Communication

The foundation for an effective team lies in the development of interpersonal communication skills, as communication is the process by which information is gathered, exchanged, digested and tested.

Information for planning, decision making, or evaluating is widely dispersed within the administrative team structure. No one person within the team possesses or acquires the information necessary to make most decisions or formulate most plans. Within the administrative team are individual members or groups of members who represent areas of responsibility.   These special groupings include individuals, the Cabinet, Administrative Council, elementary principals, secondary principals, and task forces and committees. Certain plans and decisions are unique to each of these groups and are accomplished accordingly, and should be shared with the total administrative team as a paramount effort for maintaining successful communication.

Within the total team, it is recognized individual members make decisions that are required within their jurisdiction and for which the individual is responsible. Occasionally situations arise which might involve the jurisdiction of individual team members or extend to the total team. It is in such situations that information must be shared. Final plans, and decisions, then, may become an individual's prerogative or joint action may become imperative.

Within the total team, then, the roles of responsibility extend from the individual, to specified groups, to the total administrative team. It is imperative that good lines of communication be maintained if the team is to be effective.

Decision-Making

Decision-making is the heart of the process of administration. All other functions of administration can be interpreted in terms of the decision-making process. Real collaboration in administration is impossible without participating in the decision-making process. Administrators, at all levels, must play a part in decision-making if participative decision making is to be meaningful. However, this point of view must be accompanied by a willingness to participate fully in other administrative processes as well. All administrative processes are so interlaced with decision-making that failure of line administrators to participate in other processes can severely circumscribe their individual effectiveness and that of the team. There are a number of sequential steps inherent in the decision-making process.

The following list of possible methods of arriving at a team decision is not intended to be all inclusive, but rather to suggest some of the options available to a creative team. The administrative team may be engaged in defining the problem; a committee or task force can identify alternatives, identify consequences, and seek advice; and, then, after considering the report, the administrative team may come to a decision by majority or consensus. Obviously, then, any combination of administrator or staff participation in the several options is possible. The decision-making model to be utilized is dependent upon the nature of the overall task, the expertise and capabilities of team members, the impact of decisions on the several administrative jurisdictions, the time and resources available and the accountability involved. As previously indicated, team management does involve varying degrees of participation and levels of decision-making, from consultation to final control over decisions.

Perhaps most fundamental to the success of a management team is a clear understanding of the decision-making process. The goal of any decision-making process should be to keep the quality of decision-making constant while varying the dimensions of time, motivation and degree of participation such that the optimal decision-making mode is being utilized.

The crux of an effective administrative team lies in adjusting the proper decision-making mode to the circumstances which surround the decision.

The several decision-making modes utilized in the Cedar Falls Community School District are:

Individual: Each member of the administrative team makes decisions within that member's sphere of responsibility and accountability in accordance with the specific job descriptions. Such decisions may be with or without consultation. In making individual decisions, the administrator should always give consideration to the impact of the decision on other administrative jurisdictions.

Cabinet: The Cabinet is comprised of the superintendent of schools and the directors of business affairs, elementary education, secondary education and human resources. The Cabinet routinely meets on Monday mornings in the superintendent's office located in the Administrative Center. Minutes of said meetings are distributed to each member of the administrative team. The Cabinet may make decisions within their administrative jurisdiction with or without consultation.

Elementary Administrators: The director of elementary education meets monthly with elementary administrators. They may make decisions within their administrative jurisdiction with or without consultation.

Secondary Administrators: The director of secondary education meets monthly with secondary administrators. They may make decisions within their administrative jurisdiction with or without consultation.

Administrative Council: The Administrative Council is comprised of all administrative team members and meets monthly. The superintendent, or a designee, is responsible for developing the agenda and chairing the meeting. Each administrative team member is encouraged to submit items to be placed on the agenda. Agenda items may be either discussion or decision-making in nature and have either a direct or indirect system-wide impact. Decision-making may be by consensus or majority vote.

In the event a decision from the Administrative Council is to be submitted to the board for consideration and the superintendent does not support the position, he/she shall so inform the Council as to this fact. Also, any recommendation submitted to the board may contain a minority report from the Council.

Task Force: The personnel involved with several decision-making modes listed above may wish to appoint a task force to further study an identified concern. The task force shall report findings and make recommendations within the guidelines determined by the administrative unit establishing the task force. A task force does not have decision-making authority.

<u>Coordinating</u>

The achievement of the process of coordination is one of the basic tasks of any administrative body. Like all administrative processes, coordination is closely related to and dependent upon the other processes. Organization puts people and resources into meaningful relationships, but it is through coordination that the organization is continuously monitored to assure that the components are orchestrated to function as an integrated and harmonious whole.

Cooperation is essential to coordination, but coordination is more than cooperation. Cooperation is the determination to work together toward common goals, while coordination is the process of informing people of the planned behavior of others. Coordination may be thought of as the process of unifying the contributions of people and other resources toward the achievement of the institution's goals. Coordination must continuously monitor all activities to assure the team of an integrated and harmonious relationship.

Goal Setting

Goal setting is the first task of any endeavor. We believe that the utilization of the administrative team can help to broaden the consideration of more goals, bring deeper understanding of those goals, reduce the conflict between organizational and individual goals, assess the feasibility of achieving the goals and quicken the administrators' commitment to their utilization.

The importance placed upon the process for the development and ultimate adoption of annual goals for the Cedar Falls Community Schools cannot be overemphasized. The goals establish a course of direction for the institution. They also serve as guide**s** in evaluating the degree of success experienced during the year in resolving identified concerns. Goals are a constant reminder in the determination of priorities and in the allocation of the available resources. They also serve as a master plan for members of the administrative team in developing individual goals that are supportive and consistent with the goals of the school district.

District Goals: Each year, a preliminary list of proposed goals and/or operational concerns will be generated by staff members. This list of issues, together with a written summary regarding levels of accomplishment of the previous year's goals, will be considered by the administrative council, the Board of Education, and the School Improvement Team annually. Proposed district goals for the following year will then be placed in final draft form for official action by the Board of Directors. Copies of the annual goals will be made available to all staff and to patrons of the school district.

Building Goals: Each building will develop annual improvement goals in support of the district's goals.

Individual Goals: It is the responsibility of each administrative team member, in cooperation with the designated supervisor, to determine individual goals for the given school year. The goals are to be consistent with the job description for the given position and the district's goals. The finalized copy of the individual goals is to be submitted to the appropriate supervisor and the superintendent of schools prior to August 15.

Planning

The importance of planning in all types of enterprise is widely recognized. There can be little intelligent direction of activities without planning. Team management involves varying degrees of participation and levels of decision-making, from consultation to final control over decisions. Team members who will be affected by decisions should be involved in the decision making process whenever possible.

Quality planning is essential to success in all phases of administration. Detailed planning in the development of objectives can provide the team with the following advantages: (1) an analytical and logical atmosphere within which the team will function in the future, (2) a commitment toward organizational goals through cooperative planning, (3) a basis upon which to evaluate how well the group is functioning, (4) be proactive, rather than reactive, when encountering conflict and pressure from outside groups, (5) the seeking of opportunities to more effectively utilize human resources, and (6) the fostering of cooperation.

<u>Organizing</u>

Organizing involves the orderly distribution of tasks, and the accompanying delegation of authority and responsibility among individuals and/or groups in order to accomplish the goals of the district. Under the organizational plan for the team, all administrators must clearly understand the parameters of their jurisdiction**s** and the nature of their duties and responsibilities.

Individual team members should be thoroughly familiar with the job description of their position and of other administrative positions. Likewise, a good understanding of the district organizational chart and the team decision-making model will assist team members to discharge their responsibilities more effectively.

<u>Directing</u>

The directing function of an organization is the heart of executive action. Directing, generally, is not a function of an administrative team. Directing belongs with a single administrator in whose jurisdiction an assigned task may fall. Ideal personal capabilities of such individuals include:

1. To delegate responsibility and exact accountability for the results of all efforts at the local jurisdiction level;

2. To motivate, persuade and inspire people to take desired actions;

3. To coordinate and relate people efforts in the most effective combination;

4. To manage differences, encourage independent thought and initiative, and resolve conflict; and

5. To manage change by stimulating positive creativity and innovation and objectives.

When a directing function is delegated to a team member, that person is also given the necessary authority to carry out that responsibility. This function is usually accomplished by an individual administrator since the process of directing is said to be indivisible.

The directing functions of members of the administrative team as stated in their job descriptions are summarized as follows:

- The superintendent of schools, as the executive officer of the Board of Education, is responsible for directing the total activities of the school system.

- The director of elementary education directs the planning, organizing, evaluating, and executing of the elementary education program. The director is also responsible for services relating to guidance and counseling, special education, testing and research, and health services.

- The director of secondary education directs the planning, organizing, evaluating and executing of the secondary education program. The director is also responsible for services relating to guidance and counseling, special education, and testing and research.

- The director of business affairs is responsible for planning, organizing, and directing the operation and administration of the major functions of the business division, and is responsible for planning, organizing and directing the operation of the transportation division.

- The director of human resources directs the management-employee relations program.

- Building principals direct the improvement of instruction and provide instructional leadership to their staff. It is the responsibility of the principals to implement the philosophy and goals of the school district by promoting the best possible teaching for their students and staff.

- Associate principals assist principals in directing any of the assigned tasks as listed in the preceding paragraph.

<u>Evaluating</u>

Evaluation is the process of administration that yields evidence on the quality of the achievement of the institution. It is the responsibility of each of the team members to ensure that the work which has been accomplished is consistent with existing plans which have been developed. The evaluation function involves a responsibility to note the need to adapt the organization to changing events, to monitor, and to measure the success of organizational activities which are directed toward the accomplishment of district goals and objectives.

Evaluating the Administrative Team and the Individual Team Member

All administrative team members accept the premise that they should be held accountable for the efficient execution of the responsibilities delegated to them.

Evaluation of the individual administrator is closely related to the goals setting process. Each administrator sets individual goals for each year which are in addition to tasks which are considered routine.

To determine progress toward meeting the goals, a mid-year conference is held with the immediate supervisor. Principals meet with their respective directors, the directors with the superintendent of schools, and the superintendent meets with the Board of Education. A final evaluative conference is held in June of each year. The major thrust of this conference is an objective analysis of how well the goals were achieved and an in-depth exploration if they were not met.

The evaluation of the team performance should be viewed as team members evaluating one another as well as assessing the overall team operation. An essential ingredient in making the process work is a positive climate which allows the team (individual members and total team) to give structured and constructive feedback about their performance. This feedback requires maintenance of a two-way flow of valid information among members.

In order that the team establishes and maintains a high level of performance, it is imperative that a systematic and quantitative assessment be made of each administrative function as well as of the everyday procedures and techniques employed by the team and by individual team members. This data then must be analyzed in such a way that comparisons can be made regarding the current functioning level and different performance aspects which may be desired.

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