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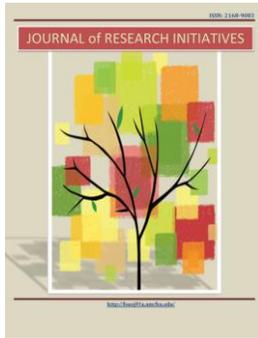
Developing a K-12 School Leadership Plan

About the Author(s)

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Keywords

leadership, assessment, school culture, climate, academic performance, school improvement



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Abstract

This paper aims to develop a K-12 School Leadership plan for public, private, and parochial educational institutions. The K-12 School Leadership plan will give principals, teachers, staff, and students guidelines on operating a thriving school culture and climate and improving academic performance at their educational institutions. I used the pseudonym JFK for the high school examined in this paper. Themes represented in this paper include assessment of ineffective leadership style, school culture, climate and performance, school improvement areas, explanation of leadership style, most effective style to improve school performance, research-based leadership styles, and description of effective leadership style for areas of school improvement.

Keywords: leadership, assessment, school culture, climate, academic performance, and school improvement.

Introduction

In K-12 educational institutions, when a school improvement plan fails, most of the time, the school's principal and teachers are often deemed at fault. The local school district superintendent makes changes and relieves the principal and faculty of their educational duties. Bird, Dunaway, Hancock, and Wang (2013) explain that the intersection of what needs to be done and who will do it varies from school to school. However, in every case, the superintendency is the only job title with positional authority to orchestrate the intentional meshing of actors and script toward future improvement. Teachers, administrators, and staff often must reapply elsewhere for new teaching assignments. This paper will examine an ineffective school improvement plan and introduce a new leadership style that will help to foster school achievement performance through a leadership action plan.

Assessment of Former Ineffective Leadership Style

An assessment was completed of the leadership style implemented to help improve the school's achievement performance, and the outcome was negative. The authentic leadership style used by the administrators did not initiate a solid response to the school improvement plan from faculty, staff, and students at John F. Kennedy (JFK) High School. Fox, Gong, and Attoh (2015) state that K-12 principals exhibiting authentic leadership and teachers who trust in their principals are two realities that are groaning for fulfillment. While the administrators were supportive of their faculty, staff, and students at JFK high school, many times, the teachers felt isolated, confused, and exhausted from their regular duties of teaching, classroom management, faculty meetings, and conferences, which had nothing to do with the current environment of their school. All educational reform reports conclude that educational excellence is impossible without effective leadership (Fox et al., 2015, p.7). The teachers' explained that the principal did not include them in the school improvement plans. Authentic leadership focuses on behavior through positive psychological traits and strong ethics (Northouse, 2016). Authentic leadership may not be the appropriate leadership style to implement for future academic improvement purposes at JFK high school. All these complaints by faculty, staff, and students contributed to the demise of JFK high school's poor school improvement plan.

Assessment of the School's Current Culture, Climate, and Performance

JFK high school's culture consisted of a diverse student population with a multiethnic faculty and staff. The faculty, staff, and students' classrooms are safe, represent positive role models, share diverse views, and have constructive-based learning environments. The school needs resources for current research methods to improve their low-performing students' achievement. The school also needs support for students with special needs and disabilities. Raffanti (2008) believes teacher leaders employ a range of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to earn power and authority from colleagues. Professional development training sessions may help teachers review data among students who are not improving in classes. Some students may need extra help through tutoring or enroll in afterschool programs, including academic enrichment in JFK teachers' failing or poorly performed subject areas. Furthermore, educational grants written by teachers can incur the costs of teachers remaining after school to help tutor their low-performing students at JFK. Few studies have examined how different components of new

evaluation systems might influence student achievement, which are the ultimate goals of teaching (Yoo, 2019).

The school climate at JFK high school is a good, nurturing environment where faculty, staff, and students combine the rules and regulations set forth by the local, state, and national education departments. Fox et al. (2015) purport that teachers sense these administrative pressures. A positive and trusting dyadic relationship between principal and teacher is essential for schools to fulfill their primary purpose of educating students. The administrators, faculty, and staff listen to each other and offer helpful advice to their student body regarding rules at JFK high school. Students participate in the Student Government Association (SGA) for high school students, the voice of reason for suggestions or changes for certain high school events/plans. Teachers rarely need to send students to the discipline room at JFK high school. Instead, the principal ensures the students are having fun while learning and plans refresher scholastic tournaments before state testing begins to help students focus on their academic subjects and skills at JFK high school.

Academic performance is another educational milestone that the principal has planned for school improvement at JFK high school. Busch, O'Brien, and Spangler (2005) describe the standards movement, focusing on measurable student outcomes and accountability, which has resulted in societal demands for fundamental changes in schooling. JFK high school received a C+ on its yearly report card by the state education department. One of the primary reasons for this report card grade is that the principal neglected to get input from the teachers on improving the school's academic performance on standardized testing at JFK high school.

In 1999, Thailand passed an ambitious national education law that paved the way for major reforms in teaching, learning, and school management (Hallinger & Lee, 2013). Also, in the United States, educational reform for K-12 was implemented through the National Department of Education. Similar changes were made for all students' accountability, learning, and teaching. Marsh (2015) explains that the capacity for schools to improve student learning represents an important area of scholarship for policymakers, schools, and scholars. Therefore, planning for school improvement should include all stakeholders in the schools, communities, and local school districts by the superintendent.

School Improvement Areas

I have determined that the areas in need of school improvement are academic performance, professional development, and research for pedagogical methods. Academic performance should be structured through a combination of professional development specific to team teaching, coaching, and new ideas from the department chair of every academic subject taught at JFK high school. First, the lead teacher should mentor novice teachers in their department and academic subject coach to ensure the students learn everything relative to what will be assessed on the state-mandated tests. Second, students must be tutored by teachers who participate in the afterschool programs for academic enrichment. Third, parents must involve themselves in their children's study habits and help them where they are weak in specific academic subjects at home. For example, those parents who are learning English must spend time in the newly created parent-student center at the school's library after school from 4-6 pm. Finally, teachers must participate in one course at a local/online college to complete research for pedagogical methods to enhance their teaching styles. Furthermore, engaging teachers in the design process could create ownership, increasing the likelihood that teachers use the innovative materials in practice (Binkhorst, Poortman, & van Joolingen, 2017).

Explanation of Leadership Style

The transformational leadership style is a compassionate, cooperative, and trustworthy approach that I will implement in my professional duties as an educational leader at JFK high school. Educational leader duties include interaction which is positive, equal, and respectful behavior from my faculty, staff, students, and me at JFK high school. School performance should be shared between faculty and staff to create educational ideas that help to improve the school's yearly achievement scores at JFK high school. Little and Houston (2003) emphasize that unless efforts are directed squarely towards reform within the classroom, improvement in student outcomes will not occur. As an educational leader, I need everyone to buy into the culture of raising standards to improve the school's scores on state-mandated tests and the annual report card. A positive school culture, climate, and school performance ensure that all my students receive instruction, learn, and exchange ideas in their classes at JFK high school. State-mandated testing is required of all students. I need to know if teachers are not implementing teaching styles to enhance the students' knowledge and understanding of core academic subjects in classes at

JFK high school. Principals are increasingly called upon to create open, collaborative, and positive learning communities (Fox et al., 2015). Educational leaders are responsible for changing the culture, climate, and school performance of K-12 institutions. If they are not successful in improving school performance, the local school district's superintendent may replace the principals and faculty. Reform is necessary to ensure that all educational institutions function as diverse, ideal educational organizations.

Most Effective Leadership Style to Improve School Performance

As an educational leader, the transformational leadership style is the most appropriate leadership approach to improve the school performance at JFK high school. Many educational leaders include different leadership styles to engage their faculty, staff, and students in transforming their school's performance. I believe that by working with my faculty and staff, I can change how educators view their teaching positions at JFK high school. I can impart new ideas through the professional development of the core academic subjects by hiring team coaches to work with various departments on JFK's campus. I would bring in motivational speakers who can talk to my students about their future and help to inspire them to perform their best on state-mandated tests at JFK. I would give my administrators under me pertinent information for each grade to ensure change would be implemented on every level at JFK high school. My leadership style would be transformative in all academic areas of the school. I also would positively evaluate my faculty and staff and inspire them to improve their pedagogy styles in classes. As an educational leader, I would claim the name of an ambassador who will lead my school forward in a positive transition at JFK high school. Next, I would be an advocate to support change in all areas of my school performance needs at JFK high school. I would be a people-mover in shaking up fallow grounds in academic areas where my students fail. If I need to find out who has not completed their lesson plans and adapted to the constructivist way of teaching, I will be the truth-seeker in assigning the team coach to work with that teacher to help improve those little areas of concern. As a creative builder, I would make sure my novice teachers use innovative ideas and have a mentor to help them in their first year of teaching at my school. I would like to have a personal mentor who can help, support, and lead me when I fall as an experienced educational leader at JFK high school. Consequently, expectations for school leaders have changed significantly, and school administrators, who previously were primarily expected to manage

organizational processes and facilitate incremental change, are now being held accountable for student outcomes (Busch et al., 2005). In other words, it is not easy working as an educational leader, but I believe my ideas will strengthen, change, and improve the school performance at JFK high school.

Research-based Leadership Styles

Downton (1973) first created the term transformational leadership. Next, Burns (1978) wrote a book, *Leadership* which talked about leadership and followership (p.18). Northouse (2016) defines transformational leadership as a process that changes and transforms people. Transformational leadership is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals, and it includes assessing their followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as human beings (Northouse, 2016). The transformational leadership model is a great choice to help lead my faculty, staff, and students at JFK high school. As an educational leader, I will help transform people, places, and ideas at my school. I am happy to be the chosen one to lead my faculty, staff, and students into the next phase of their journey once they graduate from JFK high school. According to Raffanti (2008), institutional structures may provide further challenges. However, most educational leaders are faced with district budget cuts, layoffs, termination, and retirements of teachers and staff. The challenges of turning around an educational institution mean that sometimes you may not go home early or have meetings with the superintendent regarding changes to school policies after school. Transformation does not immediately take place but over time. Educational institutions are fraught with political and communal ties for educating students in the K-12 sector. The United States government is now requiring educational institutions to meet the demands of the global competition in other countries. For example, in South Korea, the government has implemented various education policies to narrow the achievement gap between at-risk children and those who are more advantaged (Yoo, 2019). Finally, transformational leadership is the most prevalent style of leadership implemented in the K-12 education organizations in the United States.

Description of Effective Leadership Style for Areas of School Improvement

First, I would re-evaluate all areas of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) with my administrators, teachers, and staff to see which areas were the strongest or weakest during the school year. Next, I might ask all the faculty and staff to offer new ideas to help improve the SIP.

Second, as an educational leader, I might ask the teachers and staff to team up in their department by specialization to analyze their instruction, teaching methods, classroom management style, and student outcomes by grade levels. Third, following teaming by faculty and staff, I would ask for a detailed report with new suggestions on how to move their grade level forward in the upcoming school year for SIP. Busch et al. (2005) assert that educational leaders are expected to possess leadership skills to inspire, encourage, and empower individuals to perform at high levels of effectiveness and efficiency.

Furthermore, I would ask faculty and staff to think about our mission, values, culture, climate, and school performance to see how we could enact these specific changes during a four-day workshop on SIP practices as required by the local school district. I would appoint several department teacher leaders to ensure all the SIP practices will be carried out in their academic field. Finally, I would specify how we will function as an educational institution on our last day of the SIP workshop, progressing for the upcoming year at JFK high school. During the aftermath of the SIP workshop, I would tell my faculty and staff that my door is always open for other suggestions regarding the SIP moving forward at JFK high school. As an educational leader, I welcome new ideas and challenges to help improve the school's weakest areas at JFK high school. During the first half of the 20th century, practical wisdom shared by principals, school superintendents, teachers, and parents in the United States conveyed the belief that 'good schools have good principals' (Hallinger & Lee, 2013, p.306).

In the 21st century, educational leaders are responsible for more than just making sure teachers are meeting instructional tasks in classrooms. Fox et al. (2015) explain that societal, financial, legal, cultural, ethical, and bureaucratic pressures are upon principals at an all-time high. So, educational leaders have loads of work to do to ensure their schools are efficiently operating during the academic school year. Many studies have documented problems with areas of school improvement, not only in the United States but in other countries abroad like Thailand, South Africa, and South Korea (Ntuta & Schurink, 2010; Hallinger & Lee, 2013; Yoo, 2019). In education, educational leaders, faculty, and staff have many issues to solve for school improvement.

Conclusion

My assessment of the JFK high school focused on the authentic leadership style implemented by the principal during the past academic school year. The authentic leadership style was a poor choice used to operate both academic and financial duties at JFK high school. The authentic leadership style represents obstacles that people in their journey can overcome. Principals in the K-12 education sector should welcome their faculty and staff input about school improvement plans. As educational leaders, if we are to be successful, then we should include everyone in the rebuilding processes of our school improvement plan. Academic performance, professional development, and research-based pedagogical teaching methods must be included in school improvement plans at K-12 institutions. No faculty and staff should feel isolated, confused, and tired because their educational leader neglected to educate or include them in the school improvement plans at their campus. Administrators should seek advice from their superintendent on establishing good communication with their faculty and staff about existing plans for school improvement. The authentic leadership style was ineffective because it was not flexible and a shared process with faculty and staff at JFK high school.

JFK high school's culture, climate, and school performance were good. However, the multiethnic faculty and diverse student body required more educational progress for underachieving students who may not speak English or live in illiterate rural communities. Also, the students with disabilities needed more support with their IEPs and inclusion in classrooms. Some parents may not be able to help their children with assignments due to language barriers. So, I suggested an afternoon program to teach both the parent/student to learn how to speak English. Some teachers and staff may need more professional development to learn how to instruct students in their classes. The educational climate included a safe, positive, nurturing environment where faculty, staff, and students can obey rules, regulations, and guidelines set forth by the local, state, and national education departments. Last, regarding school performance, JFK high school received a C+ on their annual report card for adequate yearly progress in their local school district. Provisions were immediately in place to build a school improvement plan required by the local school district.

The areas in need of school improvement were academic performance, professional development, and research-based pedagogical methods at JFK high school. These three areas

needed more improvement to bring up state-mandated test scores, district report cards, and teachers' evaluations before a school-wide takeover by the local school district. I remained adamant about how I would like to see these changes take effect at JFK high school for the upcoming year. As an educational leader, I think if all of us put our heads together, we can produce a viable school improvement plan at JFK high school. Parents must be educated on successfully preparing their children to receive instruction and matriculate from JFK high school.

My explanation and defense for my leadership style are relative to my composition as a good, patient, compassionate, respectful, and knowledgeable person. The transformational leadership style fits the composition of what JFK high school should represent for school improvement plans in the upcoming school year. Transformational leadership means that I can successfully transform JFK high school into a four-year magnet or college preparatory educational institution. By including my faculty and staff, I will ensure direct change and improve morale on my school's campus. I want to leave you with my thoughts about the Leadership Legacy Assessment instinctive leadership styles, 1) ambassador –means that I am in charge of everything that could impact my high school days at JFK 2) advocate- I support my faculty, staff, and students in whatever they may need if it is within the official guidelines of the local school district 3) people-mover- I will effect change on my school campus when it is necessary to improve instructional learning for my students 4)truth seeker- I will get to the bottom of all disagreements or opinions of faculty, staff, and students 5) creative builder- I will remember how to offer new ideas or expressions among my faculty and staff to enhance the culture of my school's environment 6) experienced- I elect to have a mentor whom I can talk to when things get heavy at JFK high school.

Finally, my research-based approach was based on early scholars in transformational leadership. Next, I concentrated on implementing my transformational leadership style to improve school performance by evaluating all departments at JFK high school.

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