Core Function ➤ **High School/ Leadership and Decision Making**

Effective Practice ➤ **Distribute management duties**

Indicator: The traditional roles of the principal and other administrators (e.g., management, discipline, security) are distributed to allow adequate time for administrative attention to instruction and student supports. (5146)

Explanation: The evidence review suggests that principals in high performing schools drive the changes necessary for improvements that accelerate student achievement. In addition, those principals build capacity in other school leaders when school management, discipline, security and instruction duties are distributed and shared. In doing so, the principal becomes the executer of leadership team recommendations. The principal sets and models a student centered focus for key stakeholders including all staff, school board, parents and community.

Questions: How does the principal ensure that her/his duties are shared through distribution to the other administrative team members? What plans/process does the principal employ to assign and monitor distributed leadership roles? How does the principal collect and respond to leadership team recommendations? How does the principal establish, maintain and communicate a student centered focus for key stakeholders?

It may have once been expected for principals to handle all of their schools' leadership tasks on their own. Yet with the ever-growing burdens placed on schools, it is no longer possible for one person to lead a school entirely on his or her own (Von Frank, 2011). Robinson, et al. (2008) talk about the "highly problematic heroic approach to school leadership" and emphasize that all of the different types of responsibilities on a principal's desk – finance, operations, instruction, discipline, and more – are simply too much for one person to manage alone (p. 34). Spillane (2005) says that these stories of heroism from principals actually lead to a distorted sense of what leadership truly is; principals never actually work in isolation to lead a school and its students to success because many other stakeholders contribute their knowledge, skills, and time to the shared mission.

Leadership, in fact, is not defined as a particular person, title, or role. Leadership is also not a compilation of knowledge and skills. It is instead embedded within the interactions between the leader, those who follow or report to that leader, and the situation at hand (Spillane, et al., 2004; Spillane, 2005). Spillane (2005) specifies that leadership is not something done to followers by leaders, but it is instead more of a process that involves many different leaders in both formal and informal roles. It is the principal's job to set the tone and climate by establishing a vision for the school (Robinson, et al., 2008; Von Frank, 2011). The principal then must ensure that staff members are in the best roles to maximize their own knowledge and skills, and that the necessary resources are available to implement the vision (Murphy, et al., 2007).

Murphy, et al. (2007) and Hallinger and Murphy (2013) discuss how principals must prioritizing the many demands put on them according to how each impacts the school's vision for student learning. Tasks outside of instructional leadership – such as management of behavior, finances, and the school building itself – must work "in service of" the teaching and learning happening in classrooms and in accordance with the school's vision. Even more importantly, in order to be an effective instructional leader – by visiting classrooms, contributing to curriculum development, and coaching teachers – the principal must step away from the more managerial responsibilities. These non-instructional

areas of work are still critical for the school to operate efficiently; though they can and often must be delegated, they are still a means to achieving the end goals outlined in the school vision.

Time management and prioritization of tasks must be in conjunction with strategic efforts to build capacity among staff members and thoughtfully delegate work to them. By creating formal leadership structures, such as a leadership team, staff members will grow and develop in their roles, and the principal will be able to share the leadership tasks among them (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). Typical leadership teams include staff members such as assistant principals, instructional coaches, and lead teachers. Because of the wide range of experiences in such a group, the delegation and distribution of tasks should be done according to their areas of expertise. For example, the principal does not need to manage the literacy professional development for the teaching staff, as that can be facilitated by a lead teacher or instructional coach (Spillane, 2005). It is also important to note that a principal cannot have expertise in every area of his or her responsibility, especially when it comes to secondary content areas. It is most logical to share or distribute leadership to those with the content area expertise, with the principal and leadership team overseeing their work (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013).

It is ultimately the principal's job to lead the school, manage the daily operations, and model how to live by the school's vision (Murphy, et al., 2007). However, Von Frank (2011) writes that leadership teams create an environment of mutual accountability for student achievement in a school, so that the principal is not solely responsible. Distributing leadership in this way allows everyone to bear responsibility in the school's goals around teaching and learning of students. Even those staff members and stakeholders without formally delegated roles or tasks can still be given responsibilities and the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns, which contribute to the school-wide efforts but also help to empower those individuals (Murphy, et al., 2007). As Robinson, et al. (2008) found, the more closely tied a principal is to the work in the classrooms, and the more he or she is able to develop and empower the staff, the better student outcomes will be.

References and Resources

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