

NEA Strategic Goal and NEA Organizational Priority:

- NEA Strategic Goal
 - Strategic Goal 1: Strong Affiliates for Educator Voice and Empowerment
 - Strategic Goal 2: Empowered Educators for Successful Students
- NEA Organizational Priority
 - Early Career Educators
 - Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
 - Institutional Racism/Racial Justice in Education

COMPETENCY: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

-Sets the mission and establishes strategies necessary for a relevant and thriving organization; empowers, motivates, and fosters a pipeline of talent for the future.

NEA Leadership Competency progression level(s)

- Level 1: Foundational
- Level 2: Mobilizing & Power Building
- Level 3: Agenda Driving

- NEA Leadership Competency themes

- Effectively executes governance and leadership responsibilities
- Establishes and maintains collaborative, effective relationships
- Advances the organization by internalizing its mission, vision, and core values
- Sets strategic objectives to guide long term goals
- Develops self and others as leaders

Background



Purpose and Significance

- To provide information and insight regarding the process and effects of rural school consolidation
- Can inform district/school leaders and provide recommendations

Research on School Consolidation

- History of school consolidation in US and in case study district
- Causes, considerations, and examples of school consolidation

History

- 1914 – Cubberly – bigger meant better; small schools/districts not adequately using resources for economy of scale nor preparing students for adult life
- 1930-70 brought large population shifts due to industry; and Conant (1950) and Sputnik reinforced idea of large schools promoting better education for international competitiveness
- Current school districts are dealing with dwindling budgets and updated buildings



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Reason/Considerations

- Financial, population shifts, aging buildings, transportation
- Effects on students (curricular, extra-curricular, achievement, sense of identity), educators (resources, class size and content, identity), community (sense of identity/tradition/pride, economics, hostility/angst)



Examples, state laws, local history

- PA (one unconsolidated; one created a charter school), NJ, MD (avoided it)
- MD dictates process (7 factors – enroll trends/trans/age&cond build/finances/qualified pro/race/impact to com)
- Multiple consolidations and restructurings

Spector's Change Theory



Methodology - Mixed Methods

- Qualitative data
 - to understand the process of school consolidation, stakeholder perceptions, and student opportunities
 - Participant observer, surveys, interviews, and document reviews

- Quantitative data
 - to determine the level of success in student achievement
 - State-mandated assessment (HSAs) proficiency rates for English 10 and biology from all three schools

Results

- Increased choices and levels for curricular and extra-curricular opportunities
- Increased student participation in clubs and advanced classes
- Increased student achievement
- Change process components present
- Discontentment/angst present, but now most community members supportive of New School

How did the rural high school consolidation affect student curricular and extra-curricular opportunities?

- Results were mostly consistent with previous research from literature review
 - Increased opportunities
 - Student participation
 - Exception: sports teams

How did the consolidation affect student achievement?

- Inconsistent with research
 - Increased percentage of students passing AP exams
 - Statistically higher pass rates of state-mandated tests in Biology and English 10

How did the process used to create a change to schools and their communities conform to prevailing change theory?

- Strategy, purpose, alteration of behavior pattern (Components)
- Shared diagnosis
- Mutual engagement

How did stakeholders perceive the outcome of the consolidation?

- Most understood factors for consolidation and support the New School
- Participants listed the updated technology and the wider range and availability of classes, especially advanced ones, as benefits
- Several viewed the involvement of the communities as positive

What leadership strategies were used to facilitate this consolidation?

- Leadership stemmed from State Superintendent, Board of Education, District Superintendent and principal of the New High School
- Atmosphere of trust and openness
- Stakeholder involvement encouraged

Can consolidation of two rural schools, resulting in a new entity, offer a better educational experience and can such a controversial process be completed with concordance?

- Initial angst, but most view the New High School with dignity and respect
- This school consolidation positively affected student achievement as well as curricular and extra curricular opportunities.

Future Studies

- A meta-analysis of school consolidation studies to create a dynamic model that could be helpful for practitioners or policy makers
- A study of the economic impact on a community due to school consolidation

Implications for School Districts

- Leaders must create opportunities for shared diagnosis and mutual engagement.
- Decision makers should consider how to make a school consolidation a positive change and how to use components of change theory.

Implications for School Districts

- Generate trust and support through relationships and openness
- Role of the principal - a strong determining factor of success
- Atmosphere of smaller schools - allowed to persist in the larger, consolidated school

Conclusions

- School consolidation will continue to be a controversial
- Can be handled with concordance if community members and stakeholders understand, are a part of, and support the effort.
- Decision makers must consider the steps in a change theory, as well as the fundamental aspects and components of an organization undergoing change. Shared diagnosis and mutual engagement of all stakeholders must be continual throughout the process.
- Furthermore, a school consolidation can and should result in a positive educational experience that will benefit and please the communities who once felt disadvantaged. By engaging those people to assist in making pertinent decisions, behaviors will align and a common vision can be realized.

Session Outcomes

- Consider using the content from this session in the following ways in your current position/role:
 - District Administrator who will implement and lead a district-wide change
 - School Administrator who must lead and support a school community through a major change
 - Educator who will assist and transition a school community through a change



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THANK YOU!!!

- Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session!
- Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment

