

Memorandum

To: Dr. Robert Terrill, Superintendent
From: Amanda Hetrick, Director of Secondary Education
Date: 3/18/2010
Re: Assistant Principal at YHS and SAMHS

In response to your request that I consider the need for a full time assistant principal at YHS and SAMHS, I have gathered the information that follows. At this time, we base the assignment of our administrators strictly on numbers of students and while this is a quantifiable method to determine need, I believe there are some unique situations at both YHS and SAMHS which would suggest that we should take into account more than simple numbers.

Program Demands

SAMHS has both a middle school and a high school within the same building. Each school possesses its own unique challenges and expectations. In order for both levels to function at peak effectiveness, it would be best to have one administrator managing each portion of the building as currently occurs at EMHS and YEMS.

Both YHS and SAMHS have complex schedules because there are fewer students. The time involved in creating and managing the schedules is significant.

Staff development at the building level tends to suffer when the same administrators is responsible for all of the daily task management and the instructional leadership.

The population at YHS is nearly 30% special education students with a total of 10% of the students being identified as Emotionally Disturbed. The time commitment to manage discipline, support teachers in the classroom and attend IEPs as expected is significantly greater than would usually be expected for a school with a similar size.

Both YHS and SAMHS qualified as Title I high schools this year. This indicates an increasing population of economically disadvantaged students which brings with it all of the problems associated with poverty requiring greater interaction with county agencies who provide services to families and students.

YHS is currently in warning with regard to their AYP status and SAMHS is struggling to maintain their status. Strong instructional leadership, regular observation and good administrative support are keys to helping teachers work with the students to overcome challenges to learning. This does not occur consistently and effectively enough in the current situation since the principals are often more involved in management tasks than true instructional leadership.

State and District Compliance

Despite the smaller size of YHS and SAMHS, the same mandates are required. This includes state testing, tutoring, state forms and district forms. The size of the school does not reduce the number of requirements that need to be addressed. Since the support staff is smaller and the principal cannot delegate as many of these responsibilities, often principals of smaller schools spend less time with students and teachers in order to comply with their paperwork responsibilities.

School Climate and Safety

Consistency is a concern within both buildings. The assistant typically is in the building every other day and often, the assistant is unable to follow through with student, parent or staff concerns because of not being there the next day to address the problem. Waiting another day to solve the problem is not effective and many times is not possible. When that is the case, the principal must then sort out the situation from the beginning, which requires an investment of more administrative time.

Two administrators in YHS and SAMHS would allow the administration of both buildings to be much more proactive in problem solving rather than simply reacting as things are placed in front of them.

More times than we would like, there is no administrator at YHS or at SAMHS. While the Central Office tries to be sensitive to scheduling for the regular principals' meetings, neither Central Office nor the building administration has much control over scheduling by CYS, the district magistrates, the County Court and other meetings that principals must attend.

YHS has one half day and SAMHS has two half days where there is no nurse or medical assistant in the building. On those days, the principals are responsible for medical issues which can take them away from all other duties if there is a true emergency.

Challenges for the Assistant Principal

Activities continue in both buildings even when the assistant is in the other building. The principals try to schedule when the assistant is available, however, this is not always feasible. As thing currently stand, the assistant principals is unable to meet with the Student Assistance Team regularly, cannot attend School Improvement Team meetings in either building, and misses some department meetings in both buildings.

Student activities are doubled for the assistant principal. For instance, this year the assistant principals reports that she missed homecoming in Sheffield, the Valentine's Day dance at Youngsville, various assemblies and class meetings and will miss graduation in Sheffield. The assistant principal is frequently in the position of having to choose to accommodate one school to the detriment of the other.

When arriving in a building, the assistant principal must always seek out a summary of the activities from the day before. This can make it very difficult for the principals to delegate appropriate responsibilities to the assistant. Administrative activities that were begun in one building the day before must often be completed via email from the other building on the next day.