



Leading the Journey

An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

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Berit von Pohle

Director of Education
Pacific Union Conference



Ed Boyatt

Retired educator with 32
years in administration

Lynal Ingham

Associate Superintendent
Northern California
Conference

Norman Powell

Retired educator with
experience as a teacher,
principal, an associate
superintendent, and Dean
of the School of
Education, LSU

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Professional Development

Leadership, NAD Principals' Handbook (excerpt)

The principal should assume an active role in providing professional growth activities for the faculty and staff individually and collectively. These activities should be planned and provided to help teachers:

- Implement necessary changes revealed by disaggregation of student achievement data.

- Develop competency in curriculum development.
- Broaden subject area knowledge.
- Improve instructional methods and techniques which meet the varying needs and learning styles of students.

Teachers should be encouraged to join national professional organizations in their respective disciplines and be provided with opportunities to attend the national conventions and local workshops.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Lynal Ingham

Teachers focused on self-improvement model life-long learning for their students, returning to the classroom rejuvenated and energized to practice new strategies. These teachers thrive on the newest techniques. They dream of cutting-edge seminars and plan with colleagues from other schools, focusing on specific areas of curriculum or philosophical approaches to study and implement. These teachers have no problem asking for release days or “school contributions” to their seminar fees, though they would find a way to attend without school support! And then... there are the others. We all have teachers who hesitate to participate in any professional development. They either don't see a need to change their classroom approach, or have a difficult time choosing an area of focus. How can administrators include these teachers in a school-wide culture of continuous growth?

Begin by setting the stage. Plan whole-staff professional development opportunities to foster an environment of learning. Do you have a school-wide professional growth focus? Consider your school's mission and vision as you collectively discuss needs and paths to improvement. Create a culture of growth and model the process with the whole staff. Set goals, finding and planning growing experiences, implementing your plan and reflecting on the effectiveness of new approaches.

Guide teachers toward areas of focus. Many times teachers are inspired by collaboration. Take time in staff meetings or in teacher-principal conferences to assist them by considering the needs of their students. Explore assessments and student surveys. Work together to identify academic needs in the classroom, shifting approaches to subject areas or pedagogy or incorporating technology. Keep in mind that whatever they choose, their growth directly benefits the students

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Who Has Time for Supervision?

Norman Powell

The previous issue suggested that two traditional teacher evaluation activities need to be sent to the dust-bin: (a) formal classroom observations and (b) form driven evaluation. What kinds of evaluation activities and reports should take their place?

The forms

First to be considered are the forms. Without prepared forms, what would end-of-year teacher evaluation reports look like? To start with, appropriate documentation¹ of all evaluation activities must occur. During the course of the year, as the differentiated evaluation activities are conducted and documented, an evaluation file will be developed. This file will include all of that documentation. At the end of the year, the principal will prepare a summary report of that documentation which would include items such as: (a) information about classroom videos and informal visits, (b) summary of written documentation of conversations with the teacher about his or her performance, (c) statements relative to the teacher's professional development activities, (d) information related to the degree of success or lack of success relative to their stated improvement goals, (e) recommendations for future growth and development for that teacher, and (f) other relevant teacher performance issues.

Many believe a prepared form is the only way to assure that teacher evaluation really happens. In comparison to a prepared form, an individualized summary report provides a far more accurate, authentic, and thorough portrayal of the principal's instructional supervision activities as well as a more useful portrait of each teacher.

There are some prerequisites for this type of reporting system to work, however. It is essential that principals are fully aware of due process principles, documentation guidelines, and teacher performance standards¹.

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Who Has Time for Supervision?

Teacher videos²

The previous issue introduced the concept of teacher-made videos. These videos are far more effective in promoting teacher growth than the formal supervisor observation. Traditional formal observation places the teacher in a passive role. In contrast, when teachers make and view videos of their own teaching activities, they become actively involved in their own self-evaluation.

Teacher-made videos have some clear advantages. Teachers should be free to view and critique their videos before sharing with a supervisor. This allows them to evaluate and reflect on their own practices. If they are dissatisfied with their performance on the video, they may redo the video. In the process, they are growing professionally and becoming reflective practitioners. Rather than preparing a lesson to “show off” their skills for a formal classroom observation, they are free to try new approaches and also free to fail, all the while learning and growing professionally.

To be most effective, some principles of teacher video need to be kept in mind. First, an objective must be established. Is the teacher new? The supervisor may wish for the teacher to demonstrate classroom management skills.

What is the teacher’s professional growth goal for the year? The teacher video should be related to that goal. Has the teacher never seen themselves on video? The goal may be to simply observe themselves to better understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Finally, keep in mind that the teacher video is a supervision tool used in combination with walk-through visits.

Principals should give serious study to implement teacher videos as a part of their supervision activities. Those principals will find details about how to implement teacher videos in the North American Division Supervision Handbook.

Differentiated evaluation models, walk through visits, and teacher videos are three easily implemented supervision principles or activities that can provide for a more authentic and pleasant instructional leadership experience.

1. For additional information about documentation and due process, see the NAD Supervision Handbook, Chapters 8-10 and the PowerPoint documentation refresher.

2. For additional information about the use of teacher videos, see the NAD Supervision Handbook, Chapter 14.

Make professional growth easy! Think through the resources you can share with your teachers. Are teachers aware of Conference-level programs to support professional development? Have you made PD a part of your school budget? Let teachers know what to expect in the way of financial and release support. Model your PD commitment by attending professional presentations, sharing from professional sources and collaborating on materials. Share what you learn at Education Council. Be enthusiastic about growth and expect your teachers to be as well!

Creating a Culture of Achievement

Berit von Pohle

A recent [ASCD book](#) written by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Ian Pumpian focuses on creating a positive school culture. The authors propose that positive school culture does more than generate good feelings in a classroom or on a school campus. The main purpose of a school’s culture is to ensure that students have every opportunity to achieve.

The authors suggest that schools should make building culture part of a planned strategic effort. While most school improvement plans include an academic focus, this is generally not sufficient to put the mission of the school into action. School culture and an academic press must both be addressed and aligned.

The academic curriculum of the school and the school culture must both be explicit and must be viewed, reviewed, and acted upon in a unified and coordinated manner. It is important to remember that a school’s culture develops and grows through an accumulation of actions, traditions, symbols, ceremonies, and rituals that should be closely aligned with the school’s mission.

The underlying essential elements of a school’s culture include relationships, identity, connections, and data. These factors exist in every school whether examined or not. To sustain or change a school’s culture, each must be understood. The mission of the school should capture all of these elements and be known to everyone involved in the school. Parents, students, teachers, staff, administrators, community should all understand how their work supports the mission. This is evident in the language, action and routines designed to make all stakeholders feel welcome, comfortable, important, and understood.

The authors identify five pillars that hold up the mission statement:

1. Welcome – can your school be so welcoming, so inviting, and so comfortable that every person who walks through the doors will believe they are about to have an amazing experience?
2. Do no harm – what are the purposes of your school’s rules?
3. Choice words – do you choose words carefully so that they build students’ identifies is an important aspect of building the culture of a school?
4. It’s never too late to learn – do you presume competence on the part of students?
5. Best school in the universe -- is there internal accountability at your school to be the best you can be?

While stated briefly here, a chapter is devoted to each of these pillars, explaining why it is important in building culture, along with examples from schools who have worked to implement the pillar.

Along with the pillars, the authors highlight the organizational principles or processes at each school that enhance the pillars. Also part of the organization are services cycles which are a series of actions that staff understand are essential in making the mission and pillars part of everyday operations. Action research tools are also important in understanding best practices.

This book provides specific leadership tools, templates, and forms which can be utilized in focusing on school climate. This is a must-read for all school leaders.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

they serve. An enthusiastic, competent and confident teacher engages students!

Lastly, take advantage of teachers “on fire”. Enthusiasm is infectious! When teachers come back from an amazing day of professional development, give them time to share and collaborate. Devote staff meeting time to share learning and discuss the implementation of new skills in the classroom. Announcements are better sent via email. Remember to walk through classrooms, send texts or emails, and check to see if new strategies or approaches are working.