Rowan University

# Rowan Digital Works

4-10-2003

# The effects of administrative change on school environment

Dale H. Horner
*Rowan University*

Follow this and additional works at: https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd

Part of the Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons

THE EFFECTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGE

ON SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

By
Dale H. Horner

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
4/8/03

Approved by
Professor

Date Approved _____

# Abstract

Dale Horner

The Effects of Administrative Change
On School Environment
2003
Dr. Theodore Johnson
Masters of Arts – School Administration

Administrative change in education is inevitable. However, successful administrative change is not. Successful administrative change requires Boards of Education and the new leaders they create to think of the administrative change as a process not an isolated act. The newly created leader must clearly and consistently communicate his vision with the shareholders. He must allow the shareholders to question and respond to his vision until together they make a new vision, one which they can all embrace. He must have and effectively convey a transition plan that will bring the shareholders from the past, which they know and accept, across the bridge into the future, which they do not know and may not understand. He must give the shareholders time to grieve for what they had and instill in them a desire to create what they can have. Only when the new administrator understands the need for and facilitates the transition process will there be successful, meaningful change in educational administration.

Mini Abstract


Dale Horner

The Effects of Administrative Change
On School Environment
2003
Dr. Theodore Johnson
Masters of Arts – School Administration


Successful school leadership change can be achieved only if the change is a process which includes communication with all shareholders, a clearly explained and revisable transitional plan, and a new leader who is willing to examine and reexamine his own beliefs as they relate to the vision of the shareholders.

# Acknowledgments

To Mother, you are "The Wind Beneath My Wings."

To my Family – who supported me and rarely complained about dinner. I love you!

To my Mentor, Dr. Frances Colon Gibson, for your faith in my ability and for allowing me to grow, to learn and to achieve.

To the Faculty and Staff of Magnolia Public School, your openness and honesty made this possible.

To my friend, Alma, your proof reading days are not over!

To my friends at Magnolia, your vision for the future is one you can achieve.

To the Professors at Rowan University, "To teach is to touch a life forever." I have been touched.

# Table of Contents

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

<u>Focus of the Study</u>

Every school district experiences change, change in programs, change in teaching staff, change in support staff, change in Boards of Education, and change in community support, but what happens to a school when the change is in administration? This study will focus on the effects of an administrative change on a small, one school district; concentrating specifically on three phases of the change process: the announcement of the change, the transition phase, and the challenges facing the new administrator.

Each segment of change brings with it its own unique set of problems. The way in which the new administrator deals with these problems may, in fact, determine his or her success or failure. From the time of the announcement of an impending change in administration to the actual take over every section of the school community will react. These reactions may be positive or may seem positive on the surface. But more likely there is in every segment of the school community a sense of trepidation for to give up what is known for what is unknown is always a risk. It is up to the new administrator to quell these fears and set into place a new vision that can be shared by all. He or she must take specific and deliberate steps to make sure that all parties involved in the change feel that their concerns are not only being heard but also addressed.

This study will deal with an administrative change at Magnolia Public School and this change's effect on the school environment and culture.

## The Purpose of the Study

Through this study the intern wishes to identify the ramifications of administrative change on a small school district by looking at the school environment and culture during three of the phases of the change process. The intern will identify negative aspects of the change process and will ascertain the positive steps taken to alleviate such negativity.

The purpose of this study is to identify the drawbacks of administrative change and the obstacles faced by an incoming administrator. By doing so, the intern wishes to discover ways to diminish the effects of the drawbacks and obstacles on the school environment and culture. Since this intern, as well as other interns, will some day be in the position of being a new administrator; such a study would be useful in providing ways to execute a meaningful transition from one administrator to another.

## Definitions

Gatekeepers - a group of influential people in the school community. This group consists of teachers, PTO members, and community activists.

Shadow Board - members of the previous Board of Education who attend current Board meetings and voice public opposition to the actions and direction of the current School Board. The members of the shadow board were not voted out of office. They chose not to run again or resigned their Board position prior to the election.

Teacher A – teacher who has been in the teaching profession for over 25 years, has duel certification and has taught a variety of subjects to a variety of age levels

Teacher B - has over 10 years in the teaching profession, duel certification, has worked mainly with primary children, and has work experience outside the educational arena

Teacher C - has over 25 years in the teaching profession, holds several certifications, has had extensive work experience out of the field of education

Teacher D - has over 20 years of experience, certification in only one area, has worked with students K-8, has worked in the education field outside the classroom

Community Leader A – has been affiliated with the system for over 9 years, has worked with 3 administrators, has an A.A.S. in Computer Studies, is active in the school as well as other community projects

Community Leader B - has approximately 5 years of school/community involvement, has a B.A. in English, is active in other community projects

Support Staff A - has a high school education, has worked outside the educational arena, and has worked for several administrators in this district

Support Staff B – has a high school education, has worked outside the school setting doing the same type of work, has worked in this district for several administrators

ISLLC Standards - Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for educational leadership

MSEA - Magnolia School Education Association

Shared Services - the hiring of one person by two school districts for the purpose of doing the same job in each district done in an effort to save money by both districts

School Culture - the atmosphere or climate of the building as perceived by the staff

## Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited to one small school in Camden County. The school is a District Factor B school with approximately 475 students, Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The administrator involved in the study has been employed in the district for over ten years.

While the issues examined are done so in a microcosm, they transcend building size, administrative organization, socioeconomic concerns and student/teacher population. The outcomes of these issues, however, cannot make such a transition; because of this the results of this study are applicable only to schools of a similar size, socioeconomic setting administrative organization and student/teacher population.

## Setting of the Study

The study will be conducted at Magnolia Public School, which is the only school in the Magnolia School District. The school has been designated as a District Factor "B" school by the State of New Jersey. It contains approximately 475 students with over one-fourth of these students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Slightly more than one third of Magnolia students received special services including Child Study Team services, basic skills services, speech and/or occupational therapy. Seven Magnolia students are currently receiving their education through out of district placement. The mobility rate of students in the Magnolia District is approximately 22.7%, far above the state average as reported in the 2000-2001 School Report Card.

The Magnolia School District is located in Camden County. It is approximately 12 miles from the city of Philadelphia and eight miles from the city of Camden. There are few businesses in Magnolia, thus most parents work outside the borough. Magnolia, which has deep historical

roots in Camden County, consists of one square mile and touts itself as being "One square mile of friendliness."

The instructional staff of the Magnolia Public School, including teachers, instructional aides and teaching assistants consists of approximately fifty members. Over one third of the teaching staff has or is working toward a Masters Degree. The Chief School Administrator holds a Doctorate in Education.

## Organization of the Study

The remainder of the study will be organized as follows: Chapter 2 will review the current literature regarding administrative change and the effects of the change on the school environment and culture. Chapter 3 will give a general description of the research design and will contain samples of any instrumentation used in the research. It will also contain a description of the data collection procedure and the data analysis plan. Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study within the limitations of the setting of the study. It will answer the original questions presented by the intern in the research proposal. In Chapter 5, the intern will present the conclusions and implications of the study, as well as recommendations applicable to all persons who will go through the administrative change process.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

<u>Introduction</u>

Much has been written about school change; change in programs, change in delivery

techniques, even whole school reform. However, very little has been written specifically about

what happens to a school, the staff and the working environment, when the administrator leaves,

and how transitional leadership affects the school environment.

Although there have been few studies of such leadership in schools and the definition of

transitional leadership is still vague, evidence shows that there are similarities in

transformational leadership whether it is in a school setting or a business environment

(Lionotos, 1992).

For this reason much of the research used for this study deals with transitional leadership in a

setting which is not educational. However, the comparisons made here directly relate to the

issues that schools face when an administrator leaves the district.

An article published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, *Making*

*Change*, (1988) discusses how to help people cope with change. According to the authors,

To make a change is to understand a process, to comprehend building a bridge from idea

to action to use. Changes are so common that individuals are asked to make and adapt to

them every day; and yet, as creatures of habit, we resist change. In organizational

settings, people rarely pay attention to the best way to make changes occur, or to consider

if there are ways to make changes smoother, more efficiently, or with more sensitivity

toward those people who will be affected by the change.

A study done in 1998 by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, involving elementary and middle school principals, reveals that the 42 percent turnover rate, which has existed for the last ten years, is likely to continue into the 21$^{st}$ century (Hertling, 2001). This turnover rate can be expected to affect schools differently depending on the size, administrative structure, socioeconomic status and student/teacher population. Regardless of these extemporaneous factors any school that experiences administrative change will experience the tribulations that are related to the change. This intern will examine the problems brought about by an administrative change and the challenge of managing such a change in a small school district.

Review of the Problem

Administrative change is inevitable. In her article, *When Leaders Leave*, Patricia Wasley explains turnover in administration is commonplace in today's schools.

> We all know that educators in leadership positions move frequently. Teachers, principals, and central office staff move so often because the career ladder, weak in incentives, requires they keep moving in order to gain salary increases or greater decision-making authority (Sykes, 1987). In some districts it is common practice to move principals every three years or so "to keep mold from growing," as one superintendent told me, or to "share the good leaders around," as another put it (Wasley, 1992).

Whatever the reason, every year hundreds of schools face the reality of administrative change. William Bridges says "Change is not the same as transition. Change is situational; the new boss,

the new team roles, the new policy. Transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is external; transition is internal" (Bridges 1991).

An administrative change is a change in a situation that touches every person who has an affiliation with the school in one-way or another. For some people the change is quite trivial, it may simply require that they learn a new name to go with the title, while for others their daily workplace environment is upset dramatically by the change. Every one in the school setting will need time to go through a transition process allowing them to absorb and adjust to the nuances of the change.

Joseph A. Custer in his article "*Managing Internal Administrative Change*" discusses the effects of internal administrative change and stresses the need to manage such change (Custer 2000). According to Custer "Change involves phases, and how well the phases of change are managed internally determines the level of successful change" (Custer 2000). Custer sees the first phase of any change as "the ending."

The ending is the time just after the change has been announced. Understandably, before one can deal effectively with *the new*, they must understand the need for *the old* to go. People must be given the opportunity to vent their feelings. Some will feel anger at the loss of what is familiar to them. Others may be sad or frightened. Some will seem confused or show signs of depression. Whatever the emotion, it must be treated with respect and taken seriously. Only if people are given the opportunity to grieve the loss of the old situation by running through the gamut of emotions can they be expected to move forward toward the new situation.

In the ending phase, communication seems to be the key to success. The people left behind need to know *what* to expect from the change. It is up to the leadership of the school to define what is over and what is not over, what things will be changed and what things will be left

the same. Only if these questions are answered openly and honestly will people begin to understand what is expected of them. Left undirected, people will be afraid to discard any of the old ways or try any of the new things. Thus they do nothing. The school is left in chaos. As Custer puts it "they need to know what's in it for them" (Custer, 2000).

Too often people are not told the truth concerning administrative change. Thus the school is left in a kind of transitional limbo where teachers and other school personnel are left to wonder and sometimes to think the worst about their jobs and their working conditions. Donna Bennett says in *Effectively Managing Change*, "ensuring that everyone in the school receives information about the upcoming change is vital to its success. Having more information than is needed is always preferable to not having enough" (Bennett, 1997).

As soon as there is any new information about the impending change or the new administrator becomes available, it is important that everyone is told. Leaving people out of the information loop leads to skepticism and may be the catalyst responsible for starting a spiraling decline in the morale of an already shaken work force. Daniel E. Griffiths in his book The Human Relations in School Administration stresses the importance of morale in the school. Borrowing a definition from John R. French Jr., Griffiths says:

> Morale refers to the condition of a group where there are clear and fixed group goals (purpose) that are felt to be important and integrated with individual goals; where there is confidence in the attainment of these goals, and subordinately, confidence in the means of attainment, in the leaders, associates, and finally in oneself; where group actions are integrated and co-operative; and where aggression and hostility are expressed against the forces frustrating the group rather that toward other individuals within the group (p. 144).

If the new leader does not share all the information with the entire staff, hostility and distrust begin to focus inward. Members of the group begin to lose confidence in each other and the ability of the group to cope with the change.

By treating the past with respect and allowing people to keep some of the old ways, leaders help to insure a higher level of morale. People need to be able to build on the past in order to get to the future. Many people see the past as a situation in which they had a voice or dominate part to play. When leaders attack the past, people see it as an attack on their own self-worth or their value to the educational organization.

According to Fredrick Wendel, Fred Hoke and Ronald Joekel, in their book Outstanding School Administrators: Their Keys to Success, it is important to honor and respect the past, for only then will people accept what is in the future.

> Honor and respect what is in the past but also look for ways to strengthen and improve
>
> upon past practices, procedures, and quality of performance. Appeal to a sense of pride
>
> in individuals who are bound by tradition is one means of gaining their support for a new
>
> idea. Refuting the accomplishments of the past efforts will not likely win over
>
> traditionalists even though a considerable body of evidence could be used to argue for
>
> better ways of new practices over old ones (Wendel, Hoke, and Joekel, 1996).

If the leadership can show that the new situation will help to insure the success of the educational structure by blending parts of the old with parts of the new; transition will go more smoothly and the new goals will be met with acceptance not hostility.

Once staff has accepted that change is inevitable and has gone through the grieving process for their loss they begin to enter what Bridges refers to as "the neutral zone."

The neutral zone occurs in the lives of individuals, organizations, and even whole nations. The dangers presented in the neutral zone take several forms....

1. Anxiety rises and motivation falls. People feel disoriented and self-doubting. They are resentful and self-protective. Energy is drained away from work into coping tactics....

2. People in the neutral zone miss more workdays than at other times. The result is that, at best productivity suffers and, at worst, medical and disability claims rise sharply....

3. Old weaknesses, long patched over or compensated for, reemerge in full flower....

4. In the neutral zone personnel overload, signals are often mixed, and systems are in flux and therefore unreliable. It is only natural that priorities get confused, information gets miscommunicated, and tasks go undone. It is also natural that with so many things uncertain and frustrating, turnover begins to rise...

5. Given the ambiguities of the neutral zone, it is natural for people to become polarized between those who want to rush forward and those who want to go back to the old ways. And given this polarization, it is natural for consensus to break down and for the level of discord to rise. Teamwork may be severely undermined, as may loyalty to the organization itself.

6. Finally, as Herodotus, the historian of the warlike age, would have been quick to note, operations, or other organizations are vulnerable to attack from outside. Disorganized and tired, people respond slowly and halfheartedly to competitive threats. They may even sabotage organizational response to outside attacks (Bridges, 1991, p.35).

Not every staff or everyone in any staff will experience all of these dangers. However, any one of the dangers presents a threat to the survival of the new administrator. Since the old

rules are gone, the new administrator is faced with a confused, even chaotic time. It is a time when people are trying to take on a new identity. People want and need leadership, no matter how resistant they appear to be. It is the job of the new leader to take this group of confused anxious people forward. Kenneth J. Tewel suggests several ways to achieve this goal.

1. *Create an environment conducive to mutual trust and risk-taking.* This item is a precondition to everything that follows. Discussing ideas, discovering new ways of thinking, and experimenting under conditions of trust and respect enhance commitment and increase receptivity to new viewpoints. Restructuring will require significant risk-taking and a radical shift in the way things get done-both of which are impossible in an environment where open communication, mutual trust, and risk-taking are not nourished and actively encouraged.

2. *Develop a shared mission.* Helping people believe in the importance and value of their work is essential, particularly when other forms of security have evaporated. Pride in one's work and recognition for accomplishments are frequently stronger motivators than traditional promotion-based reward system.

3. *Empower staff members to use their professional discretion in making decisions.* People need to feel some control over their professional lives. Superintendents can provide this by encouraging central office staff to develop their own projects and seeing that they have time to carry those forward. A second strategy is to foster results orientation by working with staff members to develop outcomes and then letting them decide how to achieve them. Greater latitude in work assignments can be negotiated individually with staff as a reward for significant accomplishment.

4. *Provide opportunities for learning.* The chance to learn skills or apply them in new ways becomes important in a restructuring. In a turbulent environment, learning enables people to create a niche for themselves in the new organization. In a climate where pay incentives are largely nonexistent, access to new training is a major inducement.

5. *Afford professional visibility.* Superintendents can provide public recognition by (a) acknowledging the innovations of school and central office staff members, and (b) by helping people to connect with professional networks outside the district.

6. *Eliminate barriers to change.* Barriers to change can be both individual and organizational. Organizational obstacles include narrow rules for accomplishing work, rigid job definitions, and lack of common language for articulating goals. Individual barriers include lack of awareness about the need for change and absence of critical skills necessary for making reform efforts succeed. Again focused education and training are vitally important. Through education a superintendent can communicate new organizational values and demonstrate long-term commitment to the importance of the change effort.

7. *Be focused and consistent over time.* Although developing a new organizational form takes a long time, a superintendent can erase years of progress in just a few weeks of inconsistent behavior. This is especially true during times of crisis. Staff members can see through glossy programs and superficial efforts. The change process must be ongoing and constantly renewed (Tewel, 1995, p. 5-7).

Although Bridges's plan for the neutral zone is not identical to that of Tewel, it does suggest similar activities to guide staff through this difficult time. William Custer sees this time as a time

when administrators need to sharpen their social skills, to anticipate problems that may arise and to act quickly to avoid them or at the very least to lessen their impact. Custer adds that during this phase of change it might also be a good idea to have a social event, a morning coffee klatch or a dinner at someone's home so that the staff can feel relaxed and speak openly about their feelings. "The main goal is to create an environment where staff can relax and get things off their chests in a nonwork setting. Surviving the tribulations of the second phase is cause enough for a celebration of some sort (Custer, 2000)."

Bridges goes a step further than Tewel and Custer when he suggests that the time spent in the neutral zone is a good time to explore the creativity of the staff. Since the old rules no longer apply, people will naturally, although it may be secretly, explore new ways to get things done. If the new administrator accepts and encourages this type of staff input, not only do the problems get solved, but staff begins to take ownership of the change as well.

This acceptance and encouragement is symptomatic of the Contribute and Commit leadership style as explained by William Cunningham and Paula Cordeiro in their book, Educational Administration A Problem Solving Approach. It is in this style that leaders understand and appreciate the experiences of their staff and the extended school community. Leadership is based on examining "what's right" not "who's right."

> The leader rises above politics and fears to constantly evaluate actual effectiveness against standards of excellence. These leaders utilize feedback and criticism to develop shared understanding of objectives, learn from experience, and find ways to strengthen team performance. Every member is encouraged to contribute to and challenge ideas without fear of retaliation. This attitude of openness generates strong commitment to

results because members feel a personal stake in outcomes (Cunningham and Corderio, 2000, p. 162)

By using this style the leader demonstrates to the staff that they, and what they represent, are important to the change, thus making the transition into the last phase of the change process more readily accepted.

Bridges refers to the last phase of the change process as the "New Beginning," a term that may seem more than a little ambiguous. One cannot assume that at this point in time all staff members have accepted change or that all the problems resulting from the change have been solved. Transition, that psychological process, is still going on inside many staff members. People are still somewhat confused and may even still be anxious about their role as a part of the new beginning. Bridges says such feelings are natural, and it is for this very reason that new beginnings cannot be rushed or put on a strict timetable. What can be done to guide people into and through this phase is answered by Bridges this way

1. You can explain the basic *purpose* behind the outcome you seek. People have to understand the logic of it before they turn their minds to work on it.

2. You can paint a *picture* of how the outcomes will look and feel. People need to experience it imaginatively before they can give their hearts to it.

3. You can lay out a step-by-step *plan* for phasing in the outcome. People need a clear idea of how they get where they need to go.

4. You can give each person a *part* to play in both the plan and the outcome itself. People need a tangible way to contribute and participate (Bridges, 1991, p. 52).

Not every member of the staff will need all four of these actions, but every staff will need them. Each person on the staff will have his/her own area of need, which may not be reflected by the

staff in general. For that reason it is important for the new leader to cover all four areas and revisit them as often as necessary. People need to know where they are going, how they are going to get there, and what will happen when they arrive.

Presenting a clear vision and the plan for achieving that vision is one way to ease the worries of the staff in this final phase of change. In the book, Rethinking Leadership Excellence in Schooling, Thomas Sergiovanni credits Warren Bennis as arguing that a compelling vision is the key ingredient of leadership in the excellent organizations he studied. Vision refers to the capacity to create and communicate a view of a desired state of affairs that includes commitment among those working in the organization (Sergivanni, 1999, p. 10).

Thus we see that just as communication was the key to successfully completing the first two phases of change, it is also the key in this last phase of change. However, in this last phase of change, the leader must be able to communicate his or her vision and articulate a plan for its achievement. The problem here is that during this time there is very little chance of finding mutual agreement on what that vision should be.

> As one principal noted, I am working on a vision-but to be worth a damn it has to be a
> vision that comes from and reflects the thinking of the whole school community. It is a
> very complicated process to try to find a consensus where at the moment little exists
> (Barth, 1990, p. 154)

It is the job of the new leader to create a consensus and turn that consensus into a vision that reflects shared goals and objectives for the school. If the leader has listened carefully during the first two phases of the change process, he/she should have some idea of what the school community desires in terms of vision and how much the share holders are willing to contribute to the achievement of this vision.

Armed with this knowledge, it is the new leader's job to shape a vision that can be shared by all the stakeholders. This is no small task and will require the leader to revisit and revise his/her own personal vision often. Communication and compromise are the keys to the success of this last phase of change.

Since not all shareholders will enter the new beginning at the same time, the leader must be sure to continually and consistently explain the purpose for what is being done. Only if people understand the need behind the new vision will they be able to focus on the challenges this new beginning will create. Some shareholders may still be holding on to the old ways, secretly or openly, and until they internalize the necessity of the new vision and assimilate an understanding of how it will make things better for them, they will continue to resist the change. The leader must deliberately and patiently communicate the new vision to these people, stressing the importance and value of the cooperation of all shareholders in making the vision a reality. Knowing the purpose and seeing the big picture will help to bring reluctant shareholders into the new beginning.

Allowing all shareholders to have a hand in making the plan used to achieve the new vision will also help to insure success for the change. Bridges says this requires a transition management plan rather than a plan to manage change.

A change management plan starts with an outcome and works backwards, step by step, to create the necessary preconditions for that outcome. A transition management change, on the other hand, starts where people are and then works forward, step by step, through the process of leaving the past behind, getting through the neutral zone and profiting from it, emerging with new attitudes, behaviors and identity (Bridges, 1991, p. 58-59).

Plans, personal or organizational, play a very important part in this process. This plan is not a large-scale outline of program instillation or dates when grade level reorganization will take place. That is a plan for change. A transition plan lays out when, where and how people will receive the information and support they need to make the transition. It lets people know when and where the transition team will meet and invites group participation. It clearly sets up times for question and answers discussions, and lets everyone know what training courses are available and where they will be held.

While this type of plan is in itself an organizational tool for the new administrator, it is a lifeline to those who are making the change. The very fact that such a plan exists is comforting to anyone who is still unsure about the change. This plan shows people where they fit in the new beginning, and once people know what is expected of them they can begin to redirect their energies from worry to work. It is this plan that gives them a part to play in transition management as well as change management. It is this plan that gives them an insight into problems and a voice in the solutions. It is the implementation of this plan that ties the shareholders to the end results of the change; they have contributed to the plan and by doing so have committed themselves to making the vision a reality. Bridges maintains that once a majority of the share holders have made the commitment to the plan and thereby the vision, the share holders need to celebrate the transition for although much may still need to be accomplished, the pieces are now in place for the vision to become reality.

Conclusion

Change is an inevitable part of the school environment. Any change, large or small, will cause stress upon those directly affected. The faster the change and the more drastic the change

18

the more stress will be produced. The success or failure of the change is not determined by the size or the speed of the change. It can, however, be explicitly tied to the way in which the change is handled by those in a position of authority. If those in authority try to rush the change and by doing so ignore the need of the shareholders to go through the transition, the change is destined to failure.

People going through change need time to give up what they have had in the past in order to embrace the change for the future. Change is an external situational process; transition is the internal, psychological process people go through during the time of change. The process of transition may take some shareholders longer than others, but every shareholder must go through the process if the change is to succeed.

Those in authority during the change process must create an atmosphere of openness, giving shareholders information and guidance through the process. They must review and revisit their own needs to be sure that their needs are also the needs of the shareholders. They must be firm in their resolve to the change and consistent in their approach. They must give the shareholders an opportunity to buy into the change and empower them to use their creativity to develop the procedures and processes necessary for the change to be a success.

Only if the psychological process of transition is managed successfully and shareholders are given the guidance and reassurance they need and desire will the change be a success. While change may be inevitable in educational administration, successful change is not.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

<u>Introduction</u>

The data collected was used to determine the effects of administrative change on the environment and culture of Magnolia Public School, a small elementary school located in Camden County. After a budget defeat, the Board of Education decided to cut an administrative position rather than cut programs. This administrative cut caused the school to change its administrative structure, going from a building with a principal and a superintendent to a school with only a chief school administrator. The former superintendent became the chief school administrator. One might assume this type of change, one of position rather than person, would not cause major concern or transformation in the building. However, the modification in administrative roles forced the shareholders to make many adjustments in their daily routines as well as in their long-term goals.

The qualitative research done by the intern shed light on the emotional, physical, and psychological changes of the shareholders. It identified and categorized the positive and negative effects caused directly or indirectly by the administrative restructuring of the school. This research traced the emotional ups and downs of the shareholders as they attempted to adjust their roles in the educational process. It also exposed the stress caused by the change and direct impact that stress had on the shareholders as well as the Chief School Administrator. Finally, the research uncovered the effects of the change on professional motivation and attitudes of the teaching staff.

## General Description of the Research Design

The intern used the ethnographic methodology to study the effects of administrative change on the school environment and culture. Through the use of observation field notes, interviews, surveys and the examination of documents and material cultural, the intern was able to ascertain how the school's culture and environment were altered by the change in the school's administrative structure which resulted in a change of roles for the administrator.

By delving into the memos and directives of the former principal it was easily established that a top down leadership style had been the norm during his tenure. It was also easy to see that the former Superintendent played a very small part in the day-to-day operation of the building.

Speaking to staff members reemphasized the fact that staff members did not feel that they had a part in the decisions made by the former principal. Through casual questioning it became apparent that this was one area they hoped would change with the administrative restructuring.

Surveys done at the beginning of the study confirmed the original findings and brought to the forefront issues not anticipated by the intern. As these issues arose and as the administrative situation changed, the intern adjusted survey questions and the focus of the study to reflect the direct correlation of staff perception of the existing leadership of the building and the existing leader.

## Development and Design of the Research Implementation

The intern began the research during the summer by immersion into the material culture of the previous administrator. Memos, directives, and parent letters were reviewed. Committee selection was analyzed in an effort to establish a pattern. The question of why staff members were chosen to sit on committees became an issue, as did the question of whether or not such

committees ever met or if staff input was ever considered in the decision making process. Through this immersion the intern began to get a sense of the school's prior climate and the level of staff participation in the decision making process.

In order to make sure that all shareholders in the school community had input into the research, key informants were identified at each level of the school structure including teaching staff, support staff and parent groups. Surveys were given to key informants. These surveys were designed to confirm the thoughts of the staff with regard to the prior administration as well as to ascertain expectations for the new administration. (See Appendix I)

Interviews, both formal and informal, were done. Hallway discussions served to capture the mood of the day, while more formal interviews took place as the situation warranted. Verbal and nonverbal responses served to give the intern a true picture of the building's mood. Since parent groups were active in the building, shareholders from these groups were easily accessible. All participants were aware of the intern's purpose and willingly shared their point of view. (See Appendix II) Observation and field notes were made throughout the period. In all cases the intern acted as and was perceived as a participant observer.

Description of the Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The target population was defined as the shareholders of the Magnolia Public School. The shareholders were defined as the teaching staff, the support staff, and parent groups including the Parent Teacher Organization, the Booster Club and the town's governing body. The Mayor, who is a member of both the PTO and Booster Club, represented the town's governing body.

*Representation* from each group was selected for survey and interview. These representatives were typical of the group and by the nature of the personality had become leaders in their respective groups or organizations. The exception to this would be the mayor who was elected by the population of the Borough. The teaching staff was broken down by grade level clusters, and the support staff was grouped by the nature of their responsibility. The intern employed purposeful sampling.

## Description of the Data Collection Approach

The data was collected in three ways. First, targeted shareholders were surveyed monthly and interviewed as the situation warranted. Second, the intern observed and informally interviewed the shareholders in the school setting, at meetings and at after school activities. Lastly, all shareholders were surveyed twice during the year to insure the validity of the responses of the target group.

## Description of the Data Analysis Plan

The data was divided into categories. These categories were determined by the subsets of the shareholders in order to gain the perspective of each group with regard to the effects of the administrative change. The data was then analyzed to see how each member of the subgroup perceived their role in the new school environment. Patterns and cross over concerns were identified. An attempt was made to identify the major concern of each group. This information was used to draw conclusions as to the strengths and weaknesses of the new administrative structure as well as to the strengths and weaknesses of the leadership of the new administrator.

Chapter 4

Findings of Study

<u>Introduction</u>

In May of 2002 the Magnolia Board of Education made a decision that sent shock waves throughout the Magnolia Public School Community. These waves transcended the building walls into the community itself causing opposition groups to form and setting the stage for battles both in and out of school, as well as in and out of court. After the defeat in April of the proposed 2002-2003 school budget which was to give taxpayers a one half-cent decrease in the school tax rate, the Magnolia Board of Education was forced to reexamine the proposed budget. Teachers were aware of the defeat but had no input into where the necessary cuts would be made. In the building at that time there was an air of uncertainty, but no real alarm. The budget defeat was not unusual for Magnolia; what was to follow, however, was unusual for this small "B" district in Camden County.

The Board of Education had only two choices, cut personnel or cut programs. There was a great deal of speculation among the staff as to which alternative would be chosen. Cutting programs was not a realistic option. The only in-school program, which could be cut, was the Transitional First grade. And while a Transitional First Grade may be a luxury in some districts, in Magnolia, with a 20% Special Education population, it was a necessity. This class had become the acceptable placement for students not ready for first grade. Parents in the community would consent to placement in the T-1 class, but would fight retention in Kindergarten. For the community, cutting the Transitional First grade was not an option. The only other program cuts that would have been feasible would have been the after school sports

activities. Again, the community would not tolerate such a move, so the Board of Education was forced to look else where to find the necessary dollars.

The search for dollars led the Magnolia Board of Education to take a hard look at personnel and the existing administrative structure. The district employed a superintendent, a building principal, a business administrator on a shared time contract, as well as a director of special services. With a student population of approximately 475, it seemed to most community members that the district was top heavy. Thus the Board of Education made the decision to cut the building principal and bring the business administrator in on a full time basis. The plan was that the business administrator, the director of special services, and the superintendent who would assume the title of chief school administrator, would share the load of administrative work.

Had the administrative restructuring gone as planned, the Magnolia School Community would have faced several challenges. However, when the Business Administrator was removed from his job due to criminal charges filed by another district, and the Chief School Administrator was out due to a stress-induced seizure, these challenges grew into what seemed to be insurmountable obstacles.

Acting as a participant observer, the intern chronicled the changes made by the Magnolia School community and the effects these changes had on the school culture and environment.


How did a change in leadership affect the climate of a school?

The change in administrative structure came as a shock to the staff and the community. A survey of the gatekeepers indicates they were not aware that a change in the administrative structure of the district was coming, nor had they been asked for their input. Although they all

acknowledged that they knew about the budget defeat, all were surprised at the decision the Board had made in an effort to cut cost. Most felt the change would not be good for the school and questioned the ability of the newly formed administrative team to meet the day-to-day operational needs.

The health of the new Chief School Administrator was an issue as well as the ability of the Director of Special Services to work effectively with the staff. The need for a full time Business Administrator was questioned in light of the fact that the district had been managing with a Business Administrator on a part time basis for over three years. There were also concerns about how the change had been made and why it was done so secretively. Questions involving the motives of the Board of Education and those of the Chief School Administrator surfaced in the community.

Since a majority of the staff was not fond of the building principal, they did not rally to his aid. They simply adopted a wait and see position. Most of the staff at Magnolia had seen several administrators come and go; they developed a self-preservation attitude which allowed them to function. However, the tension in the building was notably elevated. People stayed in their rooms. Conversations in the hallway were limited and usually in a whisper. Small groups of people began to congregate in the rooms of the gatekeepers of the building. People were searching for facts and asking the hard questions.

From the Superintendent's office there was no information regarding the administrative change. There was no clear plan for reorganization disseminated to the staff. Due to this lack of communication, people began to speculate as to the future of the school. Opposition groups began to form, both in and out of the building. One group was made up of people who were not directly opposed to the change in the administrative structure but were opposed to the lack of

staff and community input into the change. Another group opposed a change in the administrative structure. This group saw no way that one person could handle the job of principal and superintendent. It was their contention that a school the size of Magnolia needs a full time principal. They were willing to concede the fact that a part time superintendent might be a plausible solution to the district's need to save money. A third group, made up of former Board of Education members became very vocal. They seemed to take the change in the administrative structure far more personally than the other groups. Perhaps this is because many of them were on the Board of Education when the former principal was hired, or perhaps it was because they had approved the budget that had gone down to defeat. For whatever the reason, second-guessing the current Board of Education became a daily activity of the "shadow board."

The decision by the Board of Education turned the Central Office into a combat zone. The principal was resentful that he was being let go. His attitude was at best hostile toward the people he perceived as doing nothing to help him. A review of the material culture showed that he simply stopped doing his job with regard to discipline which caused resentment among the teachers. He allied himself with the shadow board which had begun to make allegations of collusion between the Superintendent and the School Business Administrator. The principal did not attend graduation or any of the end of the year activities which further angered parents and teachers.

The eighth-grade students seemed more concerned with the end-of-the year festivities than with the change in administration. When the principal did not make an appearance at graduation, none of the students asked any questions. The Chief School Administrator and the eighth grade teachers, with the help of the Central Office Staff, ran the event. The younger students did not seem to be concerned. There were no visible displays, no good-bye cards or

other signs of regret. Although a review of the discipline reports showed that a higher than average number of sixth grade students were sent to the office after the announcement of the administrative change, this may simply have been due to the time of year rather than to the administrative change.

During the last week in June 2002, there was a verbal battle between the new Chief School Administrator and the leaving principal. This battle resulted in the principal's leaving the building one-week early due to stress and threatening to file suit against the district for unfair termination of his contract. It also served to strengthen the alliance between the principal and the shadow board.

In July, the former principal filed the law suit against the Board of Education and the shadow board began making its presence known at every Board meeting. The Board of Education was questioned at length as to the wisdom of the decision they had made. The health of the Chief School Administrator became an issue, as did the catastrophic illness clause, which had been made part of her contract. The fact that she had to have a pacemaker inserted the previous summer was a major concern. There was also much speculation as to her ability to keep up with the day-to-day running of the building. Casual conversation with the central office staff revealed that they were glad to see the principal leave, but had serious concerns regarding the health of the Chief School Administrator. They wondered if the new position would be demanding for her and thus cause further deterioration in what they perceived as a questionable health situation.

The PTO supported the change; making offers to help wherever possible. The Booster Club seemed to follow the teachers' lead, maintaining a wait and see attitude. They did not openly support or oppose the change. However, one of the former Booster Club members did

become a very vocal part of the shadow board. The community at large did not become openly involved in the controversy. If they were displeased with the administrative change, they did not voice an opinion. However, one must remember this is the same community that voted against the 2002-2003 budget, even with the one-half cent decrease in the school tax it generated. This budget defeat would imply apathy among the town residents or a negative attitude directed toward those running the school.

How did the leadership style of the new administrator alter the milieu of the school?

The teachers knew this administrator as Superintendent of the district. Many of them considered her to be fair with contractual issues; however, they had not seen her on a daily basis and had not developed a working relationship with her. They knew her as the person of last resort, not the person who dealt with the daily problems of the school.

The gatekeepers expressed concerns over her ability to make the role change. They did not know how much support they could expect from her, nor did they know what she would expect of them. They were apprehensive about her dealing with discipline and her ability to deal with parents. The Chief School administrator was not unaware of these concerns and tried to eliminate them where possible.

Just before school started the Chief School Administrator had a meeting with the intern and an administrator from a neighboring district. This administrator had recently gone through a similar administrative structural change and was willing to share her expertise. The next day a meeting with representatives from the Magnolia School Education Association, the Board of Education, the intern, and the Director of Special Services was held. At the second meeting the Chief School Administrator disseminated the information she had gained regarding how to run a

district with this new administrative structure. Members of the group voiced their concerns and discussed how to overcome anticipated obstacles. All made concessions, thus all came away from the meeting feeling that their opinions were heard and valued. This meeting epitomized the new administrator's leadership style. By her own account, the Chief School Administrator believes in empowering her staff and allowing them to have input into the basic running of the school. This represents a contribute and commit style of leadership, which is a philosophical change from the leadership style of the previous building principal.

A review of the material culture left by the previous principal gave the appearance that he was an administrator who valued staff input. However, further investigation showed this was not the case. A memo urging staff to volunteer for the scheduling committee was put out in March 2002. There was viable evidence to support the fact that several members of the staff did sign up for the committee. According to a group conversation with the staff members on the committee, at the first and only meeting of the scheduling committee the staff members were given a completed schedule and told there would be no major changes. When a member of the middle school staff questioned why the physical education teacher was teaching study skills, she was told the physical education teacher was elementary certified and could teach anything he was told to teach. A primary teacher who voiced her concerns about having her preparation period first period, explaining that children of that age had difficulty settling down after specials, was told that everyone had to take a turn with first period prep and this was her year. Thus, the approach used by the previous administrator seemed to be in direct opposition to the contribute and committee leadership used by the present administrator.

Having dealt with the previous administrator's leadership style, many teachers still had doubts about whether or not their opinions mattered. Two surveys, one concerning a change in

30

the progress report/report card procedures and one concerning agendas, produced less than 30% participation. When teachers were randomly asked why they did not fill out and return the surveys, most indicated that they really didn't think anyone would look at the surveys anyway, so why bother filling them out.

When teachers were given a schedule with only their lunchtime and their preparation time filled in, they were not comfortable completing the rest of their schedule. It was only after the Chief School Administrator told them for a second time that she felt that as professionals they knew what was best for their students that the teachers began to earnestly work on figuring how they would spend their day. Although most appreciated the opportunity, it was obvious that they were skeptical. This skepticism had deep roots and was one of the most difficult obstacles the new administrator had to overcome.

The PTO saw a dramatic change in the way they were viewed by the new Chief School Administrator. This group had tried with little success to work with the former building principal. When the PTO wanted to start a newsletter for parents, the former principal told them that the students did a newspaper and that was enough. When the PTO wanted to buy agenda books for the students, they were again rebuffed.

## How will the new administrative structure affect the day-to-day operations of the school?

There were structural changes in the existing programs brought about by the administrative change. It was felt that these changes were necessary to give the Chief School Administrator time to handle the day-to-day operation of the school. It was believed that this change would help to lighten the load on the Chief School Administrator. The structural change shifted programs from what was previously the domain of the Building Principal to the Director

of Special Services. The leadership in Special Services did not change. Programs covered by Special Services were increased to include Kindergarten and Pre-school as well as Basic Skills. A survey of the gatekeepers showed that they considered Special Services a weak area in need of immediate attention. They felt the leadership in that area was lacking and hoped that this change in the administrative structure would help to eliminate the conceived problems. That did not happen.

In a follow up survey which was given out during the first marking period, Special Services was still the main area of concern. The gatekeepers expressed concern over the lack of professional consideration and cooperation of the Director. More than one grievance had been filed with the Chief School Administrator. What was to be a move that would reduce the workload of the Chief School Administrator turned out to be a move that caused unrest among the staff and indirectly caused more work for the Chief School Administrator.

The other programs in the building stayed basically intact. Teachers unwittingly picked up the leadership roles where necessary and the intern became an active part of the administrative team. When speaking to the teachers about the changes, most seemed unaware of their new role. They were simply doing what they felt needed to be done. This attitude on the part of the staff caused more problems, for with no clear leader in the building there was no clear goal or objective. The staff was performing its duties on a daily basis. People were making decisions without all the facts and without knowing the full ramifications of what they were doing. While the students saw no change in their educational program, tempers were growing short and staff members were not sure who to seek out with their problems. Since many of the staff members live in the community, these problems were taken home and in some cases shared with members of the shadow board.

The shadow board took full advantage of this situation. Many of them made frequent visits to the building seeking documents including Board of Education minutes, salary figures and contracts. These visits caused the Chief School Administrator to be on the defensive. She was frequently in meetings with the shadow board, thus causing the day-to-day operation of the building to be put on hold.

In late September, when charges were filed against the Business Administrator, the situation grew worse. With many of the grants waiting to be finished and many of the financial reports due in Trenton; the attention of the Chief School Administrator was further diverted. The ripple effect of this diversion caused more uncertainty among the staff and added fuel to the growing community unrest. Members of the shadow board now had a new avenue to pursue. There was a subtle change in the wait and see attitude of the teachers, and the tension in the building began to escalate.

In conversations with the gatekeepers of the staff it was clear that they were having difficulty supporting the Chief School Administrator. Although they still felt she could do the job, they felt she was not doing the job, and while they understood the reasons for her lack of effectiveness, they wanted leadership. Many were tired of not having their questions answered and were concerned that the school had no direction. They felt the Chief School Administrator was not accessible to them. One even remarked "when she's here, she's not really here." When asked for clarification of the remark, the teacher explained that she had had a meeting earlier in the day with the Chief School Administrator who was so distracted that nothing had been solved.

At the end of October the gatekeepers were again surveyed. They had two major concerns. The first was the lack of communication and the other was over who was running the building. Many of them who were from the beginning concerned over how the building would

survive on a daily basis under the new administrative structure, now felt even more concerned. They felt that the building was running itself. Everyone was doing their job, but no one was coordinating the activities. There had been no teachers' meetings and something as simple as the revision of the report card procedure had taken several memos and was still unclear. They also did not feel that they had been given enough information concerning the state of the building to be honest with parents or other members of the community. Teachers were being asked about the financial well being of the district, the law suit brought against the district by the former administrator, as well as about the plight of the Business Administrator, yet they had no information with which to answer these questions. This lack of communication was fueling the dispute with the shadow board which came to every Board of Education meeting hostilely demanding answers.

The problem came to a head in November when the chief School Administrator suffered a stress induced seizure while meeting with three members of the shadow board. This brought again to the forefront the physical condition of the Chief School Administrator and her ability to lead the district, as well as the controversy concerning the catastrophic illness clause in her contract. More importantly, however, it brought about another change in the administrative structure at Magnolia school.

In the hours and days that followed the seizure, rumors among the staff and the community members ran rampant. The Shadow Board was busy absolving themselves of any guilt while the Gatekeepers were busy scurrying around in search of answers. The Board of Education in conjunction with the Camden County Office of Education found an interim superintendent to assume control of the building. However, there was no communication between the Board or the Director of Special Services and the staff. The new interim

superintendent was not introduced to the staff, nor did any letter of explanation go home to the parents. Once again people were left with more questions than answers. This lack of communication led to more unrest and for the first time true alarm among the people working in the building.

The new leader was able to handle the day-to-day operation of the building quite well. Discipline issues were taken care of daily and according to some teachers were handled in a more effective manner. However, grievances were put on hold, as were reports that were due in the County Office or the State Department. The shadow board went underground, although still active they were not as visible in the building. They did make an antagonistic appearance at the December Board of Education. While much of the discussion at the Board of Education meeting centered on old issues, the Shadow Board did use the Board of Education's lack of communication concerning the Chief School Administrator and the interim superintendent as a new bone of contention.

The lack of communication and the health of the Chief School Administrator were two of the main issues that had troubled the gatekeepers since September. Though other issues surfaced during interviews and casual conversations, most of the people interviewed felt that the majority of the problems facing the school, even the problems with the Director of Special Services, could have been solved had the Chief School Administrator been able to attend work every day and had she been able to publicize the information necessary to squelch the rumors surrounding the elimination of the principal's position and the criminal charges facing the Business Administrator.

Chapter 5

## Introduction

The literature suggests that the change in the administrative structure at the Magnolia Public School was destined to fail before the criminal charges were filed against the Business Administrator and before the Chief School Administrator had a seizure. The change, regardless of its merit, was not looked at as a process by the Board of Education, but rather as a single act that would solve the financial problems of the district. If any change is viewed as a disruption in that which is familiar, then it is easy to understand why a person or, in the case of a school, a group of people need a transition plan to take them from that which is familiar to that which is unfamiliar. With out a transition plan people will naturally cling to what they know, to that which they are accustomed and where they feel safe. They will, consciously or unconsciously, develop ways to insulate themselves from the change rather than risk being wrong.

Magnolia had no transition plan in place to help the staff go through the administrative change. Thus small groups began to form within the school and the community as well. These groups unquestionably did their jobs; however, what was done was in the best interest of the each individual group and not necessarily what was in the best interest of the school. Each continued to play its part in the school, but there was no guiding force.

## How did the change in administrative structure affect the climate of the building?

Prior to the administrative change at Magnolia Public School, the climate could best be described as one of frustration and discontent. The daily educational commitments were being met, but there was no spark of excitement or clamor for knowledge about new educational

practices or grant opportunities by the staff. There were no assembly programs and few community service projects that involved the students. The parents were rarely visible at the school, unless it was to drop off forgotten book bags or lunch money.

After the administrative change the climate fluctuated from relief to anticipation to uncertainty and fear. When the change was announced, teachers reacted, first with shock, which was quickly replaced by relief. Many felt that a majority of the school's problems had roots in the office of the building principal and that without him things would go more smoothly. When given the opportunity to have true input into their schedules and when asked for their opinions about revamping programs the relief turned into anticipation. However, when the business administrator was faced with criminal charges and the health of the new administrator prevented her from coming to work, the anticipation quickly subsided and the staff fell back into the self-preservation mode they knew so well.

Underlying all of these emotions was an uncertainty that daunted everyone. These people, who wanted so desperately to believe that this change would work for the betterment of the school, were constantly searching for information and trying to find answers to questions so that they could help to make the new administrative change work. It was only after the new Chief School Administrator was taken out on a stretcher that they gave up and went back to their self-preservation mode.

How did the leadership style of the new administrator affect the milieu of the school?

The data showed that the old administrator used a top down management style. Although he formed committees and sought teacher input it was evident to those involved that he paid little attention to their input. In most cases teachers felt the old administrator was just going through

the motions and that he was simply doing what was expected of him. They felt he had placed little, if any, value on their opinions and only truly listened to them when he needed information that was out of his area of expertise. Community members were not invited to participate in decisions that affected the school. Their ideas were often rebuffed, and they were seldom allowed to offer suggestions. This leadership style led to resentment and cynicism among the staff and community members.

The new administrator represents a totally opposite leadership style. She truly believes in empowering her staff and involving community members. She has an open door policy. She invites teachers to seek her counsel and guidance. She works hard to find amiable resolution to the district's problems. She encourages and relies on the involvement of the community to make the school successful. This leadership style is much more time consuming, and the new administrator often leaves the building very late. However, the teachers and the community members seem to be more at ease with this administrator and seem to react to her in a genuine manner. There is little resentment toward her with most people feeling that she valued them as a person and as a professional.


## How did the administrative change affect the day-to-day operation of the school?

With the old administrative structure the building principal ran interference between the Superintendent and parents and staff. He also was in charge of discipline, did the county report and had input into many of the state reports. He handled the day-to-day running of the school. Although many would question the effectiveness with which he did these jobs, he did lighten the load of the Superintendent.

The new administrative structure reeked havoc with the day-to-day operation of the building. The open door policy of the new administrator forced her to let reports and paper work wait while she dealt with teachers and students. The departure of the Business Administrator necessitated that she pick up some of the work from the business office. She faced constant interruptions due to discipline issues. The shadow board took up much of her time as she sat with them to try and defuse the growing community unrest. The current Board of Education also made demands on her time. There were many times that the Director of Special Services or the intern was called upon to handle a situation because the new administrator was just too busy.

Although the students did not seem to be affected by the day-to-day changes brought about by the administrative change, the staff was. There were many times when their questions had to go unanswered or their concerns were left unheard. Staff meetings were not held from September until February. Memos or morning announcements became the accepted form of communication. Some staff members even joked that the most reliable communication at Magnolia came from the school grapevine.

Implications of Study on Leadership Skills

The new administrator at Magnolia Public School adhered to a philosophy that directly relates to all six of the **ISLLC Standards for School Leaders**. Like the standards, she tried to redefine the role of the school leader in relationship to the other shareholders in the educational process and insure the success of all students. She tried to push the school into a more *gemeinschaft* environment by expanding the school community and trying to increase the role each community member had in the success of the students. By her actions, the administrator, like the standards, sought to bring the entire school community, school staff, families,

community members, and administrators together to create a shared vision with shared responsibility and shared accountability to increase the opportunity for student success.

Due to many circumstances unique to this study, the new administrator was not successful in her attempts to create a shared vision for the Magnolia School District. The lack of communication with staff concerning the administrative change was a major reason for her inability to meet with success. Each time she tried to convene the staff, other pressing issues would surface. After the Business Administrator was charged, the shadow board began to question her relentlessly. This questioning as well as the increased workload and her attempts to quiet the growing community unrest took a toll on her health and made success all but impossible.

However, one cannot discount the attempt made by the new administrator, for while she did not totally achieve her goals, she did make a difference in the attitudes of many teachers, and she did reopen the school to the community. She made the school more student centered and empowered the teachers. She indirectly forced the teachers to assume roles of leadership and to communicate with each other. These are all positive leadership skills which cannot be discounted by her inability to achieve the ultimate goal of administrative reorganization.

Implication of the Study on Organizational Change

What became clear through this study was the fact that people going through any kind of change need communication. They need time to communicate with each other, but more importantly they need communication and direction from the people who lead them. They need to know what is expected of them and what they can expect from their leadership. They need to be respected and empowered as professionals. They need to know that their opinions and

questions have value and that they have some say in the direction of the newly created organization.

From the surveys taken, the interviews conducted, and the casual conversations, the gatekeepers in this study believed that with the proper communication almost any problem can be overcome. They also believed that the lack of communication could virtually kill any chance of successful change in a school system.

Future Study

Administrative change is inevitable in education. What is also inevitable is the anxiety such a change creates. Future study is needed to find a definitive way to make this change successful. Research should center on the commonalities between school districts experiencing change and the different means taken by these districts to facilitate successful change. Special attention should be given to the transition process as experienced by the staff and the communication tools used. Such research would greatly aid new administrators by identifying various leadership techniques and their effects on staff behavior as well as their implication in the over all success of the administrative change.

# References

Barth, R. S. (1990). *Improving schools from within.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bridges, W. (1991). *Managing transitions: making the most of change.* New York: Harper Collins.

Cordeiro, P. A., & Cunningham, W. G. (2000). *Educational administration: a problem based approach.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Custer, J. A. (2000) *Managing internal administrative change.* Retrieved October 5, 2002 from http://www.aallnet.org/products/11j_v92n01/20.

Edwards, C., & Walton, G. (2000). *Change and the academic library: understanding, managing and coping.* Retrieved October 2, 2002 from http://www.is.unn.ac.uk/impel.

Griffiths, D. E. (1956). *Human relations in school administration.* New York: Appelton-Century-Crofts.

Herting, E. (2001). *Retaining principals.* ERIC Digest NO 147. Retrieved October 9, 2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed454567.html.

Hughes, L. W., Norris, C. J, & Ubben, G. C. (2001). *The principal: creative leadership for effective schools.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Lashway, L. (1997). *Visionary leadership.* ERIC Digest NO 110. Retrieved October 10, 2002 from the World Wide Web http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed402643.html.

Linotos, L. B. (1992). *Transformational leadership.* ERIC Digest NO 72. Retrieved October 10, 2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed347636.html.

*Making Change.* (1998). Retrieved October 5, 2002 from North Central Regional Educational

    Laboratory web site: http://www.ncrel.org.

Sergiovanni, T. S. (1999). *Rethinking leadership.* Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Training and

    Publishing.

Tewel, K. J. (1995). *Despair at the central office.* [Electronic version]. Educational Leadership,

    52, (7), 1-7. Retrieved October 10, 2002 from http://www.ased.org.

Wendel, F. C., Hoke, F. A., & Joekel, R. G. (1996). *Outstanding school administrators: their*

    *keys to success.* West Port, CT: Preager Publishers.

Wasley, P. A. (1992). *When leaders leave.* [Electronic version]. Educational Leadership, 50,

    (3). Retrieved October 10, 2002 from http://www.ased.org.

Appendix I

Research Instruments

Staff Identifiers

Interview Questions

Staff Surveys

## Participant Identifier

Thank you for your help.

For the purposes of this research you will be known only by title and letter (i.e. Teacher "A").

None of the information you contribute will be used for anything other than support data. At no time will your name or your opinions are shared with the administration or any other staff member.

General Information

Name_____

Age Bracket:  20-30_____30-40_____40 +_____

Number of years in the Education Profession_____

Degrees/Certifications held_____

Grade levels/Content areas you have taught_____

Number of years at Magnolia Public School_____

Number of schools in which you have worked_____

Number of administrators for which you have worked_____

Other work experience_____

Group Interview Questions

10/1/02

1. What positive things do you see happening in the building?

2. What types of programs would you like to see come into the building?

3. Compared to last year, how would you rate the day to day running of the school?

4. What, if anything, do you think would help people get through the problem with the Business Administrator?

5. What do you see as the school's major problem today?

Group Interview Questions

11/18/02

1. How do you think the absence of the Chief School Administrator is affecting the day to day operation of the school?

2. What do you see as the main differences between the old administrator and the new administrator?

3. Do you think the staff has been well informed concerning the Business Administrator problem and the problems of the Chief School Administrator?

4. Do you think the Board of Education adequately informed the staff, parents and the community about the interim Chief School Administrator?

5. What do you see as the main problems facing the district?

Group Interview Questions

1/23/03

1.  Compare this year and last year at Magnolia Public School.

2.  What do you think were the major problems with the administrative restructuring?

3.  How has your opinion changed regarding the administrative changes?

4.  Do you feel you are being heard by the administration?

5.  What are the two most pressing issues to be dealt with this year?

# Survey 1 (format altered for thesis purposes)

Thinking back to how you felt at the time when the change in administration was first announced please answer the following questions.

1. When I heard about the administration change I
   _____felt things here would stay pretty much the same
   _____was concerned about the future of the school
   _____really didn't think much about the change
   _____was happy at the prospects of a new leader in the building

Comment

_____

_____

_____

2. I felt the change in administration was
   _____necessary
   _____would be beneficial for all concerned
   _____would be the first step in making the school better
   _____had no opinion about the change

Comment

_____

_____

_____

3. I thought the new administrator would
   _____change existing procedures making things more difficult for me
   _____put in place programs that were unfamiliar
   _____allow me more educational freedom
   _____encourage my input into procedures and programs

Comment

_____

_____

_____

4. The way I heard about the change
   _____Through a formal announcement
   _____Through the "grapevine"

Comment

_____

_____

_____

Please rank the following items in order of priority with 1 being the most important.

_____the ability of the administrator to communicate his/her vision to the staff

_____the ability of the administrator to make decisions

_____the ability of the administrator to follow through on decisions

_____the ability of the administrator to keep staff abreast of possible changes

_____the ability of the administrator to ask for and use staff input into school matters

_____the ability of the administrator to ask for and use community resources

_____the ability of the administrator to be fair and consistent when dealing with all staff

_____the ability of the administrator to ease the staff through periods of change

Comments

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

# October Survey

Please read the following statements and check the appropriate response.

1. I feel confident that I know the ultimate goal of the district.
_____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

2. I understand the legal problems facing the district.
_____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

3. I have been given the information necessary to answer parents questions concerning the district's problems.
_____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

4. I feel the administrative restructuring is working well.
_____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

5. I understand and use the new chain of command in the district.
_____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

6. I feel my professional needs are being met by the district.
_____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

Please rank the following items in order of priority with 1 being the most important.

_____the ability of the administrator to communicate his/her vision to the staff

_____the ability of the administrator to make decisions

_____the ability of the administrator to follow through on decisions

_____the ability of the administrator to keep staff abreast of possible changes

_____the ability of the administrator to ask for and use staff input into school matters

_____the ability of the administrator to ask for and use community resources

_____the ability of the administrator to be fair and consistent when dealing with all staff

_____the ability of the administrator to ease the staff through periods of change

Comments

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

## December Survey

Please read the following statements and check the appropriate response.

1. I feel I have been given enough information concerning the Chief School Administrator to answer the questions of parents and students.
   _____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

2. I feel the attitude of most of the building staff is positive.
   _____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

3. I feel the staff has a clear defined goal for the year.
   _____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

4. I feel the district is more efficient and effective due to the administrative change.
   _____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

5. I think there is a direct correlation between the amount of information given to the staff and the amount of communication between the Board and the staff; and the effectiveness of the administrative change.
   _____I agree _____I disagree_____Not applicable

Comment

_____

_____

Please rank the following items in order of priority with 1 being the most important.

_____the ability of the administrator to communicate his/her vision to the staff

_____the ability of the administrator to make decisions

_____the ability of the administrator to follow through on decisions

_____the ability of the administrator to keep staff abreast of possible changes

_____the ability of the administrator to ask for and use staff input into school matters

_____the ability of the administrator to ask for and use community resources

_____the ability of the administrator to be fair and consistent when dealing with all staff

_____the ability of the administrator to ease the staff through periods of change

Comments

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix II

Material Culture

# MAGNOLIA PUBLIC SCHOOL
420 N. Warwick Road
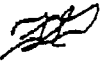Magnolia, NJ 08049
Phone: (856) 783-2994


THOMAS F. GRIGGS
Principal

MEMO #91

TO:        Magnolia Faculty

FROM:      Thomas F. Griggs

RE:        Faculty Meeting etc.

DATE:      March 25, 2002

Please be advised that our faculty meeting scheduled for Thursday, April 4, 2002 will be rescheduled due to our extended Spring break. The following meetings are scheduled for April, 2002.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Wednesday – April 10, 2002 | 3:10 P.M. | Faculty Meeting (Terra Nova grades 2,3,5,6,7) |
| Thursday – April 18, 2002 | 3:10 P.M. | Scheduling Committee Mtg. Lock Down Committee Mtg. |

Note: Faculty Meeting of April 18, 2002 postponed

Wednesday - April 23, 2002 4th period 11:08          ESPA Training
                                                     K. Butler
                                                     A. Miller


Note: Curriculum Resource coverage: 4/23          B. Moody
      K. LoCantore for Barbara Moody              S. Breitenstein
      C. Buckley for Stacey Breitenstein


c: Dr. Gibson
   Mrs. Linda Mackiewicz
   Ms. Janine Simonetti

# MAGNOLIA PUBLIC SCHOOL
## 420 N. Warwick Road
## Magnolia, NJ 08049
## Phone: (856) 783-2994
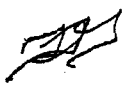
THOMAS F. GRIGGS
Principal

MEMO #94                        **Confidential**

TO:           Mrs. Lucille Anastasi

FROM:         Thomas F. Griggs

RE:           Possible Algebra Consideration

DATE:         April 18, 2002

     I've been in consultation with personnel at Sterling High School regarding possibilities for an Algebra I class. Your assistance in identifying grade seven students who may be recommended for an eight grade Algebra program would be appreciated. Those students should be maintaining an A or high B as a minimum grade. Please submit those student names to me by Wednesday, April 23, 2002 and again at the end of the school year. Be aware that we are only exploring possibilities at this time and your discretion is expected. See me with any questions or concerns. Thank you.

c: Dr. Gibson

May 13, 2002

Mr. Griggs,

In memo # 94 from April 18, you addressed the "possibility" of returning the Algebra program to the students of Magnolia School. In looking over my schedule for next year, I do not see any "possibility" of its returning. When I spoke to you about it, you indicated that the program would be done at Sterling. You stated at the meeting on Thursday, May 8, that all classes were to be heterogeneously grouped with all Special Education and Basic Skills students evenly split between the two classes. That would mean two groups go down to Sterling, 8H fourth period and 8T eighth period. Sterling is on block scheduling, having one period to two of ours. These students would miss another class as well. Also, because of the block scheduling, the students would have the class for only half of the year. What would they do for the rest of the year and how would they be graded? It seems that the most practical way to reinstate the program is to homogeneously group the students and conduct the program here. If the program returns, the seventh grade should take Pre-Algebra, and they should also be homogeneously grouped.

I also understand from the meeting that Mr. Eddy is not moving upstairs. That means when the sixth grade comes upstairs for Math, Science, and Language Arts, they will move through the entire school unescorted. Students are walked to "specials" as a class. They are not walked to their "regular" classes. We monitor the hallway, and it is not necessary. This new system eliminates that option. I assume that 6K homeroom is to be in the Basic Skills classroom. As it is currently structured, it cannot physically house a full class of students.

In speaking with Mrs. Horner, I understand that she will no longer teach eighth grade Language Arts. Next year Mrs. Finley will be responsible for this. I do not see any educational reason to take this class from a teacher experienced with the eighth-grade curriculum, GEPA preparation, and requirements for Sterling and place an inexperienced person in this position.

With approximately 110-120 students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, I do not see how all the parents who could potentially request conferences can be accommodated. Years ago, all three grades were upstairs. It did not work. Once again, we are revisiting a past mistake.

After dealing with the heterogeneous grouping this year, it seems that we must keep lowering our standards to allow students to pass. You cannot place self-contained Special Education students back in the regular classroom with no support and expect good results from everyone. Higher level skills are virtually impossible to develop.

Sincerely,

Lucille M. Anastasi

Cc: Dr. Gibson
    MSEA

To: Ms. Griggs

From: Ruth Hadick

Re: 2002-2003 Schedules

Date: 5/7/02

After reviewing the schedules that you gave me, I have the following concerns:

1- Lucille Anastasi + Ruth Hadick are the only regular ed. teachers teaching 6 class periods, 3 different grade levels, daily. All other reg. ed. teachers have 5 teaching periods and 1 enrichment period, daily.

2- In the 6,7,8$^{th}$ grades, there is no continuity in teachers teaching the Study Skills program.

3- On C. Finley's Schedule:
① Change 2$^{nd}$ pd. to read "8H LA" and 3$^{rd}$ pd. to read "8H SS" for Charlene to have continuity in subjects. ⟶

(b.) C. Finley has 7th everyday for enrichment – she never teaches these students

(c.) J Eddy has 8F for enrichment, everyday – he never teaches these students.

(4.) I see many problems in Mary Kopczynski's schedule

    (a.) I don't see where enrichment for Spec. Ed. is in resource room – so who is it with??

    (b.) 6th period – should be 7th Math.

    (c.) How do you schedule Math (gr. 7) + L.A (grade 7) at the same time??

These are the concerns that I mentioned to you on 4/23/02 during 8th pd. I would be happy to discuss any changes with you

Ruth Hadick

# Biographical Data

Name                          Dale H. Horner

High School                   Bridgeton High School
                             Bridgeton, New Jersey

Undergraduate                Bachelor of Arts
                             Elementary Education
                             Glassboro State College
                             Glassboro, New Jersey

Graduate                     Masters of Arts
                             School Administration
                             Rowan University
                             Glassboro, New Jersey

Present Occupation           Language Arts Teacher
                             Magnolia Public School
                             Magnolia, New Jersey