

## People

**Goal 2: Review administrative assignments to ensure appropriate development, implementation, and evaluation of our K-12 academic programs.**

### What Went Well

One of the many benefits of being a mission driven school focused on the 3 pillars of **success and connection**, **opportunity and access** and **teaching and learning** is our ability to frame our leadership and management work around the development, implementation, and growth of a shared set of goals and projects that contribute to true generational change opportunities for our kids and our community. Our administrative team includes a mix of individuals who have been part of the BASD family for many years as teachers, with others who are new to our community. This blend of individuals, who possess a diverse range of skills and abilities that complement each other, allows us to avoid excessive *groupthink* as we explore alternate points of view, work habits, and personal traits. Our common, unifying element is a shared passion and belief in our mission and a willingness to be flexible and adapt in these rapidly changing and unprecedented times.

Education as a sector tends to be very traditional, stable and often a painfully predictable enterprise. With clear hierarchies and decades old established norms, the effectiveness of most K-12 organizations is highly correlated with the relative wealth and educational levels of the community in which they exist. Administrative and teaching positions are quite static and school leaders spend a great deal of time literally checking boxes. Here, our **success and connection** mindset allows us to create the conditions for true academic, intellectual, social and economic mobility. We passionately live and operate by the mantra, *if we can capture kids' hearts, we can teach their minds*. Through this lens, our administrators are coached to accentuate our expressive arts programs, develop K-12 Panther Pride events, and view themselves as leaders within the Panther family, rather than a specific building administrator or program coordinator. Attendance at student events is more than encouraged, it is required.

Each of our administrators is expected and works hard to develop relationships with our external partners, whether they are post-secondary educational institutions, community businesses and organizations, vendors, or schools within and across our region. As we meet with our partners, we hear more and more that the types of projects and tasks our team undertake are not common and we have a unique manner of leading and managing for **opportunity and access**. While many schools celebrate non-transferable state test scores and nebulous school rankings, we judge ourselves by college credits earned, new partnerships formed, and community connections both made and grown. Our standards are high, our outcomes are exemplary.

Perhaps our most unique attribute is our belief in the life changing power of strong **teaching and learning**. With the recent exception of implementing a K-8 Core Math curriculum, we allow our teachers to design, develop and implement curriculum with autonomy and individual discretion. Our supervision and evaluation philosophy is framed by research based best practice in formative evaluation, cognition and research based best practice. While we comply with the check box and survey culture required by PDE and an over-simplistic social understanding of the nuance of master teachers and program leaders, we press for the difficult growth conversations. At the end of the day, our goal is to be judged by our contribution to the common good.

### Limitations

The old saying, *sometimes our greatest strength is also our greatest weakness* is appropriate here. We operate with a true leadership philosophy focused on challenging the status quo, with little regard for traditional educational hierarchies and a focus on transferable outcomes often reliant on our ability to establish effective, external partnerships. Our willingness to shift our administrators' roles and responsibilities and modify our programs to adjust to the rapidly changing educational climate around us has allowed us to flexibly adapt and respond. While flexibility and adaptability are often positive traits, both can diminish the often-reliable predictability and clarity of expectations so familiar in more traditionally managed educational settings. Though not intended, for many in our

organization, who may have been part of establishing those traditions and norms, there could be a sense of loss and judgement that comes with these changes.

Knowing that my passion and commitment to generational change will always drive my work, I understand that a willingness to disrupt traditional roles and structures can come with a general uneasiness from our faculty, staff and administration on an individual level as a familiar structure and routine provides a sense of safety. That said, the work we have done in transforming our overall organizational structure, our facilities and financial management protocols, and the programs and services we offer our kids was necessary. As a K-12 organization our systems, structures and practices were individual silos or not existent, our facilities needed significant upgrade across the board, and our staffing model was unsustainable as student enrollment and revenue projections were steadily, yet rapidly declining.

The opportunity to have direct two-way dialogue with our teachers over the past several weeks has been helpful in grounding our work. Throughout the past several months of this pandemic it has been these conversations and this dialogue with our teachers that has allowed us to not only adapt in areas where we were off course, but to stay the course, when a change may have been considered. It is my greatest leadership fear, that this dialogue fades as we establish new routines and patterns. It is my greatest hope that through continuing this dialogue beyond this crisis stage, we can move forward with a sense of pride, passion and commitment to our work that has risen to the forefront over the past several months.

### **Moving Forward**

**District Shared Decision-Making Team:** As noted throughout this document, the two-way dialogue we have developed over the past several weeks has been of true value and benefit to the District and to me personally. I will be asking the school board to develop a committee of board members, Act 93 members and teacher leaders to develop a framework for a District Shared Decision-Making Team. Ideally, the model and framework would be approved at our re-organizational meeting in December. My request will be that a primary role of the team will be to develop our 2021 District Goals.

**Act 93 Team Training:** Of the nine members currently on our Act 93 team, seven have been administrators for three years or less. Three of those seven are in their first year as an administrator and two are in their second. *(We will be seeking approval for one of the seven Monday October 5, 2020).* At this point in our organizational development and the development of each of these high potential leaders it is incumbent upon us to create the conditions for each of them to grow and achieve both individually and collectively. I will be asking the school board for permission to work with NISL to incorporate their requires Act 45 hours into a yearlong administrative training and mentoring program, ran by NISL. I envision this being one of our 2021 District Goals.

Information on NISL:

<https://ncee.org/what-we-do/center-on-system-leadership/high-performance-schools/nisl-program/>