



# Leading the Journey

## An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

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### Ongoing and Collaborative

*Robert Smith*

**T**eacher evaluations—the very words themselves often elicit uncomfortable emotions. On the one hand, the principal may look at the annual list and feel overwhelmed at the daunting task ahead; while on the other hand, the teacher may be filled with anxiety and concern over what the “inspector” may uncover. In either case, these emotions often lead to a process that is superficial, perfunctory, and one that seems to be simply another task to check off the “to-do” list. Such a process seldom results in change and often seems quite hollow. I believe that in order for the evaluative process to be meaningful it must be ongoing and collaborative.

It is important for the principal to be a regular presence in classrooms and throughout the campus. Simply spending five or ten minutes on a regular basis in the classroom will provide a good indicator of the classroom dynamics. There is no way to overstate the value found in being visible in the hallways, eating in the cafeteria and assisting occasionally on the playground. These casual interactions will help the administrator get a genuine sense of what is happening in each of the classrooms, before he or she even embarks on the formal process of evaluation. In addition, it is in these moments of informality that teachers often find the opportunity to talk with the administrator about his or her needs, challenges and desires for the classroom. These informal times together help the teacher and principal to develop a relationship that is safe, supportive and collaborative. Once this dynamic has been established, the evaluation process becomes one that is ongoing and natural, rather than one to be feared or appears artificial.

At the beginning of the school year, the teacher, in consultation with the administrator, should articulate meaningful professional goals. These might be tied in to perceived areas of growth on the part of the teacher and already established school-wide areas of improvement. Now the principal has a focus and a lens through which to

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### Teacher Evaluation

*Leadership, NAD Principals' Handbook (excerpt)*

**E**valuation is an ongoing process consisting of a number of events and activities. Summative evaluation takes place at the close of some period of time, generally relating to the prescribed requirement for teacher evaluation and results in some sort of evaluative document. It covers the full range of the evaluative criteria and the teacher’s experiences relative to those criteria.

Many unions and local conferences provide schools with a document to be used in the evaluation of teachers. These forms constitute the performance standards to be met. Such evaluation instruments generally include the following areas:

- Engaging in and supporting student learning
- Creating and maintaining an effective learning environment
- Organizing subject matter and designing learning experiences
- Monitoring and assessing student learning
- Developing as a Christian professional educator

Teacher evaluation includes various facets. Following are the three most common.

**Planning Phase** – The faculty should be oriented regarding:

- How the evaluation will be used
- The evaluation events
- The purpose of the evaluation
- The performance standards

Each teacher should also be part of planning their own evaluations. A planning conference held at the beginning of the evaluation period should include:

- Instructional plans
- Job description
- Professional growth plans

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## Ongoing and Collaborative

view the classroom. Throughout the school year, the principal will also want to conference with the teacher to look at how they are working together to accomplish these benchmarks. These conversations are significant and provide a means for the dynamic partnership that is essential for improvement.

If this process of ongoing and collaborative evaluations can be established, then the completion of the conference's summative document becomes simply an obvious progression in the continuous process of improvement. It is rooted in a real understanding of the teacher and the classroom, not something to be feared, but a process teachers will value in their professional growth.

## Teacher Evaluation

- Self-assessment

**Data Gathering Phase** – A variety of sources may be used while gathering the necessary information for teacher evaluations.

- Documents
  - Student work
  - Achievement test scores (NOT to be used to evaluate teachers, but to reveal patterns that might warrant further investigation.)
  - Lesson plans
  - Course outlines
  - Teacher-made tests
  - Student evaluations
- Interviews
  - Students
  - Parents
  - Colleagues
  - School board members
- Observations – both in and out of the classroom with appropriate feedback

**Summative Phase** – This phase includes completing the evaluation document and having a conference with the teacher to review the findings. The teacher must have the opportunity to respond to the evaluation document and to indicate, by signature, its receipt.

## Levels of Leadership

Ed Boyatt

In his book, *The 5 Levels of Leadership*, John Maxwell describes various reasons why employees have confidence in their leader. The goal of this article is for principals to reflect on their level of development in this continuum of effective leadership.

The entry level of leadership is positional authority. It doesn't require ability, because anyone can be appointed to a **position**. This level signifies you as a boss, not a leader. A boss relies on rules, policies and organizational charts to control their subordinates. Teachers are not colleagues or team members; they follow because they have to, not because they want to. The key words here are boss and control. Choice and commitment are rare at this level of leadership.

The next level of leadership is **permission** or choice. Teachers transition from "have to" to "want to" in their attitude or relationship with their principal. Teachers begin to work together to improve student learning when they feel liked, cared for, included, valued, and trusted. At this level of support a principal begins to influence others with relationships, not just a position. Teachers move from compliance to commitment and collaboration.

**Production** and action is the next level of leadership. Effective principals make things happen. They get results. At this level, principals use their influence to improve their school. This level requires self-discipline, organization, inspiration, and skills to be productive. It requires setting goals with your staff and taking the steps to implement those shared goals.

Another level of leadership is **people development**. Teachers follow their principal because of what he or she has done for them.

Quality principals are not satisfied with only meeting goals; they see themselves as developers of people. Since teachers are the most important asset in the school, their professional development is essential. Great leaders invest in people. Professional growth is a priority for the most important people in your organization – your teachers.

Maxwell believes that the highest level of leadership is **pinnacle** or respect. This is when a leader intentionally develops leadership skills in their colleagues. Remember that the goal of a leader is not to get more followers, but to grow more leaders. The greatest legacy of a leader is to mentor emerging leaders. As John Maxwell states, "With gratitude and humility, they should lift up as many leaders as

they can, tackle as many great challenges as possible, and extend their influence to make a positive difference beyond their organization and profession."

In summary, Maxwell observes different reasons why teachers team with their principals. First, people follow because they have to (**Position**). Next, they follow because they want to (**Permission**). Then, people follow because of what a leader has done for the organization (**Results**). And, people follow because of what their leader has done for them (**People Development**). Lastly, people follow because of their deep respect and desire to emulate their leader (**Pinnacle**).

I challenge you to take inventory of where you reside in Maxwell's levels. Your goal this year is to grow a level in your journey to personal and professional competence. You, your students, and your teachers deserve it.

