



Indicator: A team structure for the district and schools is officially incorporated into district policy. (5617)

Explanation: A common team structure for a school consists of a Leadership Team (principal and teacher leaders), teacher Instructional Teams, and a School Community Council (majority of members are parents). Each team has a specific purpose and scheduled time to meet. Though strong teaming practices are indicators of successful schools, without their establishment in district policy, teams can wane or disappear with changes in school leadership.

Questions: Does your district policy specify the team structure for all of your schools? Does it include a description of the teams' purposes and how they are constituted? Are new school leaders apprised of this expectation? How is the effectiveness of your teams determined?

How does a district demonstrate to its schools what is important? They can model what they would like schools to do; they can write into policy what they want schools to do; they can provide resources for what they want schools to do; they can provide professional development for what they want schools to do; they can provide flexibility in scheduling to support what they want schools to do. In the case of building a team structure, all of these come into play. A district must first model in its own behavior the team structure. When a school looks to its district does it see the superintendent and the district staff operating as a team? Or does it see programs and funding streams operating under different goals and sets of rules? Is the establishment of a school leadership or improvement team written into district policy so that as leadership changes in a school this leadership team carries on and is not disbanded with every new principal? Does the district invest in professional development on how to function as a team? Does the district allow schools flexibility in scheduling so that teams—whether the leadership team or teacher instructional teams—can find time to meet?

The importance of teams has been long established in research. Marzano (2003) suggests that “leadership should not reside with one individual; a team approach to planning and decision making allows for distributive leadership. Planning and decision making within the school require *teams, time, and access to timely information*. 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” (in Redding, 2007, p. 101). Perlman gives a quick review of the literature on school change and finds that improvement teams (district and school level) are necessary for school change, “These teams which should have no more than seven or eight members, work with the team leader to create improvement plans and obtain input from and communicate with all members of the school community” (2007, p. 54).

References and Resources

- Marzano, R. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Perlman, C. (2007). Restructuring options and change process. In H. Walberg (Ed.), *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement* (pp. 53–70). Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation and Improvement.

Redding, S. (2007). Systems for improved teaching and learning. In H. Walberg (Ed.), *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement* (pp. 99–112). Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation and Improvement.

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