



# Leading the Journey

## An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

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### Supervision

*Leadership, NAD Principals' Handbook (excerpt)*

Supervision of instruction is the process for helping teachers grow. It is generally accomplished through:

- Performing formal and informal observations of instruction
- Analyzing the teacher's instructional strengths and weaknesses
- Providing effective feedback to teachers
- Assisting the teacher to further develop strengths and minimize weaknesses

It is easy to allow one's calendar to be filled with activities not directly involved with instructional leadership. Effective principals will make a commitment to regular and frequent classroom observations. When appropriate, find someone to hold you accountable to your commitment. To assist during the observation process, the following suggestions are provided:

- Ask for and review the goals and objectives for

that class period before class. If one knows what is to be accomplished in class that day, it will be easier to determine if it was achieved.

- It is imperative that the principal know what constitutes effective teaching skills.
- Some areas to look for during a classroom observation include:
  - Engagement of students in learning
  - Effectiveness of the learning environment
  - Organization of subject matter and presentation
  - Monitoring and assessing of student learning
- Always have a follow-up conference. Some questions to use in the conference are:
  - What happened in class today that you thought was good?
  - What would you change and why?
  - How do you know if the students learned what you were teaching?

### The Value of Classroom Walkthroughs

*Pedro Ojeda*

I remember how surprised I was to see the principal walk through my classroom when I first started teaching. I thought she wanted to speak to me, but she did not. She simply walked in, took a look at my lesson plan book and walked out. If I said good morning to her, she would reply. Otherwise, there was no verbal communication.

I soon discovered that this "inspection" would be a daily routine that occurred at random times throughout the day for every classroom at the school. Principals are busy, but I determined that I would do better if I were a principal.

I first learned about the Walkthrough method while taking classes at Montana State University. The concept was so intriguing to me that I decided then and there that I would use this method when I became a principal.

However, I soon learned that there is a difference between classroom visits and walkthroughs. In

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### Who Has Time for Supervision?

*Norman Powell*

What was your day like yesterday? If you are a principal it was busy, challenging, and stressful. Where does a principal find time to be an instructional supervisor? No one needs a lecture on the importance of instructional supervision. Adventist parents demand a quality academic program and that requires effective teaching and active instructional supervision.

There are some reasons why it is difficult for principals to find time and enthusiasm for instructional supervision. Traditional methods of supervision are often viewed as neither relevant nor useful by principals or teachers. It is time to rethink instructional supervision.

#### Out with the old

Two traditional activities need to be sent to the dustbin of educational practice: (a) formal classroom observations and (b) form driven evaluation.

Formal classroom observation. Few would miss it. Recent studies suggest that formal classroom

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## Classroom Walkthroughs

walkthroughs, the principal stays in the classroom for three to ten minutes and leaves a comment and a question—via written note, email or text—about what he/she observed. Many books have been written about this method, so the process can be quite complicated, or you can choose to keep it simple. I chose the latter.

I like the simple approach because principals, especially in Adventist schools, barely have time for the one or two evaluations we are required to do each year for most teachers. I try to visit every classroom each day that I am at school. I try to do a walkthrough in each class once every week. For me, this is very time consuming because Holbrook Indian School is a twelve grade school. In the elementary grades, I vary the time of day so that I can observe all aspects of the classroom over time. I also keep a log to ensure a systematic coverage.

When teachers buy into this approach, it is simply beautiful. Avenues to communication are opened that create a community of colleagues working toward the same goal. The note and question you leave for the teacher leads to a continual dialogue between principal and teacher and in many cases between colleagues. Teachers will actually become eager to have you visit their classrooms so that you can observe what they and the students are doing. I have discovered that my teachers appreciate being evaluated in this formative manner rather than on one or two formal evaluations per year.

Bottom line: Walkthroughs are supposed to be informal and supportive to the teacher. Formal evaluations can be very stressful for teachers. The frequency of walkthroughs alleviates this extensively. I believe strongly in maintaining a presence in all classrooms so that students and teachers know they have a principal that supports them and values learning.

## Who Has Time for Supervision?

observations are of little value. Replace this activity with a combination of walk-through visits and teacher videos. These activities are far more effective in helping teachers grow professionally. Walk-through visits have been discussed in a previous article and the use of teacher videos will be discussed later.

Form driven evaluation. Most principals, when needing to perform or complete their teacher evaluations will go to their conference form to determine what to do. These “one size fits all” forms do not adequately recognize the uniqueness of each teacher’s supervisory needs.

To consider doing away with traditional teacher evaluation forms requires a close examination of our traditional evaluation models, purposes, and practices. This article proposes that schools implement a differentiated teacher evaluation model<sup>1</sup> that meets the different needs of different teachers.

### Differentiated evaluation model

The differentiated teacher evaluation model is purpose driven. That purpose will differ for different teachers. Think of three different types of teachers. They include: (a) the experienced teacher, (b) the new or recently transferred teacher, and (c) teachers who are performing poorly.

The veteran teacher. Even veteran and satisfactorily performing teachers need to focus on growing professionally every year and throughout their career. Effective principals will provide resources and encouragement to these teachers. They will work with these veteran teachers to assure that, each year, they focus on at least one aspect of their teaching with the goal of demonstrating some new or improved skill. The supervisory activities of the leader will include encouragement, providing resources, monitoring their progress, and celebrating their successes.

The new teacher. New or recently transferred teachers also need to demonstrate ongoing professional growth. But they have additional needs. New to the profession or the school, these teachers will need additional coaching and monitoring. Soon, they will be considered for regular appointment and the principal will need a comprehensive file of their teaching experiences. The same supervisory activities as mentioned in the

previous paragraph will apply to these teachers. In addition, the supervisor will provide close attention to these teachers’ coaching and monitoring needs. The supervisor will carefully document these supervisory activities. The documents will include such items as the teachers’ demonstrated professional growth, reports of informal classroom visits, and reports of teacher videos.

The poorly performing teacher. A school may have teachers, new or veteran, who are perceived as not adequately meeting the conference teacher performance standards. The supervisory activities for these teachers will be highly individualized depending on the nature of the performance concerns. Both informal and video observations may be needed to identify the specific nature of the performance issues. Once those issues are clearly identified, supervisors must provide relevant resources along with focused monitoring of their performance. Supervisors will conduct regular conversations with those teachers focusing on the degree of success or failure in meeting those expectations. Thorough documentation<sup>2</sup> of all of those activities is essential. Due process principles must be observed.

The fundamental purpose of teacher evaluation is to promote teacher growth. A form-based model of teacher evaluation that is pretty much the same year after year, does not generally meet that objective. Differentiated evaluation focuses on growth and different teacher needs. Educational leaders expect teachers to practice differentiated instruction. Why would we expect less of principals?

Effective use of teacher videos and a discussion of evaluation forms or reports will be considered in the next issue.

1. For additional information about Differentiated Instruction, see the [NAD Supervision Handbook](#), Chapter 6.
2. For additional information about documentation and due process, see the [NAD Supervision Handbook](#), Chapters 8-10 and the [PowerPoint documentation refresher](#).

Additional note:

For information about a school that has implemented differentiated evaluation, contact [Datha Tickner](#) at Orangewood Academy.