

# **Busting at the Seams**

## **Case Study Module Standard Six Superintendent**

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A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by **understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.**

### **Knowledge:**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- Principles of representative governance that undergird the system of American schools
- The role of public education in developing and renewing society a democratic society and an economically productive nation
- The law as related to education and schooling
- The political, social, cultural and economic systems and processes that impact schools
- Models and strategies of change and conflict resolution as applied to the larger political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of schooling
- global issues and forces affecting teaching and learning
- the dynamics of policy development and advocacy under our democratic political system
- the importance of diversity and equity in a democratic society.

### **Performances:**

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- the environment in which schools operate is influenced on behalf of students and their families
- communication occurs among the school community concerning trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which schools operate
- there is ongoing dialogue with representatives of diverse community groups
- the school community works within the framework of policies, laws, and regulations enacted, by local, state, and federal authorities
- public policy is shaped to provide quality education for students
- lines of communication are developed with decision makers outside the school community.

## **Title**

Busting at the Seams

## **Scenario**

You are presently the superintendent of a K-12 school district. You have a K-2 building with 335 students, a 3-5 building with 297 students, a 6-8 middle school with 255 students and a 9-12 high school with 310 students. The two elementary buildings are on the east and west side of town. The middle school and high school are on the north side of town. Your school district has recently experienced a spike in the lower elementary enrollment. This trend will continue for a minimum of three years based on your live birth data and the latest economic growth indicator as produced by the local chamber of commerce. This information was presented to the board at the February meeting. You also presented ideas to satisfy the brief spike, with a cost indicator for leasing several trailers for the three time period.

Since the meeting, discussion in the community has ensued about the negativity of use of trailers for educational classrooms. Also, there have been rumblings of a property tax increase, both pro and con, to support additional buildings, an idea that you did not propose.

The final straw has come from a local minister who has offered the use of educational space in the church for the time needed to complete any new building additions. The church is located across the street from the lower elementary school.

You are preparing for the March board meeting and your president has requested a plan of action and a presentation as to your ideas and suggestions.

## **Writing Style**

Your written responses will be evaluated based on their responsiveness to the questions and evidence of the relevant ISLLC standards. It should also be representative of graduate level work.

## **Adequate Rationales**

Some questions will require you to explain why you made particular decisions and/or selected certain courses of action. By merely stating that policy and /or guidelines require you to act in the way that you did, will not be an adequate response.

## **Project Specifications and Guiding Questions:**

The presentation to the board should contain the following information and/or understanding of the problem.

## Community Power Structure

*Using your district as a guide, please respond to the following questions:*

### *Who makes up the power sources of the community?*

- *How did they obtain their power?*
- *Are there community groups who support the school district?*
- *Are there community groups who do not support the school district or who have not supported the district in the past? Why?*

## Community's demography and social tensions

Below are listed some of the most significant demographic features of the community in which your school or district exists. Using your district as a guide, please respond to the following questions for each feature.

- How does this feature affect/impact your decision to use or not use the educational space at the local church?
- In what way could this feature be a barrier?
- How does this feature help shape your decision-making and your activities as a school leader in accordance with this PBL?
  - A. Community Customs/Traditions
  - B. Historical Background
  - C. Human and Financial Resources
  - D. Transportation and Communication Services
  - E. Religious Conflict

## District's Profile and Demography

Below are listed some of the most significant demographic features of the school or district. Using your district as a guide, please respond to the following questions for each feature.

- How does this feature affect/impact your decision to use or not use the educational space at the local church?
- In what way could this feature be a barrier?
- How does this feature help shape your decision-making and your activities as a school leader in accordance with this PBL?
  - A. Assessed Valuation – Previous five years
  - B. Current Tax Levy and Bond Capacity
  - C. Amount of property tax increase necessary to build the addition
  - D. Costs to operate the building(s)
  - E. Costs to operate/lease trailer(s)

## **Presentation**

Design a presentation using appropriate technology.

- *The presentation should be suitable for a meeting with internal and external publics.*
- *The presentation should entail the details of your proposal with rationale as to the pro/cons of the solution.*
- *The presentation should also detail the pros/cons of other solutions that have been or could be presented by other internal and external publics.*

## **Project Projections**

Following your presentation, respond to the following questions for the solution that you proposed to your board of education.

A. Time Line

**What would be your timeline for organizing strategies/meetings to implement the proposal?**

- *Who(m) would you meet with and why?*
- *What responsibilities would you assign, to whom, and why would you assign*
- *this responsibility to this individual?*

A. Financial Costs

**What would be the financial costs to the district for your proposal? Would money be saved from your solution?**

A. Future Problems

- *What would be the impact of your proposal/solution three years from now?*
- *Five years? Ten years?*
- *Would other solutions need to be considered? If so, what would they be?*
- *How would you respond to them?*

## REFLECTION

*The reflective piece should respond to the following issues:*

- *How did you effectively communicate the decision with the internal and external communities and stakeholder?*
- *To what extent was the value of internal and external community involved in the decision?*
- *To what extent did the internal and external communities collaborate as partners during the decision process to impact teaching and learning?*
- *To what extent does the school function as a partner within the larger community?*

## Standard Six Performance Expectations

- There is ongoing dialogue with representatives of diverse community groups
- Communication occurs among the school community concerning issues and potential changes in the environment in which school operate
- The school community works within the framework of policies, laws, and regulations enacted by local, state, and federal authorities

## Key Terms

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Public Relations
- Resources
- Facilities
- School finance
- Religious interference

## Recommended Resources/Support Materials

- Missouri School Public Relations Association – <http://info.csd.org/mospra/mosprahome/html>
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – School Finance Section – School Laws and Legislation Section - [www.dese.mo.gov/](http://www.dese.mo.gov/)
- School and Community Relations, Bagin, Gallagher, and Kindred. Allyn and Bacon (2002)
- Missouri Association of School Administrators – [www.mcsa.org/masa](http://www.mcsa.org/masa)
- Missouri School Boards Association – [www.msbanet.org/](http://www.msbanet.org/)
- Regional Professional Development Centers
- Missouri Association of School Business Officials – [www.moasbo.org/](http://www.moasbo.org/)
- Missouri School Plant Managers Association – [www.mspma.com/](http://www.mspma.com/)

**Notes to Instructor**

1. This Problem Based Learning module is one that can be used to determine students' entry level skills in:
  - Communication
  - Collaboration
  - Community relations
  - Working with diverse populations
  - Presentations
2. Students will increase their knowledge of community pressure groups, their power structures.
3. Students will increase their knowledge as to how to deal with a variety of critics.
4. Students will write a reflection of their findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
5. With the lack of knowledge of most students, concerning public relations, this case would be better suited as a group activity.

**Scoring Guide**

<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Little or No</b>	<b>Progressing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
The environment in which schools operate is influenced on behalf of students and their families				
Communication occurs among the school community concerning trends, issues and potential changes in the environment in which schools operate				
There is ongoing dialogue with representatives of diverse community groups				
The school community works within the framework of policies laws, and regulations enacted by local, state and federal authorities.				
Public policy is shaped to proved quality education for students				
Lines of communication are developed with decision makers outside the school community.				

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Dr.'s Kern and Arnold both teach educational administration courses and have used case studies, vignettes and problem-based learning modules in their classrooms. Each has written for the Missouri Professors of Educational Administration (MPEA) web site for instructional material and currently serve on the executive board for MPEA.