



Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity is defined as the degree to which employees are unclear about the expectations for their role or what is required of them (Baron, 1986; Papastylianou et al., 2009). Role conflict can occur when an individual is asked to perform two or more conflicting tasks simultaneously, or when the expectations from different groups of people (e.g., family, colleagues, friends) are not aligned (Pettinger, 1996).



Why is it important?

- Role ambiguity is associated with poor job satisfaction (Acorn, 1991) and the onset of stress (Greer & Wethered, 1984).
- A lack of clarity about role expectations can negatively impact job performance (Tubre & Collins, 2000).
- Role ambiguity negatively impacts organizational outcomes, including decreased productivity and employee turnover (Bauer & Simmons, 2000).

In Practice

To improve role clarity, organizations should provide clear job descriptions and expectations, offer ongoing training, and give both recognition and positive feedback when expectations are met (Bauer & Simmons, 2000).



What can schools do?

To reduce role ambiguity in the workplace, schools should:

- Establish work contracts that contain detailed job descriptions with clearly defined tasks.
- Ensure that all board and school-level policies, and associated documentation, are unambiguous with regards to work-related roles and responsibilities.
- Take the time to discuss role-related considerations with staff and ensure that any tasks that are not in their job description are either added or, alternately, eliminated as needed.
- Reinforce the key responsibilities and objectives related to a given role by integrating feedback on these areas into a formal performance review process.

Work roles provide reliability and stability for an organization. By providing clearly defined work roles, school leaders can reduce work-related stress and improve organizational outcomes.



Leader Reflection

School leaders can ensure that expectations for roles are clearly defined and agreed upon by:

- Clearly outlining the expectations and responsibilities for each role.
- Regularly connecting with employees to ensure that directions are clear.
- Ensuring staff know who, ultimately, has decision-making responsibility.
- Providing avenues for employees to openly express role-related concerns.
- Clarifying work priorities by taking stock of staff responsibilities and eliminating redundant or non-essential work.

References

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