

# **Pilot Multiage Middle School Team: Program Planning, Community Involvement, and Communication**

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## **Standard 1:**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

## **Performance Indicator**

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- The vision and mission of the school are effectively communicated to staff, parents, students, and community members
- The vision is developed with and among stakeholders
- Progress toward the vision and mission is communicated to all stakeholders
- The vision shapes the educational programs, plans, and actions
- Barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed

## **Scenario:**

Central Middle School implemented one pilot multiage team containing sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Students from all three grades attend the same classes and learn the same material. The principal selected five excellent teachers in the school to ensure the success of the pilot multiage team. The principal and the five teachers spent one year planning and ample training was provided for the teachers. Because of the principal's belief that multiage teaming is appropriate for all middle school students, all students in the multiage team were randomly selected from the general school population. The pilot multiage team was representative of the school population.

At the end of the previous school year, letters were sent home to all parents informing them that their child might be selected for the multiage team. Very little response was received from the letter. It is now the end of the first week of school and ninety percent of the parents of students in the multiage team have called to complain and want their child moved to a single grade team. The parents of the sixth graders are afraid that their children will be picked on by older children. The parents of the seventh and eighth grade students feel that

the children will not be academically challenged with younger children in the same class.

**Assignment:**

- What is the main issue?
- What action should the principal take?
- Why did this problem occur and how could it have been avoided?
- How can parental support be obtained?
- What aspects of program planning were lacking?
- How can communication be improved between the school and community?

## Instructor's Notes

For

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#### **Extended Learnings**

- Any of the scenarios may be role played. Some of the alternate scenarios lead to large group role plays.
- Review literature on program planning.
- Review literature on multiage teaming.
- Develop an implementation plan for a multiage middle school team.
- Develop a communication plan for a middle school.
- Develop a rationale for multiage teaming.

#### **Other Standards: 2 & 4**

This case study could also be related to standard 2 because a multiage team is also an instructional program that requires a departure from a single grade curriculum or instructional paradigm. Other instructional issues may include peer tutoring, cross grade grouping, continuous progress, etc...

This case could also relate to standard 4 because one of the obvious omissions was the lack of collaboration with families and community members.

#### **Alternate Scenarios**

##### First

During the second week of school, the first parent teacher association meeting of the year is held and ninety percent of the parents on the multiage team show up to complain about their child's placement in a mixed age setting. The principal was unaware that the parents were upset. The meeting becomes volatile and the parents are extremely vocal about their displeasure with the multiage team. The parents feel that they were not consulted before the school changed the basic educational placement of their children. The parents have very little knowledge of multiage grouping.

##### Second

During the first faculty meeting of the year, it becomes apparent that the teachers on the multiage team are being isolated. The teachers on the single grade teams feel that the teachers on the multiage team are given special

privileges. Some teachers wanted to participate on the pilot multiage team but were not selected by the principal. This group is bitter and resentful toward the multiage team and the teachers. Some of the long time teachers feel multiage grouping is a trendy fad and bad mouth the concept. Still another group is disinterested in multiage grouping and knows little about the concept. The teachers are not afraid to voice their concerns at the faculty meeting. The principal had hoped that the multiage team would become a model for instruction and affective education for the school. During the planning stages there did not seem to be any negative feelings about multiage teams. It now seems that the faculty is divided on the issue.

### Third

The principal and teachers on the multiage team put a lot of time and effort into planning an effective mixed age team. They visited other middle schools with multiage teams, went to conferences, and researched the topic. They were excited about implementing a new and innovative program. Now both the community and other teachers in the school are against the multiage team. What went wrong?