



Cochrane-Fountain City Public Schools – Restructuring Report

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 1) The School Board contracted in August of 2018 with School Exec Connect (SEC) to assist them in their search for a new superintendent and to provide input on administrative restructuring models proposed by the School Board for 2019-20 and recommend to the School Board one or two models from those proposed or that we create. Dr. Kenneth Dragseth, President, and Dr. Antoinette Johns Vice President of School Exec Connect, are serving as consultants for the process.
- 2) On August 7, 2018, a planning meeting was held with the School Board and a process was put in place to provide input to the consultants about the restructuring study. It was agreed that the consultants would give input on models proposed and recommend one or two of those proposals, if appropriate.
- 3) The district provided to SEC multiple documents for their review including recent School Board minutes, multiple district and community surveys, U.S. Department of Education survey, county survey, current job descriptions of some administrators, C-FC Administrative contracts, goal setting documents with a vision and mission, proposed options for restructuring, results and

recommendations of a WASB study on restructuring by their consultant Roger Price, and current administrative structure documents.

- 4) SEC consultants met on September 18 with 6 School Board members, superintendent, principal, assistant principal, and business office personnel. In addition, one School Board member was interviewed by phone earlier. They were asked 7 questions concerning the administrative structure of the district. These questions included: 1) There has been discussion about restructuring the administrative team. What are the difficulties that need to be addressed? What are the pros and cons of the current structure in your mind?, 2) What are the gaps or what do you believe is missing in the current structure?, 3) For Board members: Do you want a job description for the superintendent position?, 4) For Board members: How would you describe the current administrative structure?, 5) For Board members: How do you define your role?, 6) Which of the proposed administrative structures do you prefer and why? 7) How do you perceive that a $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ time Superintendent position will impact the district long-term? We also asked participants about the history of the current structure and how the current structure has been changed or modified over the past years.
- 5) Consultants reviewed all the information provided and gathered and used that information to make the following observations and recommendations.

SEC OBSERVATIONS:

- 1) There has been a significant amount of discussion and information gathered within the district and by the School Board about the issue of restructuring over the last year. The district is to be commended for the multitude of surveys they have conducted to get the input of the community and staff about the district's achievements, challenges and direction desired. The amount of information gathered is unique among districts of any size and especially significant in a district of your size. With all this information and with the pending retirement of the current superintendent it is an opportune time to review the current administrative structure.

- 2) There is a culture in this district of a small town where people have known each other for years and sometimes generations. This culture of a small-town environment where people are interconnected and sometimes know each other well is a positive thing. This culture has made the community and the district strong. This can also make it difficult for change to occur, since it may impact individuals who know each other well and fear of the unknown enters in to the discussion. For a School Board and staff this is a challenge as they seek to create an educational system that will meet the needs of 21st Century students whose future lives may not include continuing to live and work in this community. These tensions sometimes influence the discussion of change in the district. We see some of that now in the restructuring work of the School Board and staff.

- 3) As we reviewed your administrative and supervisory structure and in the gathering of information and the reading of the surveys we noted that you have, for a small district, many different people assigned to the various jobs of the district. This is positive in that

it does give more people input and opportunity for leadership. It can also lead to less efficient program development and a disconnect among staff and programs. It is also more difficult to supervise and provide oversight since it is not known who is responsible and accountable for the work required. Without the above it is difficult for the administrators and supervisors to accomplish their jobs and staff to seek out the appropriate person for answers to questions or to get direction needed on issues. Tied to seeking these defined responsibilities was the desire to hold people accountable for their responsibilities in an appropriate process and for the School board to then trust them to carry out their responsibilities.

- 4) In our discussion with district staff, the School Board, and from reading survey data it is evident that there are a variety of opinions on how effective the current administrative structure is and what changes, if any, should be made to make it more effective and accountable. Some think it is just fine as is and others see improvements that should be made. There was no consensus among people we talked to about the current or any proposed structure's feasibility or viability for the future. There seemed to be different opinions, also, on how and why the current structure was in place as well as its effectiveness.
- 5) Since a study of administrative structure to make sure it is highly effective and meets the needs of the district is usually a part of any new superintendent's obligation as they enter the District the consultants feel a healthy discussion is necessary and appropriate currently. In many districts, including our own that we served, this was a normal procedure. This process, we understand, can cause consternation among district staff as they know it can potentially impact their jobs.

- 6) It was noted that the School Board has had excellent in-service and discussions on the issue of policy governance and their role as a School Board. They have attempted to define how they will function with the superintendent and staff and have commented that they do not want to micromanage the district.

- 7) Typically, in school districts it is the responsibility of the superintendent to recommend to the School Board the administrative structure of a district and get their approval for the structure, job descriptions, the accountability model and standards for evaluation. When a new superintendent is hired the School Board typically asks the new superintendent to evaluate the current structure and make suggestions that would best fit the needs of the district utilizing the new superintendent's background and qualifications. In this current situation it seems appropriate to define the top-level administrative roles and then let the new superintendent, with the background you have provided in the process and investigation on their part, to make suggestions to the Board for the rest of the District's administrative and supervisory structure, reporting process, job descriptions, and accountability and evaluation components. It is the School Board's responsibility to accept or deny the above structural components and the hiring of specific individuals positions based on recommendations from the superintendent and their own knowledge of the position or personnel recommended.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

These recommendations are a result of the data gathering and conversations we have had over the last month in your district. We know, even though we have gathered much input, that we do not know your district as well as your current staff and Board members.

However, we offer these recommendations for your review based on our work with your district and our own background of experiences. We have chosen not to define the FTE's or position descriptions for some administrators or supervisors since we feel we do not have enough information to do so.

After reviewing the 7 proposed Administrative Scenarios and reviewing the documents and data gathered in the process we have the following recommendations:

- 1) We recommend that the superintendent be a full time or at least a ¾ time position.** This position is vital to the leadership of your district and the multiple responsibilities of the job description. This person is the face of the district and should be a strong educational leader as well. It will be very important in recruiting you next leader to tap into those people who are currently or want to be a superintendent. Offering anything less than a ¾ time superintendent position will make it much harder for us to recruit top candidates and, we believe, to retain them long-term in the district. They will seek other districts that are looking for a superintendent. To make more effective use of the qualifications of the superintendent we recommend that the superintendent be heavily involved in the areas of curriculum and instruction, finance, and human resources. We feel that this person can oversee finance and the business office, provide direction to human resources regarding all human resource functions, and should be the instructional leader for the district. This person should determine direct reports, compile job descriptions for each position and then hold the persons accountable for completing those responsibilities by ongoing evaluation of these individuals. This superintendent should have their job description approved by the School Board and be held accountable to that job description by a defined evaluation process. The Board has

worked on a job description and it should be refined based on the qualifications of the newly selected superintendent. Other duties can then be assigned to other administrators or supervisors. In addition, working with the School Board and stakeholders the superintendent should have a long-range plan that sets priorities for the changes needed in the district, the financial planning to commit resources to those priorities, and maintain financial stability. Financial stability was a crucial concern of almost everyone we talked with in this data gathering process. These processes set the stage for holding any administrative structure accountable for success. The Board should annually evaluate the superintendent for success in meeting district goals and implementing priorities.

- 2) **We recommend that the principal role be either K-12 if a full-time superintendent or another combination based on the experience background of the principal and superintendent.** The principal role should be defined so that it encompasses strong curriculum and instruction work and oversight, professional development, staff support and evaluation. The job description should include who this person supervises and holds accountable. The principal should report directly to the superintendent. If there is an assistant principal, the principal should be the supervisor of that person.
- 3) **We understand, if it is decided because of financial and staffing needs, to only have 2 administrators that the work of the assistant principal will need to be reassigned to multiple individuals.** Some of those disparate duties could be assigned to

current staff and others may have to be downgraded or eliminated.

- 4) **If the decision is to have three administrators, the role of the assistant principal should be more of an instructional support person and relieved of areas that are not directly connected to students and staff needs.** In your proposals you mention a new position that encompasses activities, building operations and communications and testing. Any, or all, of those areas could be incorporated into this position. The data did show, however, that if there is an assistant principal position that more direct contact with the educational side of the district and contact with students is important. The goal, if a third person is hired, to develop a strong position that meets the needs mentioned and is still not an overwhelming position. It is also possible to incorporate other positions in the district into the new position and offset the costs of this position. It is possible also, to have an activities/athletic director as part of a split teacher/administrative role as they do in many districts. If you do this, then you need to address somewhere else the areas you suggested above.

- 5) **We feel that financial oversight and management can be accomplished with a superintendent who has the financial skills necessary for the position.** We understand and share your concern the need to have strong financial oversight and management. Many districts have had difficulty with their communities over mismanagement of school finances and school boards need to be confident in the work of the superintendent in this area. Financial acumen is something all superintendents need and should be able to lead in your district. This person should have strong oversight over the work of the business office and provide on-site professional development for them. The superintendent needs this expertise because he/she must be the

face of the district to the community on financial issues.

6) **We recommend that the School Board, with input from staff, determine the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent and principal(s).** They can and may want to offer advice to the new superintendent and School Board. New job descriptions should be developed based on the roles and responsibilities of these positions and formally approved by the Board. A plan for accountability and formal evaluation process ought to be approved, also. The School Board and superintendent then must be committed to carry out this task. Seeking input into this process from the newly selected superintendent seems appropriate and necessary.

7) **We recommend that upon selection of your next superintendent in February 2019 that you make provisions for this person to be involved in the determination of the structure and responsibilities of other administrators and supervisors for the 2019-2020 school year.** This process will help build connectedness, responsibility and accountability of the supervisors, administrators and the new superintendent. This can be accomplished by swapping days in the next contract for days on site in your district in the spring.