Chapter 17

Green School Leadership: What Does It Really Mean?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the roles and responsibilities of a school leader who is accountable for initiating and implementing green school projects. School leaders need to follow the green school strategic planning model of goal setting, activity programming, procedure planning, and program evaluation for implementation of green school projects. Organization of the stakeholders and fiscal resources in support of strategic planning will start the green school program. Green school leadership could include exploring practical strategies leading to establishing sensible steps in green school project implementation. As an accountability procedure, valid evaluation process needs to be developed to examine if green school projects really achieve what they intend to do.

INTRODUCTION

A recent green school study by Chan (2013) in Atlanta indicated that out of the six areas surveyed for school compliance with green school practices, green school leadership was the weakest. In all of the other areas surveyed, Student Involvement, Water Conservation, Energy Conservation, Green Environment, and Waste Management, the overall rating was average. The slow progress in implementing the green school initiatives in Atlanta schools is closely related to the lack of educational leadership both at the district and the school levels. As identified by Green School Initiative (2013), the four pillars of the green schoolhouse consist of (1) striving to be toxin-free, (2) using resources sustainably, (3) creating a green healthy space, and (4) teaching, learning and engaging green environment. While appreciating the viewpoints of Green School Initiative, the authors have
perceived the importance of emphasizing green school leadership in the preparation of both school and district leaders as being additionally critical to the green school movement. The contents of this chapter are focused on the extent of green school leadership and its exercising process. The functions of district and school organizations to achieve green school effectiveness are also discussed with practical strategies.

GREEN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

In her closing remark of the meeting of The World Commission on Environment and Development in Tokyo, Japan, 1987, Gro Harlem Brundtland called the attention of the world to the ever increasing human population and the associated activities that have caused unintended damages to occur in the atmosphere, water, plants, animals, and soils. She warned the generation of the urgency of the environmental challenges that face us and asked for renewed commitment to action before it becomes too late. To end the meeting, the following declaration (Bruntland, 1987) was made by The World Commission on Environment and Development to target an improved world environment:

1. To re-examine the critical issues of environment and development, and formulate innovative, concrete, and realistic action proposals to deal with them;
2. To strengthen international cooperation on environment and development, and assess and propose new forms of cooperation that can break out of existing patterns and influence policies and events in the direction of needed change; and
3. To raise the level of understanding and commitment to action on the part of individuals, voluntary organizations, business, institutes and governments.

Pursuant to the declaration of The World Commission on Environment and Development, some progressive higher education institutions in the United States have responded by incorporating the achievement of green environment in their long-term strategic plans (Lockwood, 2006). Exemplar school systems nationwide have established green school goals to achieve in their school capital outlay projects and educational programs (Dejong, 2012; Cobb County School District Strategic Plan, 2013).

An educational leader’s roles and responsibilities are well stated in the Educational Leadership Constituent Council Standards (ELCC) (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002). Standard 3 of the ELCC Standards sets the criterion for an educational leader to create a safe and healthy environment for teaching and learning. This is how advocating for a green environment has become an essential component of an educational leader’s daily duty and fits neatly into the pre-established educational leadership framework. Educational leaders can contribute to the school system’s adoption of the green school movement by continually moving the system toward increased productivity in green concept application. For example, there is increasing demand for educational leaders to adopt environmentally sensitive approaches to constructing new buildings and renovating old ones, practice energy saving school operations, and initiate environmental educational programs for youngsters. These forms of green school advocacy have been considered as some of the most viable approaches to environmental challenges that educational leaders can and should incorporate in their own buildings. That being said, the administrative team of the school district has the ultimate responsibility of instituting policies and practices that apply district-wide to turn the school system green.

As stated by Chan (2013) in a recent survey of green school initiatives: