

How to Make Wise Resource-Allocation Decisions

In a sidebar in this *District Management Journal* article, Nathan Levenson and Bridget McNamara list ten mistakes superintendents should avoid when they make difficult resource-allocation decisions:

- *Don't make tough decisions alone.* “When only a small group of leaders make decisions, those who were not involved often fail to support the decision,” say Levenson and McNamara.

- *Don't ignore unstated values.* Beyond the core values of Children First are other competing values, for example, loyalty to staff and appreciation of seniority.

- *Don't forget that making the wise choice isn't sufficient.* “How decisions are made matters as much as the decision itself,” say the authors. “Be sure to involve deep influencers in the decision-making process.”

- *Don't assume others know the facts.* People may not know about a program's disappointing results or the high costs per student served. If they're part of the fact-finding process, they're more likely to support the decision.

- *Don't frame choices as “good” or “bad.”* This personalizes decisions and increases the chances of strong pushback. Better to talk in terms of alignment (or non-alignment) with the district's strategic vision.

- *Don't forget to involve principals.* They are the key communication link to teachers and parents.

- *Don't advocate for half measures.* “Be careful not to undermine the integrity of the proposal,” advise Levenson and McNamara. “Half measures will cause support to dissipate.”

- *But don't be stubborn.* There's a time to incorporate feedback and bend to ensure support and success, say the authors.

- *Don't assume central-office support.* Even those closest to the superintendent may have conflicting loyalties and need to be part of the process and understand decisions.

- *Don't despair.* If district leaders attend to the “adaptive” as well as the technical challenges, budgets can be managed well.

“10 Mistakes to Avoid: Making Difficult Resource Allocation Decisions” by Nathan Levenson and Bridget McNamara in *The District Management Journal*, Fall 2012 (Vol. 12, p. 22-23),

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