

Leadership Team

Length: 30 minutes

Featured School

School:	Lusher Alternative Elementary School
Location:	New Orleans, Louisiana
In this program:	Kathleen Hurstell Riedlinger, principal Sheila Nelson, assistant principal Megan Neelis, second-grade teacher Marti Dumas, fifth-grade teacher Kathy DeJean, dance teacher Adele Brown, fourth-grade teacher Carolyn Cunningham, fifth-grade teacher Geraldyn Broussard, first-grade teacher Paul Reynaud, first-grade teacher Carolyn DuBois, fourth-grade teacher

About This Program

At **Lusher Alternative Elementary School** in New Orleans, Louisiana, principal Kathy Riedlinger works closely with a team of classroom teachers and arts specialists on curriculum and policy decisions. She sees the group as an effective way to strengthen and protect the school's commitment to arts-based learning.

"For too long, the program relied on me for leadership issues. I don't think that's a good idea," Riedlinger observes. "In too many schools, when that principal leaves, in many ways, they have to start all over.

"I thought it was really important to institutionalize what the vision and mission of Lusher is,...tapping a group of leaders who would take responsibility for the implementation and the continuation of that vision...[and] giving them the opportunity to sit together and use their experience to come up with a plan that's going to work for us," she says.

In this program, you will sit in on a Leadership Team meeting as participants discuss a diverse agenda, including:

- how to structure Lusher's annual Arts Celebration in light of ongoing construction at the school,
- increased demand for enrollment from outside Lusher's neighborhood, and
- peer mentoring and other strategies for helping new teachers feel comfortable with Lusher's arts-based curriculum.

In their classrooms, Leadership Team members reflect on how serving on the Leadership Team has benefited the school and their own teaching practice:

- GERALYN BROUSSARD, first-grade teacher: "It makes me feel more a part of school—knowing my ideas are shared and used.... The Leadership Team is the think tank—you have to be willing to work through ideas."
- KATHY DEJEAN, dance teacher: "It lets me look at how the arts are being used and listened to and understood by classroom teachers—and listen to classroom teachers and hear how arts are affecting them and what they need."
- MARTI DUMAS, a new fifth-grade teacher and Lusher alumna: "The Leadership Team is a voice for people who don't necessarily know the ropes around here.... Having the Leadership Team focused on the arts makes other people more serious about the arts."
- SHEILA NELSON, assistant principal: "The Leadership Team members have to go out to other teachers to get information. They have to be people who are flexible and know how to relate to others."
- PAUL REYNAUD, first-grade teacher: "We allow the teachers to have a voice about what kind of curriculum changes we are going to have."
- CAROLYN DUBOIS, fourth-grade teacher: "My colleagues have a contact with the administration. They share with me, and I can go back to the Leadership Team."

Riedlinger says: "I call the Leadership Team in on almost every decision I make that deals with things that will really impact policy.... There is not one person running the show. Everyone begins to say, 'I feel good about voicing my opinion.'

"When I stop, there will be no question that the [next principal] will know that arts are at the core—and that it is a community decision, backed up with a strong group of teacher leaders that will be right there to help a new person come in."

Viewing Suggestions

Who Should Watch This Program

As a model for effective planning and management, “Leadership Team” is a good professional development resource for principals, assistant principals, and teachers who would like to enhance their leadership skills.

Other audiences for this program might include:

- mixed groups of administrators, classroom teachers, and arts specialists, to help them explore team-building and planning skills, and
- directors of curriculum and instruction, to promote ideas for tapping into teachers’ leadership and planning skills.

Before Watching

This Leadership Team was formed, in part, to ensure continuity of the school’s vision and mission, even if the current principal should leave.

As you watch this program, consider these questions:

- What are some other reasons to have a Leadership Team?
- What are the benefits to the school of having a Leadership Team?
- What benefits do members of the Leadership Team gain by serving?
- What kinds of knowledge and skills do you think you would need to serve effectively on a Leadership Team at your school?
- How would you acquire these skills?

Watching the Program

Watch “Leadership Team” (30 minutes).

Viewing Suggestions, cont'd.

Suggested Activities and Discussion

Consider the following questions for reflection:

- Could a Leadership Team be effective in your school? How would it be structured? How would the Leadership Team implement its plans throughout the school?
- Would you want to be a member of a Leadership Team?

Below are some additional ways you can build on the ideas in this program in a variety of school and community settings.

Professional Development Sessions for Teachers

- Identify the knowledge and skills that would help teachers serve effectively on a Leadership Team. Plan a workshop or course around leadership development.

Leadership Teams

- Identify the special skills and unique perspectives of your team members. Consider ways in which individual members might share their knowledge to benefit the group. Put together a skills bank to consult for future projects.
- Invite parents or prospective partners to a Leadership Team meeting to hear their perspectives on current issues. Schedule periodic open meetings that other teachers and parents can attend.

Additional Resources

Related Video Library Programs

Watch these programs for more information on ideas explored in “Leadership Team”:

- What Is Arts Education?
- Expanding the Role of the Arts Specialist
- Three Leaders at Arts-Based Schools

Web Resources

The Arts in Every Classroom video library Web site: www.learner.org/channel/libraries/artsineveryclassroom

The Arts in Every Classroom workshop Web site: www.learner.org/channel/workshops/artsineveryclassroom

Related Organizations and Resources

Building a Committed Team: www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadrsdp/le200.htm

Notes
