Assignment #1: Collaborative Relationships in Education

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As an educator, it is important to understand the role of having good collaborative relationships within the school setting. Having good collaborative relationships in the school community will benefit the students in the long run. When the school board, faculty, support staff, and the community come together and work together, it can set up a relationship that is beneficial for the students in regards to academic success. It is important to understand different theories on effective collaboration in order to determine which are ideal to be used to best assist students in achieving success. By understanding a couple of different theories on collaboration, a school system can cultivate collaborative relationships within the school community and ensure that every step is being taken to better prepare students for academic success.

One of the first theories that needs to be looked at that helps foster a collaborative environment is professional learning communities. Professional learning communities are environments within the school that are created to promote working together by support staff, teachers, and school leaders in order to achieve better academic results for students who attend the school (Schaap & de Bruijn, 2018). For professional learning communities to be successful, a school environment needs to have five key characteristics established within the school: common values and norms, concentration on student learning, collaborative relationships throughout the school, stakeholders working together to better assist students, and reflective dialogues amongst the stakeholders involved (Schaap & de Bruijn, 2018). In other words, professional learning communities are more than just teachers working together to come up with ideas on how to best teach students. A successful school with professional learning communities set up involves everyone who works within the school setting from support staff, to leadership, to the teachers working together to best assist the students. When a school and a school district start to function using professional learning communities, it involves a shift from just teachers teaching to one in which the entire school community concentrates on learning, including the school district (Eaker, Rhoades, & Keating, 2008). The school board has a large role in helping set up good professional learning communities in which the board members are the ones who set the direction for the entire school district and the individual schools. This means that a school board needs to foster a collaborative relationship and lead by example of how to work in a collaborative manner with the school leaders and the community in order to have a successful professional learning community (Bradea, 2016). If the school board just sits back and does nothing, then it is possible that the professional learning community that is set up will not be successful. School boards that helped stress the importance of working together and provided resources to help set up professional learning communities were found to be more successful and to have higher student achievement (Bradea, 2016). The community is involved in the professional learning communities by being supportive of the school board and the direction that is being taken. Support staff’s role in providing and maintaining a successful professional learning community is that they will help model the concepts that can be found within the established communities (Eaker, Rhoades, & Keating, 2008). When the support staff interacts with the community members who come in, they need to work in a manner that is supportive of the learning community that has been established (Eaker, Rhoades, & Keating, 2008). In other words, the educators, leadership, school board, support staff, and community all have a role in helping professional learning communities to be successful.

When looking at professional learning communities, it is important to understand if the use of them is effective in regards to the K-12 school community setting. School districts that had effective professional learning communities set up were more likely to have more students achieving academic success than schools that did not have professional learning communities established (Bradea, 2016). Schools that had professional learning communities that operated with more than just educators and included the community as a whole were more likely to be successful and have higher student academic scores (Easton, 2015). If professional learning communities are set up and used correctly, then it can lead to more collaboration taking place within the entire school and lead to higher morale for the faculty and staff involved (Schaap & de Bruijn, 2018). More collaboration benefits students and leads to higher academic scores for the students involved. Therefore, professional learning communities are important for the success of students and the school as a whole.

Another theory of leadership that needs to be looked at within the education setting is the use of collaborative leadership. Collaborative leadership is when the leadership within the school and the school board work on building relationships, handle issues that come up in a constructive manner, and also work together with other parties to help have a great environment for all stakeholders involved (Veale, 2010). Schools in which the school leadership acts in accordance with the theory of collaborative leadership have environments in which the stakeholders work together, positive relationships are formed with stakeholders, and partnerships are important to the overall success of the school and student performance (Veale, 2010). When collaborative leadership is in place, it requires the leadership to develop a clear vision, promote clear communication, and foster trust amongst the stakeholders involved (Calvert, 2018). The way that the school board helps with collaborative leadership is making sure that a clear vision is in place that the school leadership knows and understands. The school leadership then sets the stage for working together to achieve success within the school, communicating the vision to faculty, support staff, and the community at large. The community is involved because clear and open communication is present and there is a level of trust in place due to the open communication.

When looking at the use of collaborative leadership within the school setting, it is important to understand if the use of this method is effective. Schools that had collaborative leadership in place tended to have more engaged staff and better results overall within the organization involved (Calvert, 2018). The use of collaborative leadership was found to lead to a more productive staff within the school setting (Veale, 2010). When the staff is more productive, it leads to higher student achievement rates on their school work (Veale, 2010). Since collaborative leadership has been found to increase productivity of school staff, it is important to understand that this theory is important for schools to try and implement.

An educator needs to have a clear understanding of what is required to have successful schools and positive environments in place for student success. One way to have a good environment in place for students is having a collaborative environment in place for student success. Collaborative relationships within the school setting can be achieved by having successful professional learning communities in place and also by having leadership use collaborative leadership methods. If both of these methods are used within the school setting, it can help set students up for a lot of success in regards to academic performance.

**References**

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