



Historical Overview Clovis Unified School District

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EDUCATIONAL ROLES

Preface

The establishment and operation of a school district must be the responsibility of the district's leaders, teachers, and parents. Without a smooth working relationship among all members of a school community, problems develop which can erode confidence in the educational system and ability of the practitioners to complete their job, which is education of the community's youth. Consequently, it is important for all members of the school district community to understand what each member's job entails, why it is important, and how it relates to the overall effectiveness of the school district.

Education is an all-encompassing endeavor. Without strong, effective leadership, it is not possible to achieve far-ranging goals. Administrators must have a cohesive, comprehensive plan to implement, to there is a continuity to the program offered to students. Classroom teachers must develop goals and objectives that meet school district criteria and must maintain established standards and expectations for all students. Parents must prepare their children to meet the day's tasks, support the school program, and send their children to school rested, fed, and ready to learn. Then, and only then, can the student begin to play his role in the learning process.

Clovis Unified School District has developed a system of delivering education to its students that is precise, yet flexible, traditional, yet creative. The foundation of this program is the recognition that each individual who touches a child's day has a role to play in the overall educational experience of Clovis Unified students. It is realized that each role is important and critical to the overall effectiveness of Clovis Unified's program. With that in mind, it is significant to the evolution of Clovis Unified to understand the interplay all C.U.S.D. staff has with each other, parents, and students.

Implied in this basic understanding of what the role of each person is is the fundamental, yet essential, trust that each member of this community perform his duties as capably as possible, in the interrelationship necessary to help the school district operate efficiently and educate thoroughly. Several levels of trust and understanding of individual roles must be established to assure students of the best education possible. These roles involve the relationships between administration to site principal; principal to teacher/parent/student; teacher to student/principal/parent; and parent to teacher/principal/administration. By analyzing the roles of administration, teachers, and parents in the Clovis Unified School District, it is possible to examine and understand what makes this school district so effective in meeting



its goal 1) of educating all children to a level where they can function in society and 2) of helping all children become true Sparthenians.

Role of a Leader

“The job of a leader is to keep focusing the attention of the people on the task that needs to be done and their responsibility to that task...If you want to be able to furnish leadership, you have to identify with the program, you have to be the heart and soul of the program; but, you have to be able to turn it loose.”

Floyd B. Buchanan, Ed.D.
Superintendent, C.U.S.D.

An educational leader must be able to assemble and to motivate a staff that believes in the educational program offered and that wants to do what is required to educate children, not because they have to do it, but because they want to do it. To create an environment where this thesis is allowed to flourish, a leader must establish the tone of the district’s policy, must recruit and develop qualified staff, and must communicate these goals to the community. In turn, the community of parents, private sector industry, and the Governing Board must provide feedback to the superintendent for him to be able to determine if the program in place is, indeed, effective in achieving the stated goals.

A superintendent is responsible for planning the direction of and means by which a school district will meet its primary goals of educating the children of its community. Such planning requires to superintendent to be flexible and a risk-taker, if the program is going to grow and adapt to an ever-changing world. Additionally, to be successful in maintaining a creative environment for administrators and teachers, the superintendent must compel these individuals to be responsible for their own areas and continually demand greater levels of performance from them. This contributes to a vital, productive program.

When planning the direction of a school district, the first step is to set major goals. Dr. Buchanan has indicated, “The superintendent has to look at, evaluate and mesh facts, trends, rumors, emotions, thinking and ‘climate’ within the district, and then try to set goals, always moving ahead, maintaining and encouraging the will of everyone to make these goals...If making changes, do so to make things better: don’t throw things out unless you know why and have something better to take its place.” Planning is a key leadership function, since it requires telling people where the district is going to go, while beginning to prepare for the change. Further, it requires to leader to anticipate the kind of support (material, personnel, financial) people will need to achieve new goals.



Once goals are set, the superintendent needs to determine if the goals are being met or if they are the goals the district truly intended. To this end, a leader must get feedback on his program, to scrutinize and analyze it, to evaluate what appears to be successful and what doesn't. If something seems wrong or not to be as intended when the goal was set, the superintendent must recognize this, make appropriate changes, and try something else.

"When you don't know what to do, do something. At least you'll know what to do or what not to do the next time! You never gain experience by just sitting there...No one is in danger when making forward progress: part of living is failing a little, succeeding a little. You can't stay at zero; you have to go plus or minus. Zero is only the fulcrum of the lever, and you can either be on the end, moving the weight, or you are the weight."

Floyd B. Buchanan, Ed.D.
Superintendent, C.U.S.D.

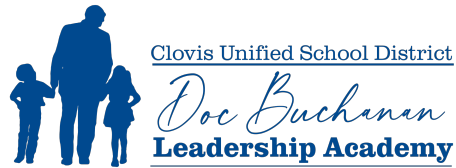
With that philosophy at the base of its educational program, Clovis Unified has striven to motivate its teachers by letting them know exactly what their role is to be. Rather than telling the teachers how they must teach, Clovis officials have set district educational goals with the understanding that each school and individual teacher may develop a program that best suits its community. By allowing its teachers the freedom to develop their own programs, while always striving to raise the level of standards, Clovis Unified administrators have cultivated a sense of ownership in the program on the part of its teachers. Teachers are more willing to work for and to support the district program because implementation of the program is theirs: they believe in how they are teaching, so they defend their right to teach. In knowing they are a vital component of the overall program; teachers are motivated to do the best job possible.

While educational goals of the district have occasionally been construed by some to be unreasonable and unattainable, the setting of such goals is a basic responsibility of the superintendent. Such encouragement to get the best and the most from District personnel is obligatory, if the superintendent is going to lead and to succeed. As Dr. Buchanan has noted, "When they don't do what they are capable of, then it's the kids who are being mistreated."

Setting goals and performance standards is only one facet of the superintendent's charge: the educational program can be only as good as its staff.

"The secret of implementation is to find people who are enthusiastic, who will take a change: so, you start with the ones who will do it...Just as there are master craftsmen, there have to be master teachers. My job is to search them out, find them out, and give them support."

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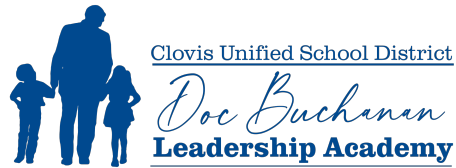
When hiring teachers and administrators, Clovis Unified School District has sought to find individuals of varied personalities, ones who are not “yes” men saying only what they think people want to hear; rather, teachers and administrators hired in C.U.S.D. are people competent in their fields, from a variety of backgrounds, who are able to relate to the broad spectrum of students and parents who compose the school district.

Identifying and hiring such professionals is one step toward developing a fully functional, first-rate teaching unit. It is also necessary to provide on-going staff development, if teachers are going to continue to grow with and to meet the challenges of an ever-changing society. Fundamental to staff development is an analysis of the people working in the district, what their capabilities are, and how their abilities and strengths fit the directions in which the district is planning to advance. Such analysis will produce three categories of staff: those who can do the job; those who can't do the job, and those who won't do the job.

In the Clovis Unified School District there are no problems with those individuals who “can” do the job. Similarly, if there are individuals who “won't” do the job, they are counselled to leave the district. It is the people who say they “can't” do the job who require further analysis. Generally, they fall into one of the two categories: 1) if they really can't do the job expected to them because they don't have the necessary skills and are unable to learn them, they are asked to leave the district; 2) if, however, they can't do an assigned task because they are unskilled in the area of instruction, but they have the ability to learn to do the task or they are willing and able to work in another area of instruction, then the District provides in-service, staff development conferences, and staff support. The District will also try to clarify its goals, to help these teachers better understand the overall program. With training, these “cant's” become “cans.”

By providing support to its staff, C.U.S.D. administrators encourage teachers to become “intrapreneurs.” This permits individual teachers the highest form of self-management, by allowing them the freedom to be innovative within an established organization. Such direct involvement in and responsibility for achieving stated goals compels teachers to evolve continually, and they then become good role models for the students.

Typical staff development sessions are designed to increase teaching skills and knowledge for better implementation of the overall instructional program within the district. Topics are developed from curriculum needs, evaluation surveys, faculty requests, principals' advisory committee meetings, and administrative recommendations. Focusing on increased mastery of subject content and the skills required to teach effectively, district administrators will support any program which on-site administrators or teachers feel would be beneficial. Their ultimate goal is to provide the community with the best teaching staff available. In compliance with California State law, the Governing Board of Clovis Unified School District approves the granting of staff development release time, and it may approve up to a maximum of eight days for this. This staff development is conducted on “Early Release” days, held once each month, during the school year.



As part of its on-going support of staff development, C.U.S.D. has an aggressive Doctoral Degree Program available to its teachers and staff. Believing that anyone who assumes a leadership position in the district should expect to maximize his educational career by preparing himself to the fullest, the Governing Board of Clovis Unified School District has encouraged and supported staff in obtaining doctoral degrees. The district is working to maintain fully one-half its administrative staff with doctorates or working toward doctorates. To assist in defraying the approximate \$20,000 each candidate spends for a doctoral degree, the Governing Board developed a partial pay-back program to successful doctoral candidates who remain in the district five years after completing the doctoral program: beginning one year after receiving a doctorate and again each year for five years, the teacher or administrator receives \$2,000/year. While this stipend does not cover all costs incurred, it is an added incentive and recognition of an additional commitment made by these staff members.

When a superintendent has established goals for his school district and has hired and developed the best staff available, his next major task is to establish good community relations. As leader, he must have constant feedback from the school community and parents to know if he is moving in the right direction. C.U.S.D. has a unique program which helps keep open direct lines of communication between district administrators and parents and teachers. S.A.R.T., the acronym for School Assessment Review Team, has school site committees and a district representative committee which help communicate the goals and philosophy of the district to parents, teachers, and the community at large. Similarly, at committee meetings, parents may voice concerns about how or why the district may be progressing in a particular direction.

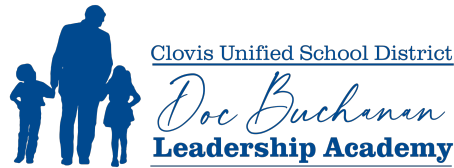
“I am for communication about the task, and when it is task-oriented, then the more people who understand where we are going, why we are going, and how we are going, the more people who buy in, then the better off we are.”

Floyd B. Buchanan, Ed.D.

In utilizing the constant give-and-take that such forums provide; it is possible either to involve everyone in developing goals or to explain what district goals are and if they are being attained.

The S.A.R.T. committees in the district annually survey all parents in Clovis Unified School District, asking parents to complete a survey questionnaire for each of their children in district schools. Besides asking questions about the success with which schools are operating and meeting a child’s curricular and co-curricular needs, a parent is encouraged to comment about what he likes about his school and what he feels are improvements that might be made. Many school districts are loathe to conduct such surveys because, “when they do, it’s used to show that they are bad school districts, and not that they are trying to become better and better.” (Dr. Buchanan)

Since the most communication about a school or district policy takes place between a teacher and parent or student, it is critically important that teachers know what is going on in the district and why. People should start with teachers to find out what is happening or if there is a problem. If the answers seem incomplete or the teacher hasn’t been informed, then the



parent can start up the chain of command to understand or ameliorate the problem. As Dr. Buchanan has pointed out, "In Clovis, whatever we tell people, they can see when they come. Whether they like it or not is beside the point; but we do not tell untruths about what we are trying to do or the level at which we are doing it...Whenever you run a high-risk operation...you have to know what the people are really thinking, and you have to use that information for corrective or positive action." That is why the S.A.R.T. committee process is such a valuable tool to the teachers and administrators.

The Governing Board of a school district has two primary responsibilities: 1) to direct the superintendent and his staff in determining what the final product of the district should be; and 2) to support the superintendent and staff in achieving these goals. Since the superintendent must carry out the wishes of the majority of the Board, while always keeping an eye toward future development, it is necessary to have a Board with vision and a great deal of courage. Clovis Unified has experienced that kind of leadership and support. Consequently, an educational program has been put in place in Clovis Unified that is exemplary and award-winning.

One facet that has contributed to this status was an early recognition by school officials of the importance of a curriculum that prepares C.U.S.D. students for their role in the private sector. Recognizing that "schools can no longer go their way and the private sector go its," Clovis Unified has recognized the importance of educated, skilled workers, if the United States is going to continue to compete for and in international markets. Consequently, C.U.S.D is striving to produce students who know what to do and how to think. This requires the district to look at what a child needs to be to survive in the world of today and tomorrow. Paying attention to detail and being flexible allow district administrators to make educated plans for the future.

One goal on which Clovis Unified is working is the development of a Diagnostic Center. This center would provide a diagnosis of and prescription for each child in the district, evaluating strengths and weaknesses, so that a classroom teacher would understand better the capabilities of each student. This would allow experts to help uncover problem areas, overcome obstacles, and educate each child. This would be a particularly effective tool for students who transfer into the district throughout the year: oftentimes, it is extremely difficult to determine the level at which a student performs, and valuable teaching time is lost trying to place the student appropriately in classes or groups. Such a program would alleviate that problem.

The superintendent of a school district must interface with all aspects of the district community he serves. He must strive to keep educational issues from becoming emotional, which is a very difficult task. He must make decisions about where to provide financial support, when to do it and how, so that he obtains the best education possible for the most children. He must encourage his staff to do the very best job they can; he must constantly analyze strengths and weaknesses within the programs, to enhance the program as best possible. He must furnish the leadership and vision needed to guide a program for five, ten or twenty years. He must



communicate his goals to the community and adjust them if they conflict with the will of the people. This is not a goal that can be accomplished in a short period of time. With the average tenure of a superintendent in a district the size of Clovis Unified being only 3.8 years, it leaves a leader no time to start a comprehensive, cohesive program and to see if it is successful. Rather, with such mobility, these leaders frequently would rather appease adults than confront and solve a district's true problems. Children, though, are the losers in this situation since their needs are not being addressed adequately. To be successful, a superintendent needs to stay in one place long enough to build a program and provide leadership for it; otherwise, long-term planning is replaced by quick fixes, the quality of the program diminishes, and the children pass through a system that has no coherent, cohesive plan to educate the whole child, to help shape him into a responsible member of society.

"Lay people are not usually professionally qualified to judge whether the superintendent is doing the details of his job properly. What they have to do is judge on the quality of the program. When it intuitively begins to appear to them that they are not getting their money's worth, that the leadership is not valid, reliable, or trustworthy, then they simply have to say that it is time you should leave. The judgment comes on the product."

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