Creating Instructional Leadership Teams for Complex System Success

One District’s Narrative
Walk a Mile in Our Moccasins

• You can not know us until you have walked a mile in our shoes, or, like many districts, ours is a story of stops and starts:
  
  o One time a thriving district, one of the largest in Pennsylvania
  o Home to two Naval bases, without a single coast in sight
  o Home of the Apollo Centrifuge and Training Center
  o Thirteen elementary schools/two high schools down to six and one
  o Ground zero for Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)
  o Greying of the community
The Last Decade

- Seven Superintendents in 10 years
- Leadership churn at all levels
- Common Core? What is that?
- Last real curriculum efforts were in 2002 and 2004
- Pennsylvania Common Core was the last nail in community trust
- Teachers working harder and harder and falling further and further behind
Two Constants: The Board and the Teachers

• 21st Century fiscal realities define decision making
• Consolidation begins: schools closing and consolidating
• Trust becomes an issue
• Children of the consolidation moving through the system
• Switch paradigms in 2015 – it is not the programs – it is the people
Teachers

- Slowly slide into survival mode
- Association provides institutional memory to new Administrators
- Teachers begin to emerge from survival mode and be encouraged to:
  - Participate in decision making
  - Develop leadership expertise
  - Be nurtured by Administration and Board
  - Work together, it is too complicated to do alone
  - Debunked the myth of the lone hero
  - Emphasize teamwork
  - Recognize and tolerate growing pains
Board and Administration

• Board supports new Administration
• Administration struggles to find fit with “tight and loose” approach
• Overarching goal is to thrive beyond survive
• Distributed Leadership teams are formed in each school for 2016-2017
• Continue to struggle with new paradigm – growing pains include:
  o Roles
  o Goals
  o Pulling the weeds
  o Initiative fatigue
Distributed Leadership Teams

- Common articulated goals
- Focus on Teaching and Learning – not the “Fad Du Jour”
- Common ground/common good
- Recognize the current churn factor of Administrators and a model designed to address the churn and create a “Centennial Way” of Teaching and Learning
- Teachers remain the constant
- Desire to develop people and create bench depth
Distributed Leadership Teams

- Fiscal and administrative support foci is on people not programs
- Resource allocation vital
- Intentionally create and nurture the concept of building “go to people”
  - RELA
  - Mathematics
  - Social Studies
  - Science
  - Special Education
  - Technology Education
Distributed Leadership

Waiting for Superman doesn’t work

“Schools built around a single extraordinary leader never sustain their success. When Superman or Superwoman leaves, it all falls apart.”

- John Davis, the DC chief of schools
Distributed Leadership

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP
OFFERS A BETTER SOLUTION

Create a cadre of talented leaders with responsibility for the development of the teachers on their teams
2016-2017

• Teacher teams are formed
• Teacher teams leading the way on innovation and school improvement
  o School improvements across the district—interim data supports increases in excess of 5-8% school growth in mathematics
  o Similar numbers in RELA
  o Centennial X
  o Shakespeare Festival—first annual
  o Film Festival—first annual
  o Genius hour growing in all schools
  o Teachers work together on full day Kindergarten implementation
  o Teachers full blown partners in Administration decision making
  o Meet and discuss and collaboration
2017-2018

• Re-commit to Distributed Leadership as the backbone of school improvement
• Association and Administration regularly meet to discuss and decide with a focus on increasing student opportunities
• Teaching and Learning becoming the lens with which all decisions are made
• Distributed Leadership teams continue to drive decision making at the school and classroom level.
• Q & A