

Sharing Principals Between Two Schools Feedback From Other Districts

- We split a principal between two buildings last year. He became only a manager that minimally kept both buildings going. Since the two schools were combined this year, he is handling the same students, faculty and parents much better than last. It can be done. Expectations of quality have to be lowered because a principal can not be in two places at one time!!
- We split a principal between two elementary schools for almost a decade. I was also that principal for awhile. It is not only a disservice to the students and staff, but illegal. The code requires a principal for each attendance center. As a result of reductions in the district, we reduced teaching staff, then closed an elementary, allowing the consolidation of classrooms. This is the most educationally appropriate decision, granting the necessary leadership to the building in operation and service to the students/teachers. Finally came to a point where we had to stand for something and we picked educationally appropriate over convenience or tradition. Sorry for the tough decisions, schools statewide are in a world of hurt, though.
- Last year we had as part of a cost saving measure we had one principal cover two buildings, combined a principal and teaching position, and combined a principal and Special Education Coordinator position. You are correct that the position became one of building manager rather than an instructional leader. He/she rarely seemed to be in the "right place at the right time". Teachers, parents, support staff, & others became frustrated and were critical of his/her work. The Superintendent and I told the board and public that expectations will need to be lowered with less administration, but that did not stop the criticism of this person or lower their expectations. Other issues:
 1. Transportation and special education problems were not addressed in a timely manner.
 2. All building responsibilities were shifted to central office. (SIP efforts, Staff development, telephone calls came to us, etc)
 3. Teacher evaluations – both formal and informal suffered.
 4. The completion of District and State reports were delayed.
 5. Secretaries began to "over step" their roles and assumed too much authority when the administrator was "out of the building".
- I had a young female principal who did a great job in her building. The year I left, the board assigned her to two buildings in two different communities. The result was that she was seldom in the right place at the right time. Travel between the buildings was 12 to 15 minutes. Although both schools were small 100 to 200 students (k-4) teachers and parents in those schools became very frustrated and always felt she was paying more attention to the other school. As a result, after the second year of this she resigned and took another principalship in another community. It is tough to be an instructional leader if your not there half the time.
- We reduced 1 principal in the district, in doing so we put one principal in charge of two buildings. Factors that we had to consider in making the move. The quality of the person being asked to do the job. We have an experienced principal who in my mind was up to the task. Secondly I think the grade levels of the buildings were imperative. The principal is in charge of our ECE- 2 buildings. A huge positive is cohesiveness of the curriculum between the buildings. A third factor is the quality of

the secretary. Bottom line the secretary becomes a quasi-administrator and handles a variety of tasks. The final factor is experience of the staff. We are fortunate not to have a "needy staff". I think that the right person is the key. There is no doubt they will be tired at the end of the day.

- This year for the first time we have had one principal over both our elementary and middle schools--approximately 1000 students total in both buildings. It has not been good for the principal, the students, or the teachers. He finds himself constantly running between buildings putting out fires and is never really able to concentrate on instructional leadership. He probably spends over an hour each day in his truck going back and forth between schools. The teachers complain (and rightly so) that he is never in the building when they need to talk to him. He is hardly ever able to get into the classrooms and observe teachers and students. His evaluation load has more than doubled and that is with central office picking up a number of the evaluations. He is now far behind on evaluating teachers and I don't see how he is going to make time to get it all done. Parents complain because they can't reach him by phone ("No Mrs. S. I'm sorry. He's at the elementary building right now" and then "I'm sorry Mrs. S. He just left to go back to the middle school.") Over and over it goes. He has 3 secretaries trying to keep track of him. Basically this whole thing has been a huge headache and the one I feel sorry for is the principal who just can't possibly be every place he needs to be. Yes, it is saving us money this year. My fear is it will cost us a principal. There is NO WAY he can continue doing this for more than one year. It is just not physically possible: 1000 students, 60 teachers, 3 secretaries, 6 custodians---too much! I have nothing good to say about the arrangement.
- We did that with two administrators in our district. We are a small district so I don't feel that it had a negative effect at all, but better use of our people. There is also not an enormous amount of travel involved. Neither administrator services more than 400 students each....so as I said in our case...it was the most logical thing to do.
- When I first came to [the district], they had a shared principal between the K-3 and 4-5 building. It was part of a promise they made to the public that if they passed the building referendum to build a new middle school, the district would not hire any new administrators. The referendum passed, but after one year of the shared position, the community and teachers were screaming to the Board to employ a full time principal at each building. From the outside looking in it was impossible for the shared principal to be any type of an instructional leader because they were constantly putting out fires. Let me know if you need any further information.