

ESTABLISHING A COOPERATIVE SCHEDULE FOR AFTER SCHOOL
CLUBS/ACTIVITIES

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Chapter I

Introduction

Research Problem

A parochial high school in New York has undergone a change in administration in the last two years. The change included one in the culture of the school. Prior to the current administration, clubs and activities were held for 10 to 15 minutes prior to the first bell of the day which proved problematic as most of the students travel by school district provided busing. In the past two years one of the changes that have occurred is the meeting times of the clubs and activities. The new schedule allows these clubs/activities to meet at 2:30. In addition to the shift in time, the number of club/activities offered increased drastically, which is, of course, a good problem. However, numerous meeting time conflicts arose.

The purpose of this study was to interview 6 different members of the faculty/administration who are moderators of various clubs/activities in an effort to modify the schedules so that the students may participate in various activities across the board. Through the interview process patterns, themes and discrepancies were discovered which led to an assumed resolution of the problem.

Background Information

The parochial school studied (School SD) is a co-educational grades 9-12 high school located in New York. The population consists of a total of 425 students, 280 male and 145

female, of which approximately 60% participate in athletics after school. There are currently 26 clubs/activities offered to the students in addition to their athletics.

Definition of Terms

Parochial school – school affiliated with a Parish

Catholic Club – club which is primarily service orientated but also has a formal prayer component

Student Athletes – those students also member of athletic teams

Clubs/Activities – include various organized clubs including honor societies

Research Questions

The focus group was comprised of six members, three female and one male teacher and two administrators, one male and one female. They were asked the following questions:

1. How can we change the scheduling conflict with after school activities?
2. Which clubs/activities would be best suited to share a day if we have more than one club meet on any one day?
3. How can we ensure that the students will attend the meetings for a mandatory amount of time?
4. How often should each club be held so that the students may gain the full benefit?
5. How can we divide up the clubs/activities to avoid conflicts – for instance put student council with Catholic Club?
6. Leave student council on its own day so that we can have as many participants as possible?
7. Offer student council on one day, Catholic Club on another and Interact on a third?

The following interview questions were asked to the participants on an individual basis:

1. What is a reasonable amount of time for a productive meeting?
2. How can we accommodate the student athletes?
3. What should the attendance policy be for a student to have credit granted to them for the year? (How many absences for the month? Year?)
4. Which clubs need officers including a secretary?

Significance

The study may enable the school to evaluate its current schedule for the clubs/activities and identify the current conflicts. A dialogue with the students will follow the study and a new schedule will be incorporated for the upcoming school year enabling all students to learn to make choices as well as give them the opportunity to make a commitment to something with the hopes that they will completely immerse themselves in these interests.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

As changes were introduced to School SD, many of the stakeholders were involved. “Sustainable school leadership treats the past as a resource more than an impediment. Whenever it is about to embark on a new improvement initiative, sustainable school leadership audits the past, capitalizes on its assets, charts and learns from its collective memory, thoughtfully abandons what is no longer useful, and involves its memory bearers in the early stages of change, even and especially when their orientation to change is one of skepticism and resistance. Creating a climate where the truth is heard involves four basic practices including lead with questions, not answers and engaging in dialogue and debate, not coercion. Guided distribution can create strong professional learning communities. It can also sustain them. Sustainable leadership spreads. It sustain as well as depends on the leadership of others (Hargreaves and Fink 2006).

The culture of a group can now be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein 2004)

Chapter III

Methodology

The methodology used allowed a collaborative assessment of the current system of scheduling clubs/activities which ultimately led to a schedule that involves as many combination of students possible to benefit from clubs/activities and athletics.

Problem

The conversation that arose from the focus group questions allowed a dialogue which exposed patterns, themes and discrepancies leading to a recommended solution.

Setting

The focus group questions were asked in the principal's conference room table where all participants gathered around the conference table. The individual interview questions were asked in various locations throughout the school.

Subjects

The subjects interviewed consisted of two administrators and four teachers, two of whom are also coaches. These people represent a solid cross-section of experience and involvement with the school and the students:

- Faculty member who is experienced, first year at SD and current student council moderator
- Faculty member who is a long standing member of the community for over 20 years who moderates clubs as well as the various honor societies

- Administrator with 35 years experience as an administrator
- Faculty member 20 years with the community who has taught and coached athletic teams for all of them
- Faculty member who is an alumni of the school, on staff for 2 years
- Faculty member who is a second year teacher and boys' lacrosse coach

Data Collection

The focus group was asked the following questions. After the initial discussion, additional questions emerged from the answers and were asked of the same subjects in individual follow-up interviews.

1. How can we improve the conflict with after school activities?
2. Based on the schedules of the students, which clubs/activities would be best suited to share a day if we have more than one club meet on any one day?
3. How can we ensure that the students will attend the meetings for a time of period conducive to completing an activity?
4. How often should each club be held to be productive?
5. How can we divide up the clubs/activities to avoid conflicts – for instance put student council with Catholic Club?
6. Leave student council on its own day so that we can have as many participants as possible?
7. Offer student council on one day, Catholic Club on another and Interact on a third?

The following interview questions were asked to the participants on an individual basis:

1. What is a reasonable amount of time for a productive meeting?

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Data Analysis

The following illustrates the patterns, themes and discrepancies extrapolated from the interviews.

The following patterns emerged throughout the group:

- Need to decide which clubs can meet on the same day
- Attendance should be mandatory
- Clubs need to meet for at least ½ hr to 45 minutes weekly or bi-weekly
- As most students are involved in student council and it is the club that drives the school, other clubs should take another meeting day
- Foreign language clubs and honor society moderator is willing to piggyback her clubs with the science department
- FBLA is willing to move to Friday
- NHS requirement must give back to Interact, SC or Catholic Club
- Clubs should not have same presidents/vice presidents
- Students must make choose which club they wish to join
- Certain honor societies do not have to meet as part of requirement
- Max of an hour
- Need JF to post central calendar on computer for all to see – put on drive

- Have bell at start of club/activity

Themes

- Need well rounded students however they are leaving for sports – coming in for 5 minutes, “I have a game, practice.”
- Outside coaches need to be addressed
- Coaches reprimanding students if they don’t get there until 3:00
- Students are not experiencing the full advantages of membership in clubs/activities
- Students sign in for one club and then run off for another

Discrepancies:

- Jazz Band/Orchestra start at 3 pm – similar to sports
- Couple of clubs must meet on an impromptu basis due to the nature of the club (Math due to competitions with mandatory dates; Interact depending on activities volunteered for in the community, etc.)
- Method of choosing/appointing club officers was different

Chapter IV

Findings

Both sets of interview questions addressed the complexity of coordinating the schedules so that the students can benefit from joining a club/activity and, if necessary, join an athletic team as well. The faculty is one that works collaboratively and was evidenced by the group meeting that was held and then the individual interview sessions. The faculty took ownership in the collaborative effort as they discussed ways that the students can immerse themselves in these activities and not cheat themselves, the moderators or the other club members by running out after 5 minutes. It was agreed that a time mandate should be set and an attendance policy put in place. These will force the students to make intelligent, well-informed choices and attend the clubs/activities that they will enjoy the most.

Chapter V

Recommendations for Future Research

As this research was a preliminary step to organize a schedule that was put together in haste, it is recommended that future research include members of the student body including athletes and members from a cross-section of clubs and honor societies as they are the main stakeholders and were eliminated from this research for reasons including the dynamics of the previous faculty. Additionally, follow up research should be completed in a year when new policies and schedules have been implemented.

References

Hargreaves, A. Fink, D (2006). *Sustainable Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Schein, E. (2004). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.