PRINCIPAL SABBATICAL REPORT

How do U6 schools (grading rolls from 501 – 675 students) structure their leadership teams to enhance teaching and learning?

What are the specific roles and responsibilities of deputy, assistant principals and team leaders within these schools and their corresponding allocation of units and release time?

How are syndicates, or planning teams, organized to enhance teaching and learning?

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

During term two 2012, I had the privilege of visiting 10 U6 schools to determine how they structured their leadership teams, what were the common responsibilities of the DPs, and in some cases, APs, and how their syndicates or planning teams were structured. As an aside, I also looked at the school's unit allocation, its frequency of meetings for leadership team, staff, and team meetings, the allocation of release time, and the role of the leadership team in appraisal.

The most common membership for the leadership team comprised the principal and two deputy principals. This occurred in four of the ten schools. Seven schools appointed two deputy principals or key leaders to assist the principal in his or her leadership role.

On the allocation of units to deputy principals, there became a clear link between the school roll and the number of assigned units. In general, schools with rolls over 500 offered five units to the DPs, six units with rolls of 600, and seven units to DPs with rolls of 700. Units allocated to APs ranged from three to five, while the majority of schools offered two units each to team leaders.

The most common responsibility of the deputy principal was the role of SENCO (Special Education Needs Co-ordinator). Nine out of the ten schools allocated this responsibility to a deputy principal.

In all schools visited, planning teams were based on the year groups of the students within their schools. The most common syndicate groupings contained two year groups.

There was plenty of variation in the amount of release time offered to team leaders within the ten schools. The most common was 2.5 hours per week.

In seven of the 10 schools, an external consultant, usually affiliated to a university or educational consultancy firm, appraised the principal while 50% of the schools also used an external appraiser for the deputy principals. Regarding the appraisal of team leaders, seven out of the ten schools delegated this responsibility to the deputy principal. The appraisal of the teacher aides was the responsibility of the special education needs co-ordinator in all schools.

Frequency of meetings showed a wide range of options with the most common being weekly leadership team meetings in all ten schools.

Purpose

St Joseph's School, Papanui is currently the largest Catholic primary school in the South Island and was founded in 1878. It caters for students from Year 0-8. After applying to the Minister of Education for a maximum roll increase in 2010, approval was granted in February 2011 to increase our maximum roll from 390 to 440 students. By the end of 2013, I am predicting the school roll will reach 440 despite losing 50 of our students to other locations in New Zealand and Australia as a result of the earthquakes and aftershocks.

The aftermath of the Christchurch earthquakes has seen an upsurge in the number of requests for enrolment as large numbers of families contemplate moving from their 'red zoned' properties to new housing options in other areas of the city.

Within our school's enrolment zone, planning is underway for four major new subdivisions offering a total of over 5,000 sections. Statistically, 12% of the population is Catholic. Therefore, larger demands will be placed on our school for enrolment requests as these subdivisions become developed. At this stage, the Christchurch Diocese has no plans for any new school or parish within our parish boundary, or indeed the Christchurch city area.

Methodology

Gathering information was conducted in person with individual principals within their own school environment, and in some cases, they were joined by members of their leadership team, depending on availability. School visits took place over a period of three weeks. The largest concentration occurred in five days set aside for school visits in the cities of Hamilton and Tauranga.

A prepared interview sheet for recording information was compiled beforehand to use as a guideline for the discussions and to ensure a consistent approach was used for the benefit of collating results.

A range of U6 schools was visited comprising state and state integrated, contributing and full primary, and schools with decile ratings ranging from 3 – 10.

Information gathered included: leadership team structure and membership, school's unit allocation and how it was distributed, roles and responsibilities of the leadership team, units and release time allocated to them, how planning teams were organised school-wide and their unit allocation and release time, role of the leadership team in appraisal, and finally, the organisation and frequency of meetings (leadership team, team or syndicate, and staff meetings).

Findings

Leadership team structure and membership

Within the 10 U6 schools visited, there was quite a range of what constituted the school's leadership team. Firstly, it is important to point out that seven schools appointed two deputy principals or key leaders. The remaining three schools appointed only one DP. Secondly, the most common leadership team membership was the principal and two deputy principals. This was found in four of the 10 schools. One school referred to this team as the *senior leadership team,* another school labelled it, the *navigation team,* and a third school, *the executive team.* In the latter example, it was interesting to note the inclusion of the school's bursar in the 'executive team'. Apart from her obvious financial skills, she was also responsible for the management and appraisal of the school's learning assistants or teacher aides.

Composition of 'leadership team'	Number of schools using this format
Principal and 2 Deputy Principals / Key leaders	4
Principal, 2 Deputy Principals and 1 AP	2
Principal, 2 DPs, 3 APs and Bursar	1
Principal, DP, 3 Team leaders	1
Principal, DP, 2 APs, 2 Team leaders	1
Principal, DP, and 4 Senior leaders (not in charge of a team or syndicate).	1

Allocation of units

Total units allocated to the ten schools ranged from 28 – 43. The largest school was allocated 43 units and had a roll on the day I visited of 690 Y1-6 students.

Of particular interest to me was how the principal distributed these units among the leadership team, the school's team leaders, and the curriculum responsibilities that warranted fixed term units for other staff.

Firstly, I will discuss the allocation of units to the schools' leadership teams, and in particular, the deputy principals / senior leaders / key leaders.

A definite relationship emerged between the number of allocated permanent units to deputy principals, and the school's grading roll. For schools with a grading roll of just over 500, the deputy principal received 5 units. Grading rolls close to 600 or over, deputy principals received 6 units, and schools with rolls close to 700 or over were awarded 7 units.

Secondly, on the aspect of assistant / associate principals, the unit allocation had no similar relationship. Only four of the ten schools chose to use the title, assistant or associate principal. Half of the schools visited deliberately chose to by-pass the AP position in favour of two deputy principals or key leaders, followed by team or syndicate leaders. Of the schools that appointed APs, most of them were also team leaders. Units

allocated to APs ranged from 3 to 5. The one school that allocated 5 units had only one deputy principal, and the APs were also responsible for leading a team of teachers.

Thirdly, the number of team leaders related directly to the school's grading roll. Schools ranged from 3 to 7 team leaders, with the largest school having a team leader for the new entrant children and each year group from Y1-6. Allocating units to team leaders was more uniform. Seven schools allocated 2 units to each team leader, while the remaining three schools were offered 3 units as their teams where generally larger and had a smaller number of team leaders.

School	Leadership team (LT) members	No. in LT	Units to LT
1	Principal and 2 Deputy Principals / Key leaders	3	12
2	Principal and 2 Deputy Principals / Key leaders	3	12
3	Principal and 2 Deputy Principals / Key leaders	3	12
4	Principal and 2 Deputy Principals / Key leaders	3	12
5	Principal, 2 Deputy Principals and 1 AP	4	18
6	Principal, 2 Deputy Principals and 1 AP	4	18
7	Principal, 2 DPs, 3 APs and Bursar	7	21
8	Principal, DP, 3 Team leaders	5	14
9	Principal, DP, 2 APs, 2 Team leaders	6	22
10	Principal, DP, and 4 Senior leaders (not in charge of a team or syndicate).	6	19

The most common allocation for fixed term units were the following learning areas in order of commonality:
1. Physical education and sports organisation. This also included organising activities for engaging children during break times.
2. Information and communication technologies.
3. The performing arts.
4. Maori and Pasifika student achievement.
5. Literacy.
6. Numeracy.
7. Enviro-schools.
8. GATE.
9. Science.
10. Health.

In one school, leaders of curriculum teams received one unit each for convening their committee. Leadership and team leaders were excluded from these leadership roles as the purpose was to involve more staff in delegated leadership responsibilities.

Roles and responsibilities of the deputy principals
In half the schools, the deputy principals were fully released from classroom teaching duties and were therefore non-teaching roles. Deputy principals in five schools had regular teaching duties. One taught the equivalent of a day per week as a music specialist. In this particular school, he was the sole deputy principal. In another school, both deputy

principals taught mathematics classes four times per week. The third school, the DP released a bi-lingual teacher for the equivalent of one day per week. In the fourth school, the DP was responsible for one teacher's CRT (classroom release time) and in the fifth school, both DPs released two beginning teachers each for their allocated release time.

The most common responsibility of the deputy principal was the role of SENCO (Special Education Needs Co-ordinator). Nine out of the ten schools allocated this responsibility to a deputy principal. The remaining school gave this role to the assistant principal, or the term they used, senior leader. Within the SENCO role was included the responsibility for GATE (Gifted and Talented Education), the appraisal of teacher aides, providing professional learning opportunities for teacher aides, convening IEP meetings, overseeing ORS students, liaising with all outside agencies, responsible for all referrals and funding applications to outside agencies, and preparing teacher aide timetables, to name a few of the major associated tasks.

The most common responsibilities allocated to deputy principals as well as SENCO were:
- Teacher in charge of curriculum development
- Teacher in charge of assessment, reporting and student management system, including assessment data aggregation across the school
- Teacher in charge of school-wide pastoral care and learning behaviour – quite often shared, half the school each, if there are two deputy principals
- Providing reports to the Board of Trustees with the assistance of the principal
- Leading the induction programme for all new staff at the beginning of the year and throughout the year
- Involved in class visits
- Appraising team leaders and some teachers
- Leading ESOL
- Organization of relievers
- Leading school council

Less common responsibilities were:
- Teacher in charge of teacher trainees – a large task in the normal schools
- Co-ordinating self review programme and associated documentation
- Monitoring attendance and truancy
- Managing international students
- Six Year Nets
- School-wide sport
- Managing ICT assets and equipment
- In charge of SchoolDocs – policies and procedures
- Overseeing performing arts programmes

Organisation of planning teams
In all schools visited, planning teams were based on the year groups of the students within their schools.

The three full primary schools had the following four planning teams led by a team leader: Years 0-2, Years 3-4, Years 5-6 and Years 7-8.

The remaining seven schools were contributing schools. Five of these based their planning teams on Years 0-2, Years 3-4, and Years 5-6. The final two schools had the largest number of students. Their planning teams were based on the six individual year groups, Years 1-6. One of these schools included a separate team for the teachers of Year 0 students, a total of seven planning teams.

As I mentioned earlier, each team leader was allocated either two or three units to lead their team based, to a certain extent, on the number of teachers within their teams.

Naming of teams was varied. Some were named according to their year groups, others junior, middle and senior, while four schools chose either names of native trees or birds.

Release time for team leaders
Plenty of variation existed in the amount of release time offered to team leaders within the ten schools. The most generous occurred in two schools where one day per week was granted with the addition of one hour per week from the classroom release time allocation. Another school offered one day per week that also included classroom release time. Of the remaining seven schools, six allocated the equivalent of a half a day per week, three of these included CRT in the 2.5 hours and three allowed CRT added to their 2.5 hours to create 3.5 hours per week release.

One school, due to a falling roll as a result of the Canterbury earthquakes, made the decision to cancel release time for team leaders for 2012.

Appraisal
In seven of the 10 schools, an external consultant usually affiliated to a university or educational consultancy firm, appraised the principal.

In the remaining three schools the appraisal of the principal was quite different. One school used a three-year cycle. In the year of its ERO visit, the Education Review Office report was used as its appraisal of the principal. In the following year, the board chair, and the third year, an external consultant facilitated the process. A further school used a local principal, while the remaining school included a local principal together with the board chairs from both schools. This process was reciprocated at the other school.

In half the schools, the role of appraising the deputy principals was the sole responsibility of the principal. Interestingly, the use of an external consultant occurred either fully or in part within the other five schools. One used an external consultant every year, two others contracted one on alternate years, and the remaining two, used both an external consultant and the principal. In one school, the external consultant appraised the whole leadership team.

For schools with Assistant or Associate Principals, their appraisal was conducted by either the deputy principal, principal, or a combination of the two. Schools that used the latter option, the principal appraised the leadership roles and the deputy principal appraised the classroom teaching.

Regarding the appraisal of team leaders, seven out of the ten schools delegated this responsibility to the deputy principal. Although, in two of the seven schools, the principal appraised the leadership objectives, while the deputy principal appraised the classroom teaching responsibilities. In the three remaining schools, the principal appraised all team leaders.

The role of appraising the teachers in 80% of the schools was delegated to the team leaders. In two schools, the principals chose to be responsible with the assistance of their deputy principals.

The appraisal of the teacher aides was the responsibility of the special education needs co-ordinator (SENCO). In one school the role of appraising the teacher aides was given to the bursar.

Organisation and frequency of meetings
On this issue, I was keen to look at how schools organized their staff meetings, leadership team meetings, syndicate or team meetings, and how they covered the scheduling of administrative matters

Full staff meetings were scheduled for professional learning in all ten schools visited. The frequency of them varied from school to school.

School	Frequency of staff meetings	School	Frequency of staff meetings
1	Once a week	6	Fortnightly, additional meetings when required
2	Once a week in Terms 1-2 Smaller number in Term 3, Less again in Term 4	7	Fortnightly, additional meetings when required
3	Mostly once a week	8	Four meetings per term
4	Once a week for 8 of the 10 weeks	9	Three meetings per term
5	Once every fortnight, staff must be available in case of a meeting on alternate weeks	10	Two meetings per term

School 8 started the year with a two-day retreat in a live-in conference centre. This was a trade-off for a smaller number of staff meetings throughout the year. Their staff meetings were organized into three smaller professional learning groups to increase the level of engagement of their teachers. The groupings were cross syndicate to give variation from the team meetings. It also provided better opportunities for moderation practices. The

principal and two deputy principals were responsible for leading a group each. The leadership team planned these meetings together to ensure all three groups received the same content.

School 9, although it only scheduled three staff meetings per term, organized its teachers into three professional learning groups that met three times per term. These were a form of coaching and mentoring focused on improving the effectiveness of teachers in learning areas linked to the school's strategic plan.

School 10 organized regular professional learning in their team meetings and engaged full staff professional learning sessions on call back days.

Leadership team meetings were more consistent in frequency among the 10 schools. All schools' leadership teams met at least weekly. If team leaders were also members of the leadership team, there appeared to be one leadership team meeting. If team members were not included in the leadership team, that generally constituted another weekly meeting combining the two groups. The leadership team, in one school, met three times a week, two of them were brief 'catch-ups and affirm' meetings.

To differentiate between the two groups one school had a 'senior leadership team' and a 'leadership team' that included both the senior leadership personnel and the team leaders. Another had a 'leadership team' and a 'senior management team' that included both the leadership team and team leaders. Finally, one school gave the term, 'navigation team' for its leadership team, and 'implementation team' for the combined group of leadership and team leaders and curriculum leaders responsible for leading its school's strategic goals in literacy, numeracy, inquiry and the performing arts.

When it came to team or syndicate meetings, seven of the 10 schools met weekly while three schools met fortnightly. Some principals tried to encourage fortnightly meetings, but the team leaders and teachers preferred to retain the weekly sessions. In one school, the Y5-6 team met weekly and the remaining teams met fortnightly. There seemed to be a general trend away from management and administrative content to professional learning opportunities and discussions based on the effectiveness of classroom programmes and the deliberate acts of teaching that improved the learning outcomes for children.

Administrative communication was dealt with either electronically or in separate administrative meetings. Half the schools scheduled regular timetabled administration meetings for staff on a weekly basis. One school dealt with its administration messages as part of its agenda in both its leadership and team leaders meetings.

Conclusion

Having the opportunity to visit 10 U6 schools in varying locations and socio-economic areas has given me an improved understanding of how larger schools structure their leadership teams and middle management for the benefit of their students. I have been fortunate to receive this valuable knowledge and experience from the principals with whom I spoke.

As one principal said, *"As a leadership team, together, we are the principal. The principal is a figurehead and where the buck stops."*

Learning about the practical ways larger schools organized their leadership teams to enhance teaching and learning has provided me with much needed knowledge as we plan for the future roll growth of St Joseph's School. Although this will not happen overnight, an implementation plan indicating the steps required will assist the board and school leaders to manage the incremental steps as we gradually increase in student numbers.

As there is no one model to adopt as we move forward, a needs analysis of our school will determine which path we take to provide the best possible outcomes for the benefit of our students, staff and community.

References

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