

# Shared Ownership at Millerville High School: Shared Ownership in Hiring Practices

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## Standard 3

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

## Performance Indicator

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that stakeholders are involved in decisions affecting schools.

## The Story

"O.K., everybody. We have been interviewing for about four hours, so let's take a 20-minute break before we discuss the applicants."

With that comment, Principal Roy Street headed for the restroom. As he walked through the office, he hardly noticed the noisy activity and clamor that was swirling around him. He was fairly certain that his committee of five would have difficulty agreeing on which one of the English candidates should be hired for a vacancy at Millerville High School, and he couldn't get that out of his mind.

His interviewing team for the English vacancy was actually a very strong one. In addition to Principal Street, the team consisted of Linda Croftman, English Department chair, Mary Valley, Chairman of the Parents Club, Keith Brownfield, a member of the junior class and student council vice-president at Millerville, and Ted Ricketts, athletic Director at Millerville.

As Principal Street washed his face, he was already contemplating the situation. Academics vs. athletics, teachers or coaches, he sensed that is what it was going to come down to. Everyone knew that Millerville had two full-time teaching vacancies, English and Family and Consumer Science (FACS), and one extra-curricular coaching position, the head coach of the boy's soccer team. If he didn't hire an English teacher who could coach soccer, he would have to hire a Family and Consumer Science teacher who could coach soccer. And what were the odds that there would be a boy's soccer coach in the pool of candidates for the FACS position? Slim and none.

Mr. Ricketts had discussed the need for a soccer coach before the interviews had even started so the entire committee was quite aware of the situation. Mr. Street has had to deal with this issue before, and it always left a bad taste in his mouth. He wanted the best teacher and coach for the school; couldn't everybody realize that? Back in his office, Mr. Street thought back four years ago when he first implemented the concept of participatory management and shared ownership in his building. He firmly believed that providing meaningful decision-making opportunities for teachers, parents, and students was essential to school governance. He believed that four years ago and believes it still. But, believing in the concept of shared ownership and actually putting that concept into effective and efficient use is not always easy. He was thinking about his comments to the committee when Keith appeared at his door "Mr. Street, we're all in the conference room ready to go."

For the first 20 minutes of the discussion, the committee reached consensus on the five applicants. After reviewing the resumes and discussing how each candidate had responded to the interview questions, three were eliminated from consideration and two (Brian Woodward and Lisa

Mercurio) were selected as finalists. The committee had agreed that both had strong academic records, very positive and upbeat personalities, and a caring and nurturing attitude toward students. But Mr. Street had anticipated that decision after the interviews had concluded, and he knew the real challenge was still ahead.

Mrs. Croftman led the discussion. "I am really impressed by the academic record of Lisa," stated Mrs. Croftman. "She had a GPA of 3.8, worked on the newspaper staff for three years, was on the student government leadership team, has 50 hours of English-related courses, and received several academic awards. Although Brian was a strong candidate, I don't think he is as strong academically as Lisa."

"I agree that she is a strong candidate," replied Mr. Ricketts, "but Brian is excellent also, and remember, we do need a soccer coach. Brian's played four years of high school soccer, four years of college soccer, and was a graduate assistant coach last year. He has received individual honors at every level, and his ex-coaches and personal references speak of a wonderful coach and role model for young kids."

"They are both good, I agree," added Mrs. Valley, "and Brian might be a fine coach, but, I want our students, and my two kids, to get the very best English teacher possible. Nothing should be more important than a strong academic teacher."

"Academically, I really don't think Brian stacks up to Lisa.," replied Mrs. Croftman, "I hope we don't put athletics before academics."

"Well of course we don't," stated Mr. Street, "We need to pick the applicant who we believe will be most effective working with our students, and we need to consider all the strengths that they can bring to this position."

Keith added, "Well, I liked both of them, this is not an easy choice."

"No, it isn't," explained Mrs. Croftman, "And we have to remember that these decisions are watched by the entire faculty. They will know if we pick a coach over a academic teacher, and I for one would be appalled and discouraged if we didn't pick the best teacher."

"I agree," stated Mr. Ricketts, "but we have to have a boy's soccer coach and....."

As the discussion continued, Mr. Street's mind drifted back to days long ago when he alone did the interviewing and recommendations for teaching positions.

## **Instructor's Notes**

For

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### **Main Issue**

To provide future administrators a dilemma that could occur in a school in which participatory management is practiced.

### **Discussion**

- How could a Hiring Policy guide that included the criteria for selection of candidates be helpful in this situation?
- Assume that Brian is hired as the English teacher. What kind of response from the faculty may Mr. Street anticipate?
- How would this situation be impacted if the boy's soccer team had won the state championship the previous year?

### **Extended Learning**

- What additional information would have been beneficial to the committee?
- What could have been done by the principal prior to the interviews which might have diminished the possibility of this scenario occurring?
- What are the pros and cons of participatory management?

### **Case Study Descriptors**

- Shared decision-making
- Personnel issues
- Participatory management