

The Plan to Reorganize the Clark County School District

The plan proposed to reorganize the Clark County School District set forth in this document provides a completely different management structure and culture for the Clark County School District (CCSD) than that which exists today. The plan envisions turning the present administrative structure upside down or, more accurately, right-side up, with the schools becoming front and center, at the heart of the operation of the school district. The plan calls for extensive involvement of the frontline staff and the community in decision making. The plan further makes staff accountable for the results which flow from the decisions they make. Concomitantly, and of equal importance, the school district is charged with providing the framework and structure in which the schools function to achieve their results.

The Proposal. The responsibilities of schools must be clearly defined and the resources to achieve those responsibilities must also be assigned for planning and budgeting to the individual schools. Similarly, the responsibilities of the different offices of the central administration of the school district must be clearly defined and the resources to achieve those responsibilities must be assigned for planning and budgeting to those offices. Measures must be put into place to ensure schools and the central administration of the school district perform well and are accountable for their performance.

The Requirements. The provision of information is critical in an operation which is based on wide participation of frontline staff, parents and members of the community. **Transparency** and **timeliness** of information and operation is critical to achieve informed involvement of stakeholders.

The Change Process. Because of the successful pilot program with empowerment schools that was carried out in CCSD, it is not necessary to create another pilot program. Rather, the organization of the school district must facilitate the operation of the schools within the district as autonomous schools. An incremental change of schools within the CCSD to autonomous schools would likely fail. Therefore, this plan anticipates a complete change in the CCSD so that all schools within CCSD are given autonomy similar to the autonomy which was provided to empowerment schools at the same time. In addition, each school will act as a local school precinct as anticipated in Assembly Bill No. 394.

The Timeline. Changing the school district requires considerable planning and the installation of infrastructure to support the new structure under which CCSD will operate. Nevertheless, the change must happen expeditiously to avoid delays. To carry out the changes proposed in this plan, there must be a willingness and urgency to carry out the change. After consideration of the factors that would most likely result in a successful districtwide implementation, the recommendation is to carry out the plan districtwide beginning with the **2017-18 School Year**.

The Reorganization. This reorganization plan deals with three principle structural components of the district: The Principalship, the Superintendency, and Central Services and their inter-relationships.

The Principalship. In terms of accountability, the school principal is responsible for the entire school operation. However, a successful school consists of much more than a one person

operation. The successful principal must reach out and embrace the involvement and contribution of staff, students, parents and community. Together the group provides much more than any one person could accomplish alone. Some of that involvement can be mandated, such as school organizational teams which are created for schools, but there is much more to a successful school than what is mandated. Successful schools radiate a culture of involvement that permeates their everyday operation and interactions with others.

The Superintendency. The Superintendency refers to a concept wherein the Superintendent and his or her immediate staff share a common interest in the successful operation of the school district. For this to take place, the staff who are most likely to share this common interest are those who are responsible for the schools. If the staff assisting the Superintendent represent individual departments and not schools, they are less likely to think at the district level than are those who are responsible for the schools. Because the Superintendent must focus on the schools, the people working with the Superintendent must share that focus. The Superintendent must understand the needs of the schools when considering and making decisions. Accordingly, this plan includes a recommendation that the Superintendent meet regularly with the school associate superintendents (see below) and any other staff members who work with the principals of the schools in the school district.

Principalship-Superintendency Linkage. In a system in which individual schools exercise such a prominent role, accountability of the schools to the district is achieved by a tight coupling of the school to the Superintendent through a single staff member within the central administration who is responsible for both support and supervision of schools. Each of these staff members is responsible for a specific number of assigned schools not to exceed 25 schools. The entire responsibility of this staff person is to ensure the performance of the group of schools assigned to that staff person. With this revision to the central administration, the schools no longer have multiple supervisors within the central administration. This governance structure removes the need to create an intermediate level of bureaucracy, commonly referred to as regionalization. The role and responsibility of this staff person in the reorganization would redefine the current structure of the CCSD which relies on Assistant Chiefs. Instead, this plan recommends that a new position be created with the title of **School Associate Superintendent**. This title reflects the dual nature of the person's responsibility for the schools and working with the Superintendent.

The Central Services. Some functions currently carried out by the central administration will be transferred to local school precincts to carry out, or to purchase. With the transfer of certain day-to-day decisions to the schools, the central administration will be able to focus on performing the tasks remaining at the district level. For the services that are not assigned to be carried out by the schools, the central administration must align its resources to the staff that has responsibility for providing services to ensure that the central administration is able to provide the services to the schools. Instead of referring to central administration, this group of staff should be referred to as the Central Services of the CCSD. Central Services must be treated as an entity separate and distinct from the Superintendency. Although still accountable to the superintendent, Central Services must be assigned the responsibility to plan and budget and must be held accountable for the conduct of its operations. Central Services will render certain district services to all of the local school precincts. These services include things such as payroll, negotiations, human resources (other than assigning personnel to particular schools) and accounting. In addition, with

this approach, Central Services will establish coherent expectations for schools, plan better allocation of resources, provide for measuring outcomes of pupils, provide requested in-services, develop support systems, establish protocols for items such as outsourcing and school-to-pay for services and formulate policies for consideration of the Board.

Central Services will likely be faced with certain challenges when it converts to operating in the manner described in this plan. For example, when responsibilities and resources devolve to the school level, certain services which become the responsibility of the school may be best provided by someone outside the school. Experience shows that after schools receive their allocations of money, the schools begin to look for “free” services that may be obtained from Central Services. The demand for “free” services increases, thereby creating an ever increasing demand for more free services. This increasing demand, however, only happens when the service is subject to elasticity in demand. When there is no elasticity, the demand does not often grow. For example, the act of issuing paychecks does not provide any elasticity of demand because there are only so many payroll checks to be written. On the other hand, if Central Services offers consultants in language arts, schools may experience increasing demand for such consultants. The solution to this type of situation is to create a market-driven operation in which the requests by schools for services from the Central Services are made on a “school-to-pay” basis, meaning that money is allocated to the school must be budgeted by the school for the services. Thus, resources that previously funded the provision of those “free” services must be reallocated to the schools so the school may determine whether it is important enough to budget for the service, or whether to use the money allocated in another manner. In this way, the schools are able to use money allocated in the most efficient manner rather than just grabbing for free services.

The Schools. With an autonomous model, individual schools are moved to the front and center, at the heart of the school district’s operations. Each school is placed in a unique position to respond to local circumstances, provide an arena for the creative and innovative talent of staff and accept ownership for the education of the children in they are charged with serving. Operating in this manner makes it easier to identify problems and provide direct solutions.

There are several advantages to the schools with this model. The schools can resolve issues without having to go through various district offices. The surrounding community more readily identifies with the school. The operation of the school is much more easily understood than the operation of an entire school district. The school also provides an easy entry point for parents to make a difference and become meaningfully involved in its success.

With only one supervisor to oversee each school (the School Associate Superintendent) rather than multiple supervisors from independent offices, the work flow of assignments is monitored much more easily. In addition, the School Associate Superintendent is responsible for ensuring that the responsibilities assigned to the schools are turned in on time. As a result, Central Services will operate much more efficiently.

Principles of Organization. To successfully carry out this plan, CCSD must have a clearly defined organizational plan coupled with a staff that shares the cultural values of the district. Given a supportive structure, effectiveness will depend largely on the commitment and motivation of the staff. The Superintendent must approve an explicit set of principles designed to

communicate the manner in which all staff are expected to perform. These **Principles of Organization** need to be developed, internalized and approved as a district position.

Surveys. The results of surveys provide a powerful tool to achieve better performance. The effectiveness of surveys, in large measure, depends on the rigor of design, the response rate, and the follow-up actions. Surveys should be administered annually toward the end of the school year. Groups surveyed should include students, staff, parents and the community. To ensure that follow-up actions may be taken, the information collected from surveys needs to be separated by individual schools and units of the Central Services. All results must be made public and reported separately for schools, for organizational groupings of Central Services and the district.

Training for District-wide Implementation. Successful implementation of this plan will depend upon the preparation and training of the staff most directly involved in the transition, including staff of the Central Services as well as in the schools. Because training must precede implementation, the training must begin during the 2016-2017 School Year. The training program must be based on real situations that will be encountered in the actual implementation of operating autonomous schools throughout the district. The training provided must be consistent from the Superintendent to the individual staff members in the schools and the Central Services.

The training is to be provided using a pyramidal model which begins with training at the top of the organization and spiraling downward and provided in related groups. For example, the supervisor and the persons supervised by the supervisor should be trained together to ensure agreement on commitments and ensure consistency in practice.

The Superintendent and the School Associate Superintendents must be trained first. During the training, the Superintendent may choose to have the group assisted by a facilitator who has expertise in the operation of autonomous schools. Successful implementation relies upon establishing a common understanding of the principles of organization, acceptance of those principles and consistency in implementation by the Superintendent and the School Associate Superintendents. Different points of view may be expressed and deliberated during training, but once the group establishes a common understanding, the debate must end. Successful implementation requires consistency and adherence to the requirements established and agreed upon during the training.

Once properly trained, each School Associate Superintendent is responsible to lead the training of the principals of the schools assigned to them regarding the requirements for operating as a principal in an autonomous school model. Associates, having completed the training, will be prepared to provide the training to the principals without the assistance of a facilitator. If the Associate does seek the assistance of a facilitator, it is important that the Associate and the principal reach a common understanding and acceptance of the autonomous school model. After training, facilitators are no longer present and ownership for successful implementation rests with the principal and School Associate Superintendent who remain responsible for results of the school. It is very important that the requirements established apply equally to all members of the group, the supervisor and supervised. There is no hierarchy and any member has the right to call out a member who violates the requirements that have been agreed upon. This acceptance is a true test of an organization's culture.

After the principals complete the training, the principals are responsible for communicating and arriving at a common understanding of the autonomous school model within their school communities. An on-going program must be made available at the school which involves staff to ensure they understand the opportunities available to them at the school to participate in decision making. Likewise, an outreach program must be in place to inform parents about the autonomous school model and the opportunities available to them to participate as part of an organizational team which advises and assists the principal in developing a budgetary plan for the school.

School Program Planning and Budgeting. The core principle of this plan for the reorganization of the management of CCSD is establishing responsibility of schools for results and aligning resources to the responsibility. This is a large undertaking and will be revised and clarified over time. As that occurs and the system begins to operate more effectively, additional responsibilities and corresponding allocations of money will be made to the schools that previously were held by the central administration of the school district. In the first year, at a minimum, the school must be assigned the responsibility of budgeting for the staff at the school as well as for equipment, services and supplies. The schools will become more successful and efficient at budgeting as more responsibility for budgeting is transferred to the schools from previous central budgets. When schools are not assigned the responsibility of budgeting for the needs of the schools, planning by the schools is extremely difficult. Further, when schools lack control over their budgets, they continually seek to access funds and services available through the Central Services rather than planning efficiently and independently for their actual needs.

Once the school responsibilities are defined and the dollars assigned, the task of distributing the resources to the schools requires the development of allocation algorithms. This plan proposes a “Weighted Student Formula” (WSF) which is based upon students and other identified factors. In the development of the WSF, the goal is to distribute the existing available funds to the schools in an equitable manner. The WSF eliminates the thresholds that are inherent in a system in which an additional student determines whether a school becomes entitled to a full-time counselor or at another level an additional student results in an additional administrator at the school.

The initial development of the WSF must be based on the equitable distribution of funds existing in each of the following groups: elementary school, middle school, junior high school, high school, and identifiable learning groups. Whether to assign greater weight to a particular group is a separate consideration. One of the real benefits of the WSF is that the system is less complicated and easier to understand, thereby providing for more informed involvement by staff and parents. Another benefit of the WSF is that it becomes easier to identify whether any group is receiving special treatment. Equally, it becomes more clear whether lower socioeconomic neighborhood schools are underfunded or overfunded. With this information available, value judgements and decisions are more likely to be made on a rational basis rather than on bias.

Initially, the WSF formula will be submitted to and approved by the Department of Education. Ultimately, the WSF will mirror the formula established for the state unless the district receives permission from the Department of Education to apply a different formula.

The process used by the school to develop the school budget must include involving the wider school community. The form of that involvement must be communicated to staff and the community. Part of that process must include communicating the amount of money that is

allocated to the school and the budget decisions that are made for the school. The process must include holding a public meeting to present the proposed budget.

School budgets must be established early to eliminate surprises and must be balanced within the amount of the allocation made to the school. Allocations will be reconciled to actual state count enrollments. School year-end balances will be carried forward and therefore will remain accessible to the school.

Staff Costs for Schools. Historically, school districts have staffed schools on the basis of full time equivalents, referred to as FTEs. Staffing decisions have been made on the basis of obtaining the best teacher for the available position, regardless of salary. Because the autonomous school model converts all resources to dollars, if schools were required to determine staff based on actual salaries, marked variation could exist in the cost to individual schools based on the composition of their staff in terms of training and experience.

The argument for using actual salaries is that it is simple and low salary schools would be able to get more staff with lower class sizes and other benefits may accrue to the school. The argument against using actual salaries, however, is that the maximum salaries are more than double the minimum salary and it would be impractical to implement such a variation based on actual salaries. No one argues that teachers receiving the maximum salary represent twice the value of teachers receiving the minimum salary. In addition, no one argues that teachers who receive the maximum salary should have twice the class size of teachers who receive the minimum salary.

There is not a lot of correlation between salary and teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, in making staffing decisions, a school should select the best teacher available for the position without compromising the decision based on salary. Attempts by schools that operate under this model to use actual salaries have not proven to be sustainable and have created administrative pressure to move teachers to other schools for the sole purpose of attempting to equalize salaries within a narrow range. Using actual salaries also does not solve the problem of attracting quality teachers to schools which are considered difficult assignments.

When CCSO operated the pilot program which made certain schools within the district empowerment schools, the district successfully used the average unit cost for each year of the program. For these reasons, this plan recommends using the average unit cost.

Central Services Program Planning and Budgeting. Budgets for the services provided by Central Services should be developed on a modified zero-based model. This is especially important since many of these budget units previously budgeted funds for the schools.

Developing a modified zero-based budget provides transparency as to what responsibilities remain in each of the budgets of the various departments of the Central Services. Central Services budgets are not based on an allocative system. Costs are based on actuals with no provision for carry forward.

The form of modified zero-based budgeting needs to be defined by the district. Modified zero-based budgeting usually is planned on a minimum threshold of 80 to 85 percent of the previous year's budget as the base with provision to add individual standalone incremental packages not exceeding 10 percent.

Parental and Community Engagement. The mindset of the **Principalship** discussed above embraces the contribution of parents and the community. Parental and community involvement

must become intertwined in the culture of the school and integral to the operation of the school. The principal of the school must be responsible for creating this culture at the school.

Appeal Process. If the community does not approve of the budget plan developed by a principal for the school, there must be a manner in which to appeal. First, this plan calls for transparency, so the budget plan developed by the principal must be explained in a public meeting where members of the public have an opportunity to comment and make suggestions. If those suggestions are not adopted, there must be a process by which an appeal may be taken to the Associate School Superintendent. An organizational team must be established for the school which consists of teachers, administrative staff and parents or guardians of pupils at the school. This team must have authority to appeal decisions of the principal to the Associate Superintendent.

Principal Selection. School staff and communities are very helpful at identifying the needs for their school when a principal vacancy occurs, but not been very successful at selecting the principal from a list of applicants. All too often, interviews are not an effective selection process. Additionally, information on the past performance of candidates and other personnel information may not be available to the community at large. The person in the district who should make the decision about the appointment of the principal is the person who will be responsible for removing the principal if the principal's performance is unsatisfactory. After making the appointment, the person who appointed the principal is accountable to the staff and community for competent leadership at the school.

School Year Operational Cycle. Whereas the existing operation places a premium on problem solving, the proposed plan instead requires much wider school involvement and considerable advanced planning. This wider involvement, both in the schools and the Central Services, in the program planning and budgeting necessitates even more attention to timelines in order to meet critical commitments. Efficient operation of a school requires constant planning and communicating regarding events, dates and responsibilities. Such planning must be completed before the school year, during the school year and reviewed at the end of the cycle. Though the operational school year is 1 year, the entire planning and operating cycle is 2 years.

Another aspect of the 2 year cycle is the overlap of school years. While one school year is being planned, another is being carried out. This means that major changes in initiatives and priorities, as a result of the review of one year's results are then included in the planning for the following year rather than in the current year which is already in operation.

Transition Costs. The reorganization described in this plan will have certain costs associated with it, especially for training and infrastructure. The amount of such costs that will be incurred is not fully understood at this time. However, whatever the cost, the plan will be cost neutral as resources will be reallocated within the CCSO. In addition, there will be significant savings to the CCSO from restructuring responsibilities within the central administration and more efficient spending by schools. In the end, the CCSO will have an organizational structure that supports a system which focuses on the actual needs of each individual school, provides transparency in budgeting and spending, encourages more efficient and effective budgetary decisions and places more money in the schools to provide programming and services for pupils.