



Historical Overview of Clovis Unified School District

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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 the 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 a 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 chance: 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."

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



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 counseled 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 of 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 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 actually 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.