Practical Steps to Empower Your Leadership Team
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Would you agree that everyone does not think like you? Would you agree that everyone will not implement and apply educational policy the same way you would? Therefore, as a leader to a new campus, you must teach philosophy to your leadership team through meetings, agendas, conversations, emails, and newsletter information. It is important to get everyone on the same page and involved in their role and assign tasks as quickly as possible.

Establish team meeting non-negotiables. There is nothing like leading an administrator team meeting when the group is seemingly disengaged. Set up a standard at the beginning of each meeting and hold the team accountable to the standard. Under no circumstances are you to deviate. Perhaps you may consider requesting that one person serve as the meeting facilitator. This person would be responsible for reminding the team to keep the meeting moving without side bar conversations and so forth. For example, all team members are to report to the administrator team meeting on time. Secondly, the team is not to be on the cell phone during the meeting unless you ask them to look up something. In other words, they are to be truly engaged and contributing to the meeting. It is a good idea to provide the meeting agenda information in advance of the session. When doing so, ask the team if they would like to add to the agenda. This shows more ownership and consensus among the group.

Every school principal should have a group of campus leaders who are willing and capable of assisting the principal in carrying out the mission of the school. No matter the size of the campus, you as a leader, must have staff who are willing to step up to the plate and lead with the same amount of vigor and relentless push as the principal. In other words, the team must have a sense of urgency that will carry over to teachers and the entire staff.

Let's start with teaching educational philosophy. Share your educational philosophy with your team. For example, if John Dewey's Philosophy of Education appeals to you. Share that and talk about what that looks like in the classroom. Individuals learn and grow through experiences with the world. Interactions increase student learning and development. Shared activities are important.   Experiences are to be meaningful, emotional, and reflective.

Then, talk about your own experiences and what you expect to see in the classroom. Document those accordingly. Talk about teacher walkthroughs and train your team on protocols for walkthroughs. Discuss look-fors and how to document them. Discuss how to provide quality feedback with teachers and how to follow up with them to ensure that it is evidenced the next time the classroom is visited.

Train administrators on how to rank their teachers and provide layers of support for those in need of assistance. Discuss what the assistance will look like and evidence for improvement. Ask the team to be honest and forthcoming.

When ranking teachers it is important to discuss the criteria that will be used to rank the teachers into various tiers. For example, the characteristics of Tier I teachers would be that they provide highly effective and engaging lessons with student understanding turning into mastery of content as evidenced in classroom observations and on tests. This is achieved through lesson design, key questioning strategies, and a conducive learning environment. The criteria will also include solid and consistent classroom management.

Each administrator that is responsible for a department or grade level needs to be able to articulate which Tier the teacher is in and provide a rationale. Also, they need to be able to share supports that the teacher(s) will need to move up to the next tier. Any teacher in the third Tier will need to be closely monitored and be provided with continuous support through instructional coaching. The idea here is to coach them up or coach them out depending on deficit areas.

If you maintain the educational philosophy that all kids can learn. Share that with the team and explain why this is important.

- Loss of Teaching Time; Loss of valuable instructional time – Excuses – Fire Alarm going off; Meaningless Field Trips; Children want to learn and deserve a positive image. Boys' bathroom locked; Don't let others stop us from learning… Attitude
- Entering workforce – Can or cannot work. – Important time is now. Don't waste.

Develop protocols for responding to areas of concern. For example…. Talk about the discipline management issues that have plagued the campus. Ask for the top five. Review those and discuss ways to reduce these as being an issue. For example, students vaping in the open results in a fire alarm two to three times a week. This is a problem. What are we going to do to eradicate the problem? Hear from the team and solicit their responses to resolve the issue.

When attempting to identify the problem, consider using the root cause approach. This is when you ask three why questions for every response. For example, we are catching a lot of students on campus with vapes. Why are students on campus with vapes? One response may be… Students bring vapes because of social influence. Why is their social influence on vaping? There is social influence on vaping because it is marketed, readily available, and some contain THC. What can the school do to reduce vaping? Educate students, parents, and educators about the dangers. Continue to impose consequences.

Thereafter, discuss instructional planning and delivery. Determine what effective instruction should look like on your campus. If teachers are required to write lesson plans, it is important to share how they are going to be monitored. Inform departmental administrators that they are to review these lesson plans and provide a rubric evaluation.

Administrators simply checking to determine if lesson plans are done is a thing of the past. The most effective way to determine if teaching and learning in the classroom is effective is to review previous performance data, attend team meetings, PLC sessions, *evaluate* lesson plans, and observe the implementation of lesson plans/scripted lessons in the classroom via classroom walk-throughs.

If it is discovered that teachers are not writing high leverage lesson plans, then the team of administrators need to discuss how to train teachers on writing high leverage plans or how to write scripted lessons. The goal is to provide quality instruction to students so that they can retain the information and perform well when the content is tested. It is also important that students file away what they learned and maintain it as a part of long-term retrieval. This is best achieved through engaging activities.

Planning is a key to success. Therefore, structured Professional Learning Community (PLC) Meetings are essential for the team to discuss plans, debrief regarding performance data, and talk about what's working and not working. During these sessions, it is important to get the entire team to contribute to the conversation. It is a good idea to get the team invested by asking PLC members to bring artifacts of student work to these meetings. It is equally important to establish an agenda and stick to it using a said protocol for discussion.

Overall, an administrator team will buy in once they see that you are heavily involved in the work and guiding them along the way on how to conduct meetings, how to participate in meetings, and develop plans for team implementation. It is equally important that the team hold each other accountable for the work that is necessary to turn around a school. It is not easy work; however, with sufficient guidance, follow-up, constant data reviews, and implementing action plans with fidelity, it can be done.