for their new assignments. There were constant interruptions during planning time before school started as they popped into each other's rooms to ask for manuals and books. This continued even after the beginning of classes as it was discovered more materials needed to be shared.

Communication among teachers, parents, and students was lacking. Parents wanted to know details on the process and the benefits for their children. However, the only information provided to concerned parents was that teachers would be teaching within their strengths. This seemed to satisfy many of them. Some parents thought departmentalization was too taxing for their children, especially for students in third grade. However, without any supporting research, teachers could only report this was something their principal thought beneficial to the school.

Immediately, carrying supplies and books for the students became an obvious problem. Students were continually dropping books (which the librarian could not tolerate), and dropped pencil holders, water bottles, etc., causing disruption and delays in getting to class on time. Dismissing students from classroom to classroom was also an issue. Some teachers failed to keep track of the time. A bell system was available to signal class changes; however, the principal did not want to disrupt the lower grades which were still using the self-contained model.

Many other problems were arising faster than they could be solved. Because of the lack of communication and leadership from the principal, stop-gap measures became the norm. One such situation that developed was when the faculty initially implemented detention during recess. The fact that teachers were assigned recess duty meant they were not available for supervision. Students owing an assignment in another teacher's room were not staying in because the homeroom teacher was not aware and/or not available to confirm who needed to

stay to serve detention. A conflict in scheduling with nine sixth-grade students who left to attend an afternoon band class at the public school in the district was also identified. Because of the conflict, they could not serve a recess detention. After-school detentions were then posed as an option. The teachers agreed this could be a viable solution and were willing to share after-school detention duties. The principal was approached with this alternative option as a solution and agreed to make the change.

After the parents were informed of the changes, the principal began receiving emails and calls from angry parents. They did not want to be inconvenienced after school. Living in a small rural community where busing is heavily relied on, parents faced new transportation issues. While some parents were upset, just as many parents supported the detentions. Some parents commented they were glad the students were being held accountable. However, the "nays" outweighed the "yeas" and the principal buckled under pressure. The after-school detentions were eliminated.

To solve this issue of late or missing work, help students complete their assignments, and avoid detentions completely, some parents wanted to revert back to the partial departmentalized structure of previous years where teachers moved from room to room. They reported it was too difficult for students to transport the correct books and assignments. On the other hand, teachers felt they would be better able to teach specific subjects in their own rooms with all of the materials at hand. Having the supplies and resources at hand for modeling was vital to good teaching methods and following best practice. Also, the teachers felt that helping

students to be more organized would help them make the transition to middle and high school, as well as providing them with a life-long learning skill. As an added benefit, changing classes provided a much needed break for students, allowing for movement and helped them to "reset" for a new subject.

Compounding the issue was the lack of consistent discipline of students. According to the principal, discipline at the school was up to the discretion of individual teachers. Two of the teachers used a stick method of discipline whereas, one did not. In the stick method, a student who commits an infraction receives a color coded stick: yellow was a warning, red was five minutes of recess owed, and blue meant they lost their entire recess. The third teacher used a discipline procedure where she gave a warning and put the child's name on the board. A second infraction meant a check mark beside their name and five minutes of recess lost. For each additional check mark, the student owed an additional five minutes of recess, but if their behavior improved they could earn back the recess time. The main difference was the check mark method allowed for improvement and redemption. With the stick method, once they received a stick, they had it for the whole day; students had no motivation to improve their behavior. Because of the variations in classroom management methods, students did not know what to expect from one room to the next. More communication and consistency on rules was needed. In fact, the hands-off approach of the administration was the largest obstacle that the teachers and support staff had to overcome.

Although implementation of departmentalization had not gone smoothly, team members of the newly developed program were very happy teaching within their interest and strengths. The lack of communication between parents and faculty and the lack of preparedness of the students continued to pose challenges.

What would have made this transition smoother and eliminated the existing problems? Preparation prior to implementation, administrative guidance, along with staff buy-in is key. Business and education organizational practices will be researched to determine best practice to implement change while maintaining the highest standards for student achievement and success. This project will detail how best practices should be incorporated to make viable organizational changes at any elementary school, not only for the administrators and teachers, but for the parents and students as well.

Chapter 4

Implementing Change

According to Aarons, Hurlburt, & Horwitz, (2011), change in any organizational structure cannot be haphazard and needs to follow a structured plan. They recommend four general phases all organizations seeking to implement change should address: 1) exploration; 2) adoption/preparation of the decision; 3) active implementation; and, 4) sustainment. External and internal forces play a role in each phase. Furthermore, Kotter (1996) has developed an 8-step plan for organizational change that breaks these phases down into logical steps. Each of the four phases will be explained. Following each phase the corresponding step in Kotter's recommended plan will also be described. Additionally, the implications for schools are detailed and recommendations are made regarding the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved. Finally, an explanation of the difficulties encountered by the school which served as the case-study for this project will follow each of Kotter's (1996) 8 steps to help other administrators avoid similar problems and to help ensure a smoother process.

I) Exploration Phase

Exploration involves the identification of an issue that needs attention to either improve an approach or address a concern; for example, budget constraints. External forces such as the need to comply with federal and state mandates can create a need to explore possible changes. Organizational and individual characteristics are examples of internal forces that may prompt an organization to seek changes. According to Aarons, et al. (2011), organizations need to have the knowledge base and the ability to use and share that knowledge. This requires leadership and the creation of a climate right for change. The workforce plays an important role as well. Employees must be able to envision the future plan. They also need to have values and goals to support the change.

As those who are in charge of educational outcomes are faced with following mandates, meeting AYP, and allocating limited budgets, exploring a change in structure is inevitable. Administrators have the task of developing new knowledge and understanding of best practices when exploring options (Aarons, et al., 2011). They should visit other schools that are/or have implemented a similar change (Hord, et al., 2000). Current literature and data collection will aid in this understanding. This additional research will provide information on evidence-based practices (EBP) that will support the proposed plan of action.

Step 1) Creating Urgency

Legislative decisions and budget constraints can leave administration with no other option than to change a program structure. According to Kotter (1996), the first thing management must do is to create a sense of urgency surrounding the

proposed change. He emphasizes when all stakeholders understand the critical need for change, they are more likely to get on board with the proposal. Furthermore, Chan, Terry, & Bessette (2009) state backing up a plan with research-based data is crucial to get that support.

The role played by administration will significantly affect successful implementation (Higgs & Rowland, 2011). They must be well versed in the proposed change and convincingly communicate the need for change to all stakeholders. Collected data should be shared with the school board, staff, and parents emphasizing how the proposed change will produce the desired results. A discussion session should follow the presentation allowing questions, comments, and concerns to be voiced, providing a sense of ownership for all stakeholders.

Although in the case study a sense of urgency was created, no research was provided, so staff were left without complete buy-in. Stakeholders were not informed prior to the change, nor were they invited to be part of the discussion.

II. Adoption/Preparation of the Decision Phase

The agent of change needs to collect current literature on the type of program being considered. This will help in answering stakeholder questions during the approval process. Resources can be obtained through public partnerships and community-based participatory research (Leykum et al., 2009, as cited in Aarons, et al., 2011). Leadership is of utmost importance in creating a facilitative climate and culture necessary to successfully adopt a new plan. The size and knowledge base of employees are two organizational characteristics that

support change (Aarons, et al., 2011). Organizational structure will play a critical role as to whether a program change is adopted or not.

Buy-in is critical from all stakeholders including: superintendent, school board, curriculum directors, teachers and staff, and parents. Innovations are successful when stakeholders are enabled to discuss pros and cons and be a part of the decision-making process (Fullan, 1992a). Curriculum directors, school board members and superintendents should be a part of the process as their continued support during implementation will be needed to sustain the effort.

Step 2) Forming a Powerful Coalition

Once it has been determined that the move is sound, leaders need to build a strong coalition by obtaining employee support and buy-in from **all** stakeholders. Kotter's (1996) second step of change calls these "change teams." Strong leaders will identify key people within an organization who represent all stakeholder groups, both internal and external to the organization. This team will then share ideas, creating a momentum and urgency to propel the proposed change forward.

Planning committees and leadership teams should be formed inviting valuable members of the school organization, including parents and community members. Surveys would be one avenue of gathering needed information. Involving parents early in the process will help them understand benefits for their children (Chan, Terry, & Bessette, 2009). Blair (2000) states it is vital to create a collaborative atmosphere.

The decision to change at the previously examined school was solely the principal's idea with no involvement from the superintendent or school board. Teachers were neither given any options, nor were they guided. Parents were only notified of the changes and were not a part of the decision process. The community at large was not included.

Step 3) Creating a Vision

Preparation for changes requires the creation of a shared vision. By using a *bottom-up approach,* leaders can obtain useful ideas from the most invested stakeholders (Daft, 2013). Using these ideas, all change team members can contribute to produce a common perception of the future program. Specifically, to develop a shared vision that describes where they want to go and how they are going to get there (Hord, Sparks, Brown, Havens, & Calderon, 2000). They emphasize that this shared vision will clearly describe the end result desired.

Principals, in collaboration with other key administrators, must create an environment conducive to change. Teacher and staff need to feel a sense of trust, that they can make mistakes, and be given the opportunity to learn from them (Hord, et al., 2000). Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) state that "principals' visions should be provisional and open to change" (as cited in Fullan, 1992b, p. 20). They need to listen to concerns and address those concerns accordingly, leading through collaboration. Ideally, the whole community should be involved with development. All stakeholders need to feel they will be listened to, respected, and fully a part of the decision process (Hord, et al., 2000). Principals should not mandate a change, but provide workable action plans that create a mental image

of what the school will look like when the reform is in place. Teachers need to understand what is expected of them in the classroom and for student outcomes (Hord et al., 2000).

Teacher expectations were neither clear, nor was the vision for reform. Although the teachers at the previously examined school voiced their opinions, they were not heard. The questions and concerns were not validated and teachers felt disrespected.

Step 4) Communicating the Vision

Management must not only create the vision for change, but must also clearly communicate it to the other participants. A vision for change should be explained in a way that expresses how things will be different in the future. All committee members communicating the proposed change must be concise and consistent giving the same information to all stakeholders (Kotter, 1996). According to Fullan (1992), the vision then becomes common ground and induces greater involvement.

Principals need to be available to all stakeholders to communicate the vision. They must use every available means including meetings, written communication, and personal interactions (Hord, et al., 2000). Once the vision has been shared, budget alignment and support is imperative. Materials and equipment that are required for the new program should be made available. If a school is going to make a commitment to change, they need to be serious about allocating resources for the acquisition of materials and equipment. Everyone

involved needs to know where they are going and have the means to get to the vision (Hord, et al., 2000).

Having taken this step would have helped the case-study school avoid many of the problems encountered during their efforts to implement change. Teachers were not given a sense of ownership resulting in resistance to the change. Many of the roadblocks from parents occurred because of the lack of community involvement and the absence of a shared vision for change.

Step 5) Removing Obstacles

Resistance to any change is common. Fullan (2009) and Spector (2011) cite six compelling reasons for resistance: 1) uncertainty; 2) concern over personal loss; 3) group resistance; 4) dependence; 5) trust in administration; and, 6) awareness of weakness in the proposed change (as cited in Lunenberg, 2010). Employees will be concerned about how the change will affect and benefit them. They may have fears regarding increased workload or job security. Leaders need to be open to questions and comments, addressing their concerns. Discussions and formal group presentations may help them see the logic behind the anticipated need for change. Management must form planning committees for implementation including all team members, as those who are participating in the change are least likely to resist it (Lunenberg, 2010).

Anderson (2011), Duke (2011), and Harvey (2010) cite several approaches to overcoming resistance to change: 1) education and communication; 2) participation and involvement; 3) facilitation and support; 4) negotiation and agreement; 5) manipulation and cooptation; and, 6) explicit and implicit coercion

(as cited in Lunenberg, 2010). Although resistance to change may not be totally avoidable, it can be minimized by using the proper tools and approaches which foster empowerment and inclusion.

According to Blair (2000), staff needs time for on-going professional development and to meet with colleagues. Time is a critical resource and asking teachers for more time may be met with resistance. Some creativity needs to be incorporated. Professional learning communities (PLCs) can help engage teachers in deliberate discussions and encourage collaboration (Blair, 2000). Receiving feedback and support in their efforts will encourage a continued forward movement. There are many ways to motivate the team, some positive and a few negative. Implicit coercion, a method of motivation, has many negative effects including frustration and fear thus leading to poor performance and dissatisfaction (Lunenberg, 2010).

In the experience described previously, the resistance from staff was not addressed appropriately. The vision was mandated, not shared. Because teachers felt coerced, the principal's efforts to implement change were not successful.

III. Active Implementation Phase

Collaboration among planning committee members is crucial for putting the plan into effect smoothly. Taking into account all stakeholders "...affected by the implementation as it takes place... is what makes the reform effort comprehensive and effective" (Hord, et al., 2000, para. 24). When creating a new culture and environment, active implementation takes time and will not happen all at once. The scale of the implementation, whether done in small steps or all at

once, has external and internal factors. Start-up funding, work demands, and client needs all play a role (Aarons, et al., 2011).

Once the climate of the school is receptive to the change, new policies and procedures need to be set in place. Teachers, staff, parents, and students need to understand what is expected of them in the new structure. Educational coaches could be hired to observe classrooms and teachers, providing constructive feedback (Hord, et al., 2000).

Using evidence-based data (EBD), the educational change teams will develop a specific plan with identified steps that will be required. However, a plan should only be used as a blueprint and be able to be modified. Flexibility is important; however, administrators and teachers need clear and concise instructions. First and foremost, teachers' knowledge base should be evaluated to determine where professional development is needed. Implementation constitutes learning something new, therefore, principals need to foster a learning environment (Fullan, 1992a). He states "in-service and professional development in support of specific innovations is usually found to be the critical factor for success" (p. 23).

Step 6) Creating short term wins

Kotter (1996) states giving employees an early taste of victory will encourage more effort and success. Leaders need not only to be on the look-out for these small successes, but need to create them as well. It is important for leaders to offer recognition to personnel for their efforts (Campbell, 2002).

Adopting a new program structure is not a one-time event. It has to be continually evaluated to make necessary changes as additional issues may arise.

Blair (2000) states when school staff get together frequently, there is time to share frustrations, mistakes, and successes. She says “seeing success is a critical incentive during implementation. Celebrating even small successes can be crucial to boosting staff morale and provide tangible results that changes are making a difference” (pg. 2). She observed a school that neither celebrated successes nor did they spend time going over what had gone right in the implementation process. Teacher morale went on a downward spiral with discussions of plan flaws. Showing appreciation for the efforts of everyone involved can be communicated in several ways: in person, in writing, and in groups such as staff meetings. Weekly planning times for teachers should be scheduled and, according to Hord, et al. (2000), "would be the largest show of commitment that the school would make" (para. 42).

Staff were neither provided time to plan or collaborate, nor were there any guidelines or professional development offered. For example, the principal at the school that was observed was approached to eliminate teacher recess duty and allow for a meeting time during the school day. This request was refused which led to more teacher dissatisfaction. The staff were left on their own with no words of encouragement offered. Morale and job satisfaction were declining rapidly.

IV. Sustainment Phase

Sustainment is not only keeping the program at optimal operation, but is also "scaling-up" or perfecting the new system. Leaders need to be supportive in their words and actions and promote collaboration and expertise. To sustain any change, it is imperative to quickly address problems that arise. Monitoring and checking progress can help identify these areas immediately (Blair, 2000).

Aarons, et al. (2011) describe sustainment as "the continued use of an innovation in practice" (p. 15). Administration across all levels must develop policies that can be maintained over time. The innovation will be more successful when a culture of a school values evidence-based practice, leadership encourages team participation for continued buy-in, and teachers and staff understand that they have to learn and perfect a new set of skills.

Step 7) Building on the changes

Building on the implemented changes is imperative. It is suggested by Blair (2000) and Kotter (1996) to collect and analyze data and share the findings with all stakeholders. It is also important to put the findings to use. Data is not valuable if it is not being used appropriately to help facilitate the change. According to Havens (2000), it is important to keep in mind that change in an organization is an evolutionary process.

Fullan, (1992b) recommends when implementing a new structure to "start small, gradually expanding on the successful" (p. 20). With staff meeting regularly, they can discuss challenges and concerns and agree on methods to resolve them. Principals need to continue to provide support and assistance by

evaluating the new structure and processes using formal and informal ways. Formal evaluations, interviews, and surveys of all stakeholders can be conducted and progress updates given. State assessments will also identify what progress students are making. Informally, they should be observing classrooms and looking at students' work. Discussion among change teams should continue.

The principal at the school examined did observe classrooms and review test scores, but did not conduct evaluations, interviews, or surveys. Staff only met briefly in the halls or over lunch to discuss how to handle the problems cropping up. For example, when after-school detentions were proposed, the principal agreed on the solution presented, but parents were not asked how they felt about it. Therefore, when some parents started complaining, instead of meeting with them and explaining the rationale, after-school detentions were arbitrarily dropped.

Step 8) Anchoring the Change into Corporate Culture

Finally, managers need to talk about progress and the relationship between new behaviors to anchor the new organizational structure (Kotter, 1996). Early changes need to be built-on to create a new culture. Celebrating small successes is one way of encouraging the new behaviors needed for change. There should not be any talk of going back to the old way. Instead, embed the new process into everyday events.

According to Dropsey (2004), any program change needs to continue long enough to research its effectiveness. Discussion should focus on moving forward and not giving up until the program has been properly evaluated. Support of the

school board and district is vital in sustaining any program change. Individual schools can maintain progress for a short term without this support; however, these entities are crucial in carrying out the long-term improvement plan (Fullan, 1992a).

When obstacles cropped up with the target school, parents and some resistant teachers wanted to revert back to how it had been done in prior years. In one instance, the parents wanted the teacher to change rooms, instead of the students, as they had in the past. The administrator did not address this and left the staff to figure it out. In some cases, such as the detentions, the principal acquiesced to pressure which continued to make the change more difficult to sustain. In other cases, the principal refused to discuss the concerns and just ordered things to be done and expected compliance. Teacher recess duty was a prime example. The staff had requested to meet during recess for collaboration and sharing; however, the request was rejected and they would continue to have recess duty. No other alternatives were suggested. This would have been an opportunity for the staff to anchor the change and continue to build on prior successes. There was no consistency and although the process had begun, building on the changes did not occur. It was difficult to anchor the changes in the environment of confusion and frustration.

School changes should be a continuous effort. Hord (2011) describes the process as a journey, a continuous effort that will result in "...schools that are better designed for learning success and student achievement" (para. 48). She also explains that schools adopting a change may find they may traverse back and

forth through these phases and steps as they are interactive. One phase does not stop to begin the next (Hord, et al., 2000). Implementing a new organizational structure successfully is dependent on following a sound framework. Aaron's phases and Kotter's 8-Steps offer schools seeking to implement change just that.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Reflecting on organizational and educational change in view of experiences from one school, sheds light on the need for a structured plan of action. Aarons, et al. (2011) describe how external and internal forces, as well as the organization's characteristics, will vary. Characteristics such as school size and qualifications of teachers and staff will be important factors. A shared vision and stakeholder buy-in is paramount. Providing resources, in-service training for staff, and time to collaborate is essential. Positive reinforcement will improve the climate and culture encouraging continued effort. Also, principals need to adopt a leadership style that make them open to questions and concerns. But most of all, a plan must be in place based on the vision for the future and all staff must understand their respective roles. Understanding the dynamics of all these characteristics involved will aid those in administration who are seeking change to successfully implement a new program structure.

The argument is not about what is the best approach for instruction because there is no clear right or wrong answer. However, when a program change is needed, the success or failure will be inherent in the plan it follows.

The dynamics and characteristics of administrations' ability to lead will determine successful organizational structural change. Collaboration, cooperation, and an openness to change are critical, but more importantly, following this framework will increase the chances for a successful program change.

Epilogue

During the 2013-14 school year, teachers and administrators continued to struggle to make the departmentalization approach work, with little success. Therefore, the decision was made to revert to a self-contained model for the 2014-15 school year. The downfall of the program change can be attributed to many factors including the lack of: leadership, vision, community involvement, school board and parental input, plan of implementation, and collaboration. Staff resistance exacerbated the problem. Some procedures had been developed, but the process was sporadic and came from one teacher at a time instead of from a cohesive team. The conclusion can be drawn that had an appropriate plan been in place, and had all stakeholders been meaningfully involved in the change, the program changes that were attempted would certainly have had a better chance at succeeding.

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