LEADING THE JOURNEY

An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

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Instructional Leadership

NAD Principals' Handbook

Professional Development

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 that meet the varying needs and learning styles of students.

Teachers should be encouraged to join national professional organizations in their respective disciplines and provide opportunity to attend the national conventions and local workshops. ☯

http://adventisteducation.org/principals-handbook/

Take Out the Guesswork

Doug Schmidt, *Principal, Rio Lindo Academy*

I once had an amazing elementary teacher who always seemed to know what her students needed and how to support those needs. Though I did not realize it at the time, she was the master of collecting data to ensure her students' success.

Data is not just a single event or test; rather, it is an accumulation of many things that can inform teachers and school administrators while making decisions for students. I have come to believe that a data driven school is similar to a skilled teacher. When I think of my teacher, three important steps come to my mind in using data effectively:

1. **Determine what data to collect and the process to disaggregate the information.**

   The teacher I referenced used quizzes, tests, essays, and visits with my mom and me. I even remember her going over my cumulative folder with me. Later, I learned that she had talked with my previous teachers about me. She had learned what data was important for her to know in making decisions about her students. Each school must determine, on an ongoing basis, what data will be used to make school improvement decisions, and then a process must be implemented to disaggregate the data.

2. **Discover the causes of the findings.**

   Once the data has been disaggregated, make a determination as to the causes of the findings. The teacher I referenced may have determined that the reason her class did poorly on the test was that her students may not have understood how to manipulate fractions. A school may determine that enrollment is declining because families perceive the school as being inattentive to student needs.

3. **Develop clear strategies to remedy the causes of the findings.**

   Once the teacher or school has collected and analyzed the data and found the cause of the findings, it is time to develop the strategies that remedy the causes. What is being done to fix the problem? Sometimes my teacher had me do

Supporting Teacher Growth in Small Schools

Lynal Ingham, Associate Superintendent, Northern California Conference

At the beginning of each school year, teachers across the Northern California Conference analyze their students' areas of need and plan instruction. Teachers often realize they need additional strategies to help students grow in particular areas. Whether it is math skills, students with ADHD, or class engagement issues, each teacher can find an area where their skills can be extended or refined for better instruction. The small school (schools with fewer than four teachers) teacher's situation is no different, but can be lonesome and requires unique connections with outside sources. **It is important for educational leaders to support all teachers, but especially those in small schools, by partnering with them to meet their goals and create a climate of growth.**

Meeting with teachers to discuss their professional growth is key. In our territory, we expect all teachers in small schools to create a professional growth plan annually. As administrators, we partner with them to identify the needs of their classroom at the beginning of each school year. Through observation and analysis of assessments, we work with each small school teacher to narrow their topic and rationale. We ask each teacher to identify three learner-centered goals for their plan and specifically identify how their plan will directly benefit their current students.

Providing support is essential to the success of our teachers' professional growth plans. Each teacher in the conference is allocated between $200 − $450 and two days' substitute teacher pay to meet their plan goals. Small school teachers especially value this resource, as their school budgets are often too tight to provide financial support. Teachers in small schools work with their superintendent to find online classes/seminars or resources, such as ASCD's PD in Focus or other video/webinar support, since it can be difficult to find substitutes or attend seminars in-person from remote locations. At times, we have set up after-school video collaborations or in-person "supper and shop talk" opportunities for teachers who have the same areas of growth focus.

As the school year continues, the small school teacher and his/her superintendent connect to review growth plan progress and efficacy. At times, these progress meetings reveal other areas that need addressing before the original topic, and changes can be made to better meet learner goals. Being flexible and allowing teachers to direct their professional growth based on evidence in the classroom keeps teachers engaged.

At the conclusion of the year, teachers reflect and evaluate the progress made as a result of their professional growth plans. Small school teachers share these results with their superintendent, but are also connected with other teachers to share what they have learned. This cycle of growth is especially important for small school teachers who often have many of the same students in their class from year to year. **Fostering a climate of professional growth requires a commitment to purposeful connections between teachers and leaders, and directly benefits our students in the end.** ✪

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Take Out the Guesswork (continued)

extra reading, special projects, or just spend some time with her going over important gaps that I had missed. She had strategies.

Knowing how to effectively use data takes the guesswork out of meeting the needs of students. A healthy process requires different types of data to determine what the need is and how to solve the need. Test scores, perception surveys, attendance, discipline issues, interviews, and demographics are just some of the different types of data. We may not always get it correct the first time, but the process is to collect data, determine the causes of the findings, and then develop appropriate strategies that will rectify the problems. The process never ends. This process ensures that staff are coming together to guarantee that no child will fall between the cracks. ✪

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Too many professional development initiatives are done to teachers—not for, with, or by them.

-Andy Hargreaves

Planning for Professional Development

Paul Negrete, Principal, San Gabriel Academy

One of the primary roles of a school's administration is to provide instructional leadership for faculty. Ongoing professional development (PD) is essential for developing and improving skills, creating and maintaining a high-performance environment, and moving educators towards teaching mastery.

Planning for Success

It is important to be clear about the intended goal in order to properly plan for PD that will support reaching your objective. If the desired outcome is to simply inform the faculty so that they are more knowledgeable regarding a specific topic, then most of the PD that generally takes place in schools (in-service and workshops) will prove to be sufficient. However, if the intent is to produce long-term change in teaching practice, the strategy must be one that supports lasting results. Studies have shown that teachers may need a minimum of 50 hours of training, practice, and coaching before a new teaching strategy is mastered. (Gulamhussein, 2013) Understanding the time involved in promoting effective change in professional practice should help focus the scope of PD.

An overview of the research literature regarding PD reveals more suggestions regarding what administrators should consider when planning for teacher training.

- **Focus on key needs of students.**
    - ◊ Of the many important PD opportunities, there are probably only one or two ideas that, if focused on, would have the greatest impact on student achievement.

- **Focus on collaborative learning.**
    - ◊ PD should be focused at the team, school, and/or system level. Focusing on systemic, rather than individual change, will produce longer lasting results.

- **Plan for progress checkpoints.**
    - ◊ If there is no follow-up or accountability, there will be no real change.

- **Plan time for modeling, observation, feedback, and re-focusing.**

- **Allow for at least 20 hours of teacher practice with coaching input after the training portion of the PD plan.**

- **Celebrate accomplishments.**
    - ◊ Acknowledging the milestones reached helps to recognize the contribution of the team and promotes a desire to continue growth.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in planning for PD that will support long-lasting results has to do with teacher motivation and engagement in the process. Very often, administrators will not consider improving teachers' emotional intelligence (EI, or EQ) in order to support high levels of motivation and creativity. Achieving high-performance in a majority of faculty happens by design and not by chance. Administrators may not always have the ability to hire only those people who are willing to follow the developed plan. Therefore, it is imperative to have something that will inherently affect teacher motivation and engagement in their profession and beyond.

It has been shown that there is a high correlation between having a healthy EI and self-motivation. (Bar-On, Handley, & Fund, 2006) Self-motivation is essential in completing difficult tasks, adapting to new situations, or developing new and creative solutions to problems.

According to leaders in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), "Because intrinsic motivation results in high-quality learning and creativity, it is especially important to detail the factors and forces that engender versus undermine it." (Ryan, & Deci, 2000) Key ingredients that give life to intrinsic motivation are autonomy, competence, relatedness and relevance. (Ferlazzo, 2015) The more these factors are employed in a work environment the more intrinsic motivation, and thereby personal engagement, will be experienced by the participants of that environment.

If the administrator's goal is to produce long-term systemic change in a school, a foundation must be laid that will be supportive of such an endeavor. Just as educators "set up the learning" in a classroom, administrators need to set up the environment for change in their schools. Considering interventions that promote the development of teacher EI and planning for sustained PD results may be pivotal towards promoting long-term, high productivity in faculty. ✵

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