Case Study 3: Sorting Through the Data From Logan Elementary School

The following data are quotes taken from interviews of parents, faculty, and staff of an elementary school by request of the school's principal, Nancy:

1. Organize these data to present to Nancy. Notice demographic details such as grade level, interviewee role, and tenure.
2. Try organizing the data a different way. Did you notice anything different from the first time you analyzed the data? Which method do you think was more effective?
3. How would you structure the feedback meeting with Nancy? Which themes would you present and why?

Logan Elementary School is a suburban, Grades 1–6 elementary school in a middle-class district in the southwestern United States. It is a large school campus with five wings, each with six to eight classrooms. Grades 1–3 (lower grades) are located in wings A and B, while Grades 4–6 (upper grades) are located in wings C, D, and E. The school was built in the late 1980s, though it was recently painted in bright colors, showcasing three elaborate murals, with funds raised from the Parents Association.

You have been called in as the organization development practitioner to help the principal better develop relationships among the school's faculty and staff. There are 38 faculty members, eight staff members, and a part-time librarian at the school. The principal, Nancy Mestas, 2 years into her role at this school, wants to improve relationships among faculty and staff, build consistency in approach among teachers at each grade level, and improve the relationship between the school and the community. She has made several dramatic changes over the past year.

You agreed to conduct interviews of staff members, faculty members, and parents over the course of one week to better understand the issues facing the school. With interviewees, you agreed that all interviews would be documented anonymously and data would be shared primarily in summary form, with quotes shared only when a single individual could not be identified. You are scheduled to meet with Nancy next week to present the data and to hold a feedback meeting.

Monday

"Nancy's been just great with the kids. A couple of times she's joined our recess or physical education outdoor activities to cheer them on as they play kickball. They call her 'Miss Nancy.' I've never seen the kids act that way with a principal before." (Teacher, Grade 5)

"I know Nancy wants us all to have a consistent set of books and materials, but that's just not the way I've always worked at this school. I've been here for 9 years and I've

always been able to choose my own books. Nancy needs to understand that that's part of the freedom we have in the classroom." (Teacher, Grade 3)

"Faculty meetings are generally productive. It is a good opportunity to meet with other teachers and release the stress of the day." (Teacher, Grade 5)

"Nancy could do a better job of equalizing participation in the faculty meetings." (Teacher, Grade 4)

"The first open house for parents last year was a nice idea. Same thing for the monthly bulletin." (Parent, Grade-6 child)

"Nancy's style has been very easy to work with. She's very accommodating and approachable." (Staff member, 3 years' tenure)

"When she asked Jaime to pick the Grade 3 reading book, the rest of us weren't consulted. I really felt that was unfair, and Nancy seemed to ignore our complaints. I know she wants consistency, but there's a better way to handle that." (Teacher, Grade 3)

"Nancy gives us a lot of support. She has been at every one of our grade-level meetings and has given us a lot of resources from her days as a fifth-grade teacher. I think she understands the challenges we're faced with." (Teacher, Grade 5)

"Nancy has been very supportive of the staff." (Staff member, 2 years' tenure)

Tuesday

"The district's new grade standards have been very frustrating. We were notified just a few weeks before the school year began—didn't Nancy know about this?—and we had to scramble to meet the new expectations. I basically had 2 weeks to redo my entire plan for September and October. Nancy didn't seem to have much sympathy. She just said, 'We all have to be flexible.'" (Teacher, Grade 2)

"Faculty meetings never seem to get around to any of the topics that I'm concerned about. They're run in a rigid and inflexible manner and we can never bring up any new topics unless we've reserved time on the agenda 2 days in advance. Sometimes things just come up and you need to have them addressed." (Teacher, grade unknown)

"I've been impressed by some of the changes that I've seen over the past year. I really like the new monthly bulletin for parents. It helps me know what Sarah is doing at school." (Parent, Grade-5 child)

"The addition of voice mail has been a helpful communication mechanism to be able to contact the teachers whenever I have a question about my son's homework." (Parent, Grade-2 child)

"I don't feel that Nancy has been accessible to me. I have tried several times to reach her to share my concerns regarding our textbook selection and she has been too busy to meet with me." (Teacher, Grade 3)

"Working with Nancy in the office has been excellent. It's been a huge improvement over the previous principal." (Staff member, 5 years' tenure)

"The upper grade teachers seem to get most of the attention. We hardly ever see Nancy in our wing of the school." (Teacher, Grade 1)

"One thing is clear—Nancy has her favorites." (Teacher, Grade 3)

Wednesday

"It's much easier to know what's going on at the school than it used to be. Things like the parents bulletin each month have been a great resource." (Parent, Grade-4 child)

"The kids love it when Nancy comes to read to them in my classroom. She has been very accessible to me and to our class." (Teacher, Grade 5)

"My working relationship with Nancy is good. I have a lot of experience at this school and I think she respects that. My only concern is that sometimes she tends to forget to notify us of some changes (like the lunch schedule last week) and it causes some problems." (Staff member, 8 years' tenure)

"I think that Nancy should have been open with us regarding the reading textbook issue." (Teacher, Grade 3)

"I'm not sure how frequently Nancy interacts with the superintendent or anyone at the district office, but I think it would help if she would build that relationship. We used to have a lot of credibility with the district because our students have been very successful and it would help us in the past when it came to budget time." (Teacher, Grade 4)

"I wish the district had given us some additional funding to deal with the new math standards for our school." (Teacher, Grade 2)

"There are times I think, 'Nancy who?' Except for faculty meetings and memos, I don't think she knows that I even teach here." (Teacher, Grade 2)

Thursday

"As the librarian, I'm only here a few days per week, but I've really appreciated Nancy's efforts to include me in the faculty meetings and treat me like a full-time member of the staff." (Staff member, 4 years' tenure)

"Our faculty meetings are tense and awkward. Only about half of the group participates. I don't generally get a lot out of them." (Teacher, Grade 3)

"I think Nancy is generally doing a good job, though I think she could have fought the district more on the new standards and getting us some additional funds." (Teacher, grade unknown)

"Nancy redirected our arts funds to the Grade 6 teachers this year, so I'm not able to do my spring painting activity like I have done for the past 6 years. I don't think that was right." (Teacher, Grade 2)

"Nancy's really approachable and sympathetic to our concerns. It's nice to have her support." (Teacher, Grade 6)

"I feel that the way that Nancy assigned teachers this year was unfair. I indicated my preference and that was not taken into account. I have never taught a combination class before and it has been a lot of additional work with very little support." (Teacher, Grade 2/3 combination)

"I had the opportunity to meet with the principal and my son's teacher during the first open house. I haven't used the voice mail feature but I do tend to read the monthly bulletins." (Parent, Grade-1 child)

Friday

"Faculty meetings are well run and structured. I don't think everyone participates equally, unfortunately. Nancy sends around an agenda a few days before the meeting, which works well, and I know what to expect and prepare for." (Teacher, Grade 6)

"If there's one complaint I have, it's the budget. We can't even afford construction paper! Everything we're doing is to support the new curriculum standards, and it's wiped out any additional funding for field trips or other projects." (Teacher, Grade 5)

"I have to sympathize with Nancy. The budget was cut at the same time as we had entirely new requirements to meet from the district, and it's been impossible. I wish she were more aggressive in pushing the district." (Teacher, Grade 1)

"I have had a few opportunities to meet one-on-one with the principal because of my daughter and I have found her very approachable." (Parent, Grade-2 child)

"I left a voice mail for Kelly's teacher a few days ago, but I haven't heard back. I'm not sure how useful that is." (Parent, Grade-3 child)

"We have occasionally seen the quarterly parents bulletin that the teacher sends home. It could be more frequent." (Parent, Grade-3 child)

"Nancy has high standards and is demanding, which makes the staff perform at a very high level. At times I think she could include us in some of the communications that are going to all of the teachers so we know what's going on, too." (Staff member, 3 years' tenure)

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