Standard 3: Planning and Organization

Reflective Essay

Managing an organization as complex as a school requires proactive planning and positive leadership. The success of a program or instructional initiative on a building level depends as much on the planning as it does the actual execution of the plan. Several important issues related to Standard 3 should be considered: elements of planning, plan implementation, and organization, change, and time management.

Large scale organizations, such as schools, must plan to plan. It's a curious play on words, but extremely important in any systemic change. There are numerous ways to approach planning to plan. A 'goal-mapping' approach could be taken where a group determines what needs to happen with a certain goal in mind. Another approach is a needs assessment. This helps decision making groups clarify what users (e.g. teachers, students, etc.) need in order to execute a plan. This could include material needs, training, or other supports.

The mark of a good leader is often apparent in how they lead staff, students, and community through planning. The elements of planning can change somewhat depending on the nature of the change. As a former systems analyst and a fan of Edwards Deming, I gravitate towards an SDLC (Systems Development Life Cycle) approach. Planning generally follows a process.

When schools make changes it usually impacts the building on a systemic scale, and many times leads to unintended consequences. Realistically understanding the change process, the time it takes, and how people experience it is important to the success of the acceptance and implementation of the change (Deming, 1994). One particularly important aspect of organizational change is anticipating and managing staff perception and response to the plan.

Oakley and Krug (1991) in their book, *Enlightened Leadership*, describe a pattern in how people respond to change. Roughly 20% can be counted as early adopters or those people who will be positive about most anything. The other 80% tend to resist change to some degree. They may be more reserved, but will gradually accept the change in a positive manner. Another subgroup will actively resist change. Administrators who can adeptly handle this through strong relationships, good timing in communication, and proactive planning can successfully manage planning and organization.

Related Artifacts

The George Washington High School Improvement Plan is an excellent example of an artifact related to planning and organization. Approaching 'school improvement' can easily feel overwhelming and can quickly become bogged down through ineffective planning and organization. During our course on the school improvement process, our small group approached this project by breaking it into smaller, more manageable goals – a very important strategy to use with large scale change. In order to stay focused on our goals, we wanted to be clear about the demographics of George Washington High School as well as its history with similar changes. We gathered extensive data on student performance on standardized tests, previous and ongoing interventions supporting student success, and needs assessment regarding improvement in these areas. The result was a straightforward review of the data, existing interventions, and clearly stated directions for change in the needed areas. The document can be used to guide further efforts in the school improvement process at the building level.

References

Deming, Edwards W. (1994). The New Economics: For Industry, Government, Education (2nd edition). Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Oakley, E., & Krug, D. (1991). Enlightened Leadership. Simon & Schuster: New York.