

Amber Turner

Leadership Challenge

Question:

As I have worked through this class I have posed many questions about shared leadership within my school and how I could increase the shared leadership in my school. As I began thinking about this assignment I did not feel drawn to which question I wanted to take on for the challenge. One morning I was sitting in my “team” time listening to a colleague discuss her frustration with her husband and children when it occurred to me that one of the greatest ways I could impact student learning through leadership would be to establish leadership in our team meetings and help keep the meetings on track with our goals for students.

Prior to this challenge our team time was often wasted with little focus on collaboration, planning or problem solving and a lot of focus was on our personal lives or other issues. That is when we meet, often we simply did not meet because we have “other things” to work on and don’t make time to meet even though it is a required part of our contract. For these reasons I challenged myself to set up a plan in which I lead our meetings to focus on student achievement and outcomes and how to improve our practices.

Background:

I currently teach kindergarten with two other teachers. One teacher has been teaching kindergarten at our school for 21 years. The other teacher teaches developmental kindergarten and has been teaching at our school for five years but has taught at other schools in early

childhood for over 20 years. This is my fifth year teaching kindergarten. I have always been the “young” one in the group and often sit back and follow the lead of the others, which is why I never have spoke up about my concern with the use of our team time. I have always worried about “rocking” the boat or making the other team members feel like I do not respect them as educators and veteran teachers with more knowledge than myself.

All three of us have good relationships both working and personal. Donald cites relationships as essential to shared leadership, “ A new model of school leadership must honor relationships as an integral dimension of leadership” (Donaldson, 37). Because I feel that the three of us have a good relationship I feel that I am ready to move forward to lead the changes that need to be made to make our meeting times more effective on student learning.

For this challenge I plan on using Donaldson’s Three Stream Model: Open Trusting, Affirmative Relationships, Commitment to Mutual Purposes with Moral Benefit and Shared Belief in Action-in-Common (Donaldson 53-39). As a group we do well with the first stream. But, in regards to the other two streams we do not do as well. Our meetings never have an agenda and often there is never a set purpose which is why I feel we get so off track. Rarely is there any problem solving taking place (unless it relates to personal lives).

My Plan

To begin my challenge I first approached my team and spoke with them about this challenge and how I felt we needed more focus and problem solving in our meetings. I offered to get the process rolling by creating an agenda template that we could use as well as finding a protocol for us to follow. Both my team mates were on board, which help with the second

stream of Donaldson's model of commitment to mutual purposes. They both mentioned that they too felt we need more structure to our meetings to improve our focus and affect student learning.

I began my work by researching different protocols in the book The Power of Protocols. I read several different protocols but found one that I felt would be most beneficial to my group. I chose the *Stuff and Vision Protocol*. The *Stuff and Vision Protocol* is geared to "help teachers or teams use material they have uncovered or amassed in order to create well targeted lesson plans or curricular units" (McDonald et al.,44). I do not think that our meetings will always revolve around lesson planning or curricular units, but I felt that the protocol could accommodate other subjects as well. Another reason I picked his protocol is because it is designed to take less than one hour (we have 50 minutes of team time per week) and intended for ten or less participants (we have three).

Here is how the protocol works:

1. Introduction- The facilitator reviews the steps of the protocol. (2 minutes)
2. Vision Input- One participant shares a vision they have. Example from one of our meetings, "I see us using the Aims Web data we collected to create learning groups that push all students forward in their learning". The protocol specifies that this statement can be very vague and in fact that is what is preferred. (5 minutes)
3. Vision go-round- Each team member answers the following question, "What comes to my mind when I think about this vision". (30 seconds each)
4. Stuff in-put- The participant that shared the vision must "show and tell" something to pin on the wall, pass out, etc, but not offer teaching ideas. This step is to invite design ideas from the other members of the team. (5-10 minutes)

5. Questions-the team asks question about how the vision sharer would like to see the plan play out. The vision sharer takes notes on the questions but stays silent until all questions are asked. (10 minutes)
6. Response-The vision sharer responds to questions. (2 minutes)
7. Designing on the spot- Everyone in the group takes turns sharing their idea of how to design a plan to meet the vision. No one should repeat the same ideas-the goal is to get several ideas to expand from. (10 minutes)
8. Open conversation- Everyone has a chance to share their thoughts on the ideas presented. (10 minutes)

Reflection-the visions sharer shares how he sees the vision moving forward. (5 minutes).

(McDonald, Mohr, Dichter & McDonald, 2003)

*This protocol is not perfect for what I had in mind but I found it to be the best one I researched for our team and the goals I had in mind for our team.

After establishing a protocol that I felt would work with our team I created an agenda that I felt would help us stay on track. I have attached that at the end of this paper. The agenda was designed to be used to keep us on track and be a space for each of us to take notes if we felt needed. The agenda included a job for each member-the vision sharer, the time keeper and the note taker this was one more way I felt leadership could be shared.

Implementation

I supplied the members of my team with a copy of the protocol and with an agenda for them to review and provide feedback on prior to our first team meeting in which I planned on using these tools. The team was satisfied with the protocol I chose as well as the agenda I created. It was decided we would begin this process at our next team meeting and for that meeting I would be the presenter (vision sharer).

My team used the protocol and agenda three times in the process of me working on my leadership challenge. One of my main goals for this challenge was to take on the leadership role and get a protocol and agenda established, but then each member of the team take turns sharing the lead. I feel we are on the road to sharing the leadership of the meetings (presenter,vision sharer). So far I have been the presenter (vision sharer) twice and one of my team mates took that role once. The other team member is scheduled to take the presenter role at our next meeting. As well as sharing the role of presenter we are also taking turns being the time keeper and note taker. By providing everyone with a job within meeting shared leadership is fostered even more.

Challenges

I encountered a couple of challenges during this process. One of the biggest challenges was relationship building in terms of providing the three of us with times outside of our team time to meet and chat about life so that our team time could remain focused on student learning and goals. All three of us enjoy each other's company but have very different schedules making meeting outside the work day very challenging. Two of us prefer to be at school early to chat and get work done where the other does not come into work until the students are arriving and prefers to stay after the students leave. It was also challenging to arrange meetings outside of work because of our varying life commitments. The easiest and best time to get together and enjoy each other's company was lunch but even that proved to be a challenge because of unexpected meetings, parent phone calls, student issues or personal matters that need to be attended to. Two of the team members often take a walk with each

other on lunch while I often need to work on assignments or readings for my masters program due to a lack of time in the evenings since I have a young child at home. We are making a commitment to eat lunch with each other at least once per week and stop in and visit each other when time allows. As stated by Donaldson relationship building is key to shared leadership so this will need to be a continuous effort on all of our parts.

The second challenge I faced was getting everyone to our meetings on time. For each meeting time I had to hunt down one of the other team mates and remind them that we were meeting and had made a commitment to this process. The ladies were always really kind and came as soon as they were reminded but I did decide after the second time of having to find and remind one of my teammates that I would use the Situation-Behavior-Impact feedback protocol provided within class. I waited until after our meeting and one on one I simply said, "Sue, I have had to remind you of our meetings a couple of times. When you are late I feel frustrated because we do not have time to follow the protocol and things get left hanging". My teammate was very open to this and apologized and arrived on time to the next meeting. That is not to say she will not be late again, but at least I found a tool to communicate how her behavior impacts me.

Reflection

I can say without a doubt that I am pleased with the outcome of this challenge. My biggest concern was keeping the group focused and on task and I am pleased to say that this has not been a problem, once I got everyone together we really did well staying focused. I feel we have now established expectations for our meetings, a protocol to keep us on track and in

turn are working together more successful and impacting our students to a higher degree. I am pleased that my teammates have taken to the new protocol and agenda as well as they are willing to share the leadership role. I feel that we are doing a much better job modeling Donaldson's model of shared leadership which pleases me since his model has been proven to work.

My current goal is to continue to keep us focused and if we begin to slip back to our old ways I will take the lead and bring us back to the protocol and agenda. Without a doubt the best thing for us, the teachers and the students is constructive use of our team time, which we have found through this challenge.

Kindergarten Team Meeting Agenda

Date:

Roles-

Presenter:

Note Taker

Time Keeper:

Implementation of Protocol:

1. Introduction (2 minutes)
2. Vision Input (5 minutes)
3. Vision go-round (30 seconds each)
4. Stuff in-put(5-10 minutes)
5. Questions (10 minutes)
6. Respons (2 minutes)
7. Designing on the spot (10 minutes)
8. Open conversation (10 minutes)
9. Reflection (5 minutes).

Debriefing:

Discussion of who will be presenter next meeting:

References

Donaldson, G. (2006). *Cultivating leadership in schools*. (2 ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

McDonald, J., Mohr, N., Dichter, A., & McDonald, E. (2003). *The power of protocols*. New York: Teachers College Press