



Indicator: 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. (5639)

Explanation: Districts establish many lines of communication with their schools, but designation a specific “go to” person for the school is both an efficient aid to the school and a source of information for the district. In some cases, these “district liaisons” to the school may be a part of the school’s Leadership Team, in other cases the district liaison may review and comment on the school’s evolving improvement plan and its implementation. Regardless of the size of the district, central office staff gain great knowledge from this intimate association with specific schools.

Questions: Does your district designate central office personnel to serve as liaisons with schools? How is the role of the district liaison described? What are the expectations for the person serving in this capacity?

The relationship of the district with a low-performing school will require more attention from central office staff to provide support and monitor school efforts. Assistance provided might include, for example, helping school staff diagnose and address problems or temporarily assigning a subject area specialist to the school to work with teaching staff. The monitoring should be ongoing and might include review of data from periodic assessments, site visits, and coaches assigned to the school.

Source: Gordon Cawelti and Nancy Protheroe, In Walberg, *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*. Retrieved from www.adi.org. See Download ADI Publications.

- District leadership must be both a “critical friend” to schools and a buffer to leverage external resources and pressures.
- Central office staff role may shift from oversight to assistance. For example, the human resources department might ask school staff for ways it can better serve schools.
- Maintain the balance between support and pressure to improve.
- Partner central office staff members with specific schools, especially low-performing schools, for intensive work on improvement efforts.

Source: *Module 4 Virginia WebEx PPT* created by Academic Development Institute

Obviously, since teachers and principals will feel the pressure of increased expectations for performance, they should also be provided with resources to help achieve them. Often, this requires a redefinition of the role of central office staff from oversight to support.

One approach would be to partner some central office staff members with specific schools, especially low-performing schools, for intensive work on improvement efforts. Other central office departments, such as human resources,

might have their roles more explicitly defined as service providers for schools, with procedures put in place to assess school staff satisfaction with their efforts and processes.

Source: Gordon Cawelti and Nancy Protheroe, In Walberg, *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*. Retrieved from www.adi.org. See Download ADI Publications.

References and Resources

Cawelti, G., & Protheroe, N. (2007). The school board and central office in school improvement. In H. Walberg (Ed.), *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement* (pp. 37–52). Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation and Improvement. Retrieved from www.adi.org. See Download ADI Publications.

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