

Research You Can Use

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Rethinking the Use of School Resources: An exploration into resource reallocation

Introduction

Dr. Joseph F. Johnson, former director of Compensatory programs at the U. S. Department of Education, was fond of using a notion called **TTWWADI (That's the Way We've Always Done It)** to describe the inertia that sometimes sets in when staff are reluctant to change and embrace new instructional practices. **TTWWADI** is not only a barrier to changing instructional practices, it can also be a barrier to conscious, deliberate, examination of funding for "favorite programs." In this instance programs that have existed for a long period of time continue to exist, while staff lament that there is little or no money to start new initiatives that are more likely to address some of their current needs. This issue of *Research You Can Use* examines the concept of resource reallocation as a potential solution for funding new programmatic practices and sustaining comprehensive school reform efforts. The article addresses: a definition of resource

reallocation, a rationale, the process for reallocating resources, examples of ways that schools have reallocated resources to support new initiatives, and web links that are useful in implementing resource reallocation.

What is resource reallocation?



“Resource reallocation is the process by which schools examine their existing resources (time, personnel, services, equipment, supplies, and money) and redirect them in more effective and productive ways to support teaching and learning.” (NCREL, 1999) This definition implies that schools can **rethink** the current ways in

which they use available resources and that these resources can be re-directed to priorities that reflect the mission of the school and support increased student achievement.

Why reallocate resources?

There are several good reasons for schools to reallocate resources:

It is unlikely that schools will receive a significant influx of new resources in times of declining state, local, and perhaps, federal resources. So, new reforms will need to be funded with existing monies. Odden & Archibald (2000) stated: "Most analysts predict that resources will rise only 25 percent in real, per pupil terms over the next 10 years, the period of time in which we want to double or triple the portion of students now achieving at performance standards."

Typically, high performing schools have strong leadership, an academic focus, high quality teaching staff, and coherence of their instructional approach. According to Walter (2001), "Analyzing and reallocating resources can be an important means of increasing these attributes in every school and school district."

In addition to the focus on the above attributes, high performing schools use their reallocated funds to more directly impact the instructional program. Specifically, these schools organize time differently, use staff differently, and make a different use of their specialized programs. Miles (2000) indicates that high performing schools:

Organize time to:

- Incorporate common planning time for teachers to plan and participate in professional development;
- Maximize the use of time to create longer blocks of time for instruction;
- Create smaller and more flexible groupings for students;
- Create structures that support personal relationships between students and teachers;
- Give all adults an explicit role in supporting increased student learning;

- Use resources for professional development that supports the school's comprehensive school reform efforts;
- Ensure that all new staff hired fit the schools' needs;
- Ensure that all program funds including those from special programs support the school's comprehensive reform efforts; and,
- Integrate technology as a tool to support the reform.

The picture for future funding of Comprehensive School Reform Programs is bleak. If implementation of the three year reform efforts is to continue in schools, schools and districts must find ways to re-direct existing funding to sustain their reform efforts.

A final reason for reallocating resources is to improve program efficiency. Through the reallocation of resources, schools are able to examine current services for unnecessary duplication of efforts and funding and thereby do a better job of coordinating resources.

Is there a process to follow for the reallocation of resources?

The answer to the above question is of course, yes. There are several approaches to the task of reallocating resources. These approaches at a minimum involve an analysis of current funding, collection of data about the effectiveness of programs funded, engagement in a decision making process, and a redirection of funds to support new improvement strategies.

A step by step approach might look something like this:

1. Ask a series of questions to determine whether resource reallocation is an appropriate approach to consider:

- a) Are our spending patterns in alignment with our values (i.e. a focus on teaching and learning)?
- b) Are we getting the most for our money (i.e. in terms of how funds are currently used)?
- c) On what are we basing our funding choices (i.e. past history, current need)?
- d) Does resource reallocation have something to offer us?

If the answers to questions a and b are no, it may be useful to further examine the notion of resource reallocation.

2. Determine all of the resources available to the school. These resources include funds for staff, materials, time, and services.
3. Gather evaluation information about the efficient and effective use of these resources. Look at available data that include program evaluations, surveys, focus group results, etc.
4. Examine each resource and decide based on evaluation data whether the current spending should be continued, continued with modification, or discontinued.
5. For the funds from strategies that are to be continued with modification, or discontinued, aggregate these funds to assign them to new school improvement projects. The chart included with this newsletter may be useful in getting a concrete picture of how the process works.
6. For each successive year of program implementation, go through the decision making process. Continue to ask questions about the efficient and effective use of resources.

In what ways have some schools reallocated resources to support increased student achievement?

Allan Odden and other researchers from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, have done a number of case studies that examine the implementation of resource reallocation at the school level. According to CPRE's website description of the studies, "The cases provide some district context, describe the change process that the school went through, and identify both the resources that were reallocated and the educational strategies they were used to fund." Below is a brief description of five schools' approach to resource reallocation:

- **Farnham Elementary School** chose a class size reduction strategy to raise student achievement. The school reallocated its categorical program specialists' positions, eliminated pull-out programs, and reduced their class size significantly.
- **Hollister Elementary School** reallocated resources in order to implement the Success For All Reading Program. The district central office provided more support for site based decision making over the funds that were within the school's discretion. This discretion included Title I dollars, funds for instruction, administration, classified staff, supplies and materials.
- **Clayton Elementary School** redesigned its school. The school reallocated its resources to become a team based school, hired new staff, implemented a new literacy program, and adopted the Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound CSR model.
- **Parnell Elementary School** also redesigned its school for team based models, hired new staff, and adopted the Direct Instruction approach to reading.

- **Harrison Place High School** used its reallocated resources to develop five separate academic programs with small class sizes in the core academic areas, and to

create a daily common planning time for teachers and teacher teams.

For a more comprehensive look at these case studies, see the web link in the reference section.

Conclusion

Resource reallocation is a powerful strategy to obtain additional funding to support and sustain both school improvement efforts and the implementation comprehensive school reform designs. It is not, however, a strategy to be undertaken without cautious and careful deliberation. Since resource reallocation may require the elimination of staff positions, every effort should be made to review categorical program regulations and district negotiated agreements. Furthermore, schools and districts should recognize that resource reallocation is not a “silver bullet.” It should be considered as part of a comprehensive planning approach the focus of which is to raise student achievement.

See the pdf file attached to this newsletter for an example of a simulation process that schools can follow to reallocate resources

References

Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) (2000). School finance case studies. Available: <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/cpre/finance/related/studies>

Foxworth, A (2001). “Reallocating Resources” Arizona School Improvement Manual Available: <http://www.ade.az.gov/asd/title1/AccountabilityGrants/ArizonaSchoolImprovementGuide.pdf>

Johnson, J. F. (1997). A model for coordinating funding for improved student achievement. Available: <http://www.starcenter.org/products/resource>

Miles, K. H. (2000). “Money matters: Rethinking school and district spending to support comprehensive school reform.” Available: <http://www.naschools.org/uploadedfiles/MoneyMatters.pdf>

Odden, A. and Archibald, S. et. al. (2000) A better return on investment: reallocating resources to improve student achievement. Available: <http://www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/funding.htm>

Resource Reallocation Available <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/go/go6lk35.htm>

Walters, F. (2001). District leaders guide to reallocating resources. Available: <http://www.nwrel.org/csrdp/reallocating.html>

Useful Websites for Information and Materials on Resource Reallocation

CDE's Comprehensive School Reform Website:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomp/CDRIndex.htm>

MidContinent Research for Education and Learning

<http://www.mcrel.org>

New American Schools

<http://www.nasschools.org>

North Central Regional Education Laboratory

<http://www.ncrel.org>

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

<http://www.nwrel.org>

Southwest Regional Development Laboratory

<http://www.sedl.org>

Star Center (see simulation **Show Me the Data** under products)

<http://www.starcenter.org>

EXAMPLE: Consider each item that reflects how this schoolwide program has currently allocated its resources. Make a determination whether each item should be continued, continued with modification, or discontinued entirely. Fill in the blanks that show funds that would be available for reallocation.

Current programs using combined funds \$61,275

Check One: C=Continue; C/M=Continue with Modifications; D=Discontinue

Funds	Schoolwide activities	Evaluation	C	C/M	D	Funds to reallocate
\$20,000	1 assistant for computer lab	Student focus group data indicated that the lab instructor read the newspaper once they began working on the computers.				
\$6,250	Inclusion training for all regular classroom teachers	100% attendance. Twenty-five percent of the teachers are implementing modifications "most of the time."				
\$6000	Professional Development for math and science integration.	The implementation of integrated math and science lessons is stalled. Teachers say they don't have enough time to meet for development of integrated lessons.				
\$8,000	Interactive science kits	Use of interactive science kits began in the second semester. No formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the materials is available.				
\$4,000	Professional development on a violence prevention program	On the average, teachers refer 25 students to the office each day for disrespectful behavior and fighting. The counselors and the assistant principals spend much of their time on discipline issues.				
\$3,000	Social skills curricula	One of the school psychologists uses the social skills curricula with the most disruptive students. See above data for discipline information.				
\$14,025	Materials for computer lab	Student focus group data show that the students perceive the materials to be similar to the worksheets in class.				