

District Reconfiguration: A Question of Equity, Excellence, and Efficiency

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Standard 6:

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:

- 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

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- education as a key to opportunity and social mobility
- importance of a continuing dialogue with other decision makers affecting education
- actively participating in the political and policy-making context in the service of education

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
- lines of communication are developed with decision makers outside the school community

Issue:

You have just finished your second year as the superintendent of Westwood School District. Your district is nestled in a beautiful section of the state surrounded by a pine forest and several lakes. You are very satisfied with your position and feel that you have accomplished some major tasks toward improving education for the students in your district.

The district, with a population of 9,000 students, is diverse. Demographics indicate that 50% of the district population is Caucasian, 25% is African-American, and 25% is Hispanic. Approximately 60% of your students are eligible for the free or reduced

price lunch program. Your district has one 9-12 high school, one junior high school of 7th and 8th graders, one intermediate school housing grades 5 and 6, and four K-4 elementary schools.

There is one issue that you have mulled over the past two years and now you strongly feel that it needs to be addressed. Your research regarding student enrollment indicates that the elementary schools, which are located in the four quadrants of your district, are not balanced in regard to ethnicity and socio-economic status. You have discussed this issue with the Board of Education, met with the principals, heard from teacher groups, and have met face-to-face with several parents that are also concerned about this issue. Topics that have been discussed are those of equity, excellence in student achievement, and efficiency of school operations. You would like to begin the process of re-drawing attendance zones on the elementary level, so that ultimately the four schools would be more racially and economically balanced. You embark on this task with a strong belief that the project needs to be addressed, however, you also know that groups will most likely emerge that are in opposition.

Assignment:

1. Describe the process to be used in order to create a plan of action regarding the vision of a more racially and economically balanced district at the elementary level.
 - a. The description should include:
 - Key groups and individuals to be involved,
 - Resources needed and how these will be obtained,
 - Timelines to be addressed, and
 - Paths of communication.

Instructor's Notes and Scoring Guide

For

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Notes to the Instructor

Discussion:

The purpose of this vignette is to prompt a discussion of the superintendent's role in promoting the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. How should the superintendent go about developing a strategic plan of action to address the reconfiguration? What key groups or individuals need to be involved? What resources will be needed, such as financial, facility, and human resources? What timelines will need to be addressed? What paths of communication should be established during the reconfiguration? What are the political dynamics of district reconfiguration? In discussing this vignette, students should identify issues surrounding the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context of school and how districts should ensure and equitable, quality, and efficient school experience for all students.

Additional Standards:

- This vignette could also apply to 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. Discussions could involve operational procedures at the school and district level, human resources management and development, principles and issues relating to fiscal operations of school management, school facilities and the use of space. In addition, the discussion could include the idea of taking risks to improve schools, involving stakeholders in the management process, and operational procedures are designed and managed to maximize opportunities for success learning.
- This vignette could also apply to Standard 4. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with the families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. Discussions could include community resources and relations, schools operating as an integral part of the larger community, collaboration and communication with families, propositions that diversity enhances the school experience, the need for an informed public, effective media relations are developed and maintained, and that public resources are used appropriately and wisely.
- This vignette could also apply to Standard 5. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. Discussions could include the idea of an ideal common good, the right of every student to a free, quality education, bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process, and how the superintendent and the district demonstrate appreciation for and sensitivity to the diversity in the school community.

Scoring Guide

Score 2

The student responds directly to the assignment by addressing the actions of the superintendent. The responses include three of the following:

- Specifically addresses other stakeholders (both internal and external) in an effort to develop a strategic plan of action.
- Specifically addresses the process of strategic planning, including setting objectives, establishing timelines, determining resources needed.
- Factors considered clearly demonstrate knowledge of public relations and an intent to inform the public.
- Factors considered clearly demonstrate the need to provide an equitable, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- Factors considered clearly demonstrate understanding of the political dynamics of district reconfiguration.

Score 1

Responses include two of the following:

- Identifies some stakeholders in an effort to develop a strategic plan of action.
- Limited understanding of the strategic planning process.
- Limited understanding of public relations and an intent to keep the public informed.
- Factors considered demonstrate some understanding of providing an equitable, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- Factors considered demonstrate limited understanding of the political dynamics of district reconfiguration.

Score 0

- Response does not identify the need to involve stakeholders.
- No clear understanding of strategic planning.
- No clear understanding of public relations or the need to inform the public.
- No clear understanding of the need to provide an equitable, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- No clear understanding of the political dynamics.

Additional Resources:

- **Success Link**
Website designed to showcase best practices and programs which have proven to work in the state of Missouri. Site includes over 2,000 lesson plans for educators.
www.successlink.org
- **National School Board Association (NSBA)**
This website provides an array of resource information as it relates to policy, research, technology, and school law.
www.nsba.org
- **American Association of School Administrators**
Website designed to support leaders in education by providing information regarding laws, policies, research and practice. Site also links to publications such as *The School Administrator*,

the AASA Bulletin, the AASA Professor, and School Governance and Leadership.
www.aasa.org

- **Institute for Educational Leadership**
Website provides links to various programs which include the Center for Workforce Development, the Coalition for Community Schools, and other organizations.
www.iel.org
- **American Planning Association**
This website is a useful source for providing information with regard to public planning issues, as well as, linking practicing planners, citizens, and elected officials to specific resources.
www.planning.org
- **Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Missouri**
This website provides links to information regarding district boundaries, facilities, transportation, district demographics, and financial resources for schools in the state of Missouri.
www.dese.state.mo.us