

## **Unit 5 will need 20 new administrators in next 5 years**

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NORMAL — Unit 5 will need about 20 new administrators in the next five years to replace retirees and fill jobs at schools to be built, and those new leaders will have to be more directly involved in student achievement.

The Normal-based school district wants to draw them from the current rank of teachers, so it's turning to SAM for help.

"The need to find a succession plan to replace 18 administrators who will retire within five years is critical to a school district the size of McLean County Unit 5 Schools," Superintendent Gary Niehaus said.

SAM, an acronym for School Administration Manager, is part of a system that could train current teachers over two years to be administrators. The trainees also could help with building management duties, giving administrators more time to work in the classrooms to improve achievement, Unit 5 officials say.

The SAM model is fairly new. Unit 5 is one of only three school districts in Illinois — the others are the public school systems in Chicago and Springfield — to try the program with funding assistance from the Wallace Foundation. The Wallace Foundation, which does research to develop educational leaders and resources, pays \$2,000 per principal for a time-use study as part of the process.

### **Managing vs. leading**

Many principals spend about 70 percent of their time managing buildings and 30 percent on their leadership roles with teachers and students. The district would like to switch this ratio, Niehaus said.

The district, which has 45 administrators, sees SAM as a way to fill a training gap created in 2004 when the two-year administrator-intern program was ended as part of a package of budget cuts.

Principals who took part in that program earlier say it was beneficial and they are glad something will replace it. Among them is John Lutes, principal at Grove Elementary

School, who took part from 1988 to 1990.

“It allowed me to get a great deal of administrative experience before I assumed the responsibility,” Lutes said.

Kingsley Junior High School Principal Lynette Mehall is one of nine principals involved in the SAM program.

“It’s an incredible opportunity,” said Mehall, a reading specialist with 20 years teaching experience before becoming an assistant principal in 1998.

### **Coaching teachers**

Mehall said is especially interested in having more time to coach teachers and students. A football coach is on the sidelines, not in an office, during a big game, she said, adding she sees the principal’s role in the same way.

Although Mehall hasn’t gone through the time-use study yet, she estimates she spends about 70 percent of her time doing managerial duties, ranging from supervising a study hall to making sure a teacher has a pencil sharpener.

A SAM trainee could help with some of those duties while she could help teachers, spend time in classrooms, mentor teacher’s assistants and assess whether classes are meeting state standards, she said.

She said she has met with Kingsley’s associate principal, who could take on the SAM role. She also has discussed it with school’s parent-teacher organization and others who would be affected by the new management style to see how they feel about taking part in the program.

“The majority embraced the idea,” she said, adding, “some (teachers) were skeptical.”

The schools taking part in SAM are: Brigham, Colene Hoose, Oakdale, Parkside, Pepper Ridge, Prairieland elementary schools; Kingsley and Parkside junior high schools; and Normal Community High School.