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Characteristics of Effective Principals: Promoting System Wide Change

by *Jeanne Fredericks, Director of School Improvement*
South Madison Community School Corporation

School principals are an eclectic lot and, as such, bring to schools a wondrous variety of perceptions, dispositions, knowledge, and values. The growing diversity in the principalship enriches opportunities for system wide change. We use a wider lens to find solutions for current educational concerns. However, as much as principals are different, they too are alike. As I work with principals and school improvement efforts, similar leadership values emerge in those most effective in promoting positive change.



Jeanne Fredericks

VALUES A CULTURE OF CARING

Effective principals take to heart a proverb which states, “Children won’t care to know until they know you care.” Successful principals understand that safe and caring environments must be established before maximum levels of learning can be achieved. In thriving schools, principals are visible, visit classrooms often, call their students by name and seek time to connect individually with them throughout the day, set up breakfast programs, create opportunities for child care and/or participation before and after school, and establish wellness guidelines to fight growing levels of poor nutrition, childhood diabetes, and obesity. Parallel relationships are established with teachers and support staff. Exceptional principals lead schools, which house people who care about one another.

MODELS EXEMPLARY VALUES

Without exception, the successful principals I have known are hard-working individuals. They put in long hours, exhibit high moral and ethical character, are genuine and sincere, and are in it for the long haul. They care about people and work hard to establish healthy professional relationships and find ways to communicate effectively. They are likeable, are always ready to celebrate accomplishments, and cultivate humor to relieve stress. Effective principals protect their school families, mentor teachers, and push for continuous improvement from the staff, yet stand fearless in the face of adversity. They are able to calm us when facing tough times. Like outstanding athletic coaches, they give credit to others when success is realized and look inward when goals are not achieved. They are always thinking, reflecting, and learning—the professionals many try to emulate.

DATA-DRIVEN AND INQUIRY-BASED

In my experience, schools showing improvement in student achievement highly value information gained from collecting, triangulating and analyzing various sources of data. Selected norm-referenced and locally developed assessments are respected as important and worthy sources of information. Effective principals work side-by-side with staff to dissect, disaggregate and understand student assessment data, searching for clues that will alter instruction to improve learning. These principals design professional development that links directly to instruction. They understand that it is the teacher who makes the difference in the classroom.

(continued on page 7)



AVERAGE Is Just Not Good Enough

January 23-24, 2006

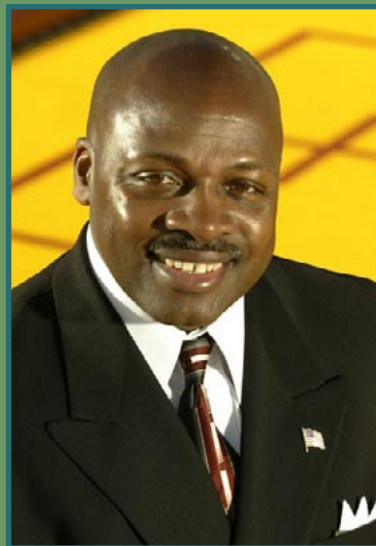


Don't Wait! Seats are Filling Quickly!

WINTER CONFERENCE

AVERAGE

Is Just Not Good Enough



When famed high school basketball coach Ken Carter literally locked his undefeated, state play-off bound team out of the gym and forced them to hit the books and stop counting on athletic potential as the only ticket out of a tough, inner city life, he sent a powerful message. At the podium, Coach Carter scores with hard-hitting advice about accountability, integrity, teamwork and leadership to succeed both on and off the basketball court.

Please visit the IPLA website at www.doe.state.in.us/ipla to view the agenda and conference details.

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(if applicable)

First Name for Name Tag _____

Position: Principal Teacher Superintendent Other
(check one)

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School Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail Address _____

Corp/Organization Name _____

Corporation Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Participant Registration

Regular Registration

\$175

This covers the cost of registration,
a continental breakfast on Day 1,
and a buffet breakfast on Day 2.

Total Amount Enclosed _____

CRU Request

If you are interested in receiving 8 CRUs
for this conference please provide
your Social Security Number below.

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Registration Deadline is January 20, 2006

No Refunds After January 22, 2006

Please indicate that you are a participant at the IPLA Winter Conference
to receive block room rates at the Sheraton.

Hotel reservations must be made by January 6, 2006

Mail registration form to:

**Krista Orton - IPLA - Room 229, State House - Indianapolis, IN 46204
Telephone: (317) 232-9004 Fax: (317) 232-9005**



Classroom Walkthroughs Promote Change

Larry M. Rausch Ed.D., Director, Wabash Valley Education Center

For the past several years, Indiana educators have formed School Improvement Teams to investigate student learning and to design plans for improving student achievement scores. These plans include investigation of effective teaching strategies to be learned, adapted, or applied in the classroom. Ongoing professional development is required in order for teachers to master these strategies and to accomplish the changes outlined in the school improvement plans. Organizing systemic professional development requires administrators and teacher leaders to collect data that will guide their decisions on the most effective methods for improving student achievement. Data can be gathered from standardized tests, grade trends, standards reports, and teacher observations. Each of these types of data are time limited. Each takes time to collect and get the results into a useable form. One solution to obtaining current data that are focused on a particular school improvement goal or objective is frequent classroom observation.

Principals are skilled at traditional classroom observations. Through experience and training, principals have developed the skills to visit a class, and with various observation methods, gather accurate information about the effectiveness of a teacher's instruction at the time of the visit. Teachers often expect the observation results to serve as a reaffirmation from the "boss" that they are successful teachers and to receive constructive feedback on how to improve their skills. The focus of the visit is traditionally seen as summative, judging the skills of the teacher to drive employment decisions. In many districts, that focus is formalized in the teacher contract by requiring well-defined criteria before and after the visit.

The current emphasis on high-level student learning standards in school improvement plans now requires that the principal and the teacher adjust the classroom visit focus from the teacher's instruction to what students are learning. There will always be a need for principals to visit a classroom for improving teacher skills but now principals also need to know if the school improvement plan is being applied. The data gathered from visiting several teachers can inform the improvement team on the success of professional development and guide future professional development planning. The shared data will also become a motivating factor for students, teachers, and the community. Another change in the observation process is that the data are shared by grade level, by department, or as school-wide data, and not by



individual teacher skills. A principal might share that in 15 visits to 8th grade classrooms they observed that of 30 questions that were asked 27 were at the knowledge level on Bloom's taxonomy or that 12 times the students were listening to the teacher lecture.

To gather valid data, the principals must visit classrooms frequently and then analyze and share the data. It is often difficult for principals to make that many observations and do the accompanying paperwork. One solution is for principals to make frequent short, focused classroom visits. In the book, *The Three Minute Classroom Walk-Through* (Downey, English, Frase, Posten, & Steffy, 2004), the authors contend that a principal can gather valuable teacher data through a series of three-minute walkthroughs. The skills described in the book will allow a principal or a trained teacher leader, to visit classrooms for no more than 4 minutes of data gathering. The aggregate of this data collection provides a better "snapshot" of what is going on than longer, less frequent visits. The short time frame allows the observer to visit

several classrooms in an hour so trends become apparent.

To be useful, the collected data must be analyzed and communicated to the improvement team and other teachers quickly. **Phi Delta Kappan (PDK)** offers training in the 3 minute walkthrough process that includes data collection forms and suggestions. **Learning 24/7** also offers training, with their own version of the forms and other tools, as well as a software component for PDAs (Palm and Windows CE) that automates the collection and analysis of data. Both **PDK** and **Learning 24/7** include in their training a strong emphasis on strategies for principals to encourage reflective practice as they share the data with teachers. The nine Educational Service Centers in Indiana are offering both the **PDK** and **24/7** trainings and have additional software in development that will help principals automate data collection. The ability to use technology for automated data collection and to provide immediate reflective feedback is the key to making the short frequent visits practicable.

Changing professional practice, like transforming old habits and shifting routines, requires focus, support, and feedback. Using brief frequent classroom walkthrough principles and the supporting technology will allow principals to help their teachers learn and use the skills for improved student test scores.



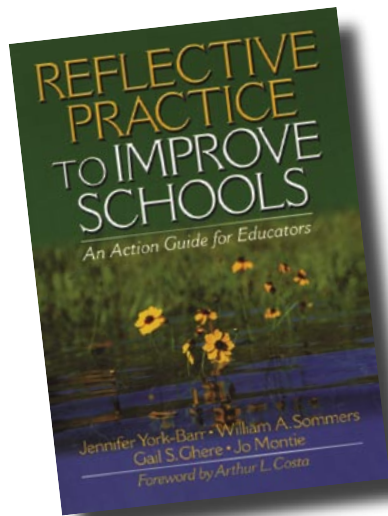
BOOKS FOR LEADERS

Reflective Practice to Improve Schools: An Action Guide for Educators

Jennifer York-Barr, William A. Sommers, Gail S. Ghere, and Jo Montie

“This book is a must read for teacher leaders, principals, and central office administrators. The authors make a substantive and powerful argument for addressing reflection at all levels of the organization and provide practical tools and insights to facilitate a comfortable transition from theory to practice. This book will be valuable to anyone serious about ensuring success for all students.”

—Stephanie Hirsh,
Deputy Executive Director
National Staff Development Council



Reflective Practice to Improve Schools allows educators to examine individual and collective beliefs and assumptions, leading to insights about instructional effectiveness. A unique, useful tool for understanding the potential--in fact, the necessity--of reflective practice, this important new book offers a practical guide to initiating or extending individual and collaborative commitments to reflective practice schoolwide.

The authors, a distinguished team of practitioners, provide the following:

- A framework and strategies for reflective thinking and acting
- Essential considerations for designing and developing reflective practices
- Examples of reflective practice at the individual level, between partners, in small groups, and schoolwide
- Reflective activities to guide individuals and collaborators toward applied strategies

Now more than ever, educators need real opportunities to continuously and meaningfully reflect on their practice--by themselves and with their colleagues--to create schools in which both students and adults continually learn. This is the book that can begin or enrich that journey.

(Back Cover)

The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through: Changing School Supervisory Practice One Teacher at a Time

Carolyn J. Downey, Betty E. Steffy, Fenwick W. English, Larry E. Frase, and William K. Poston, Jr.

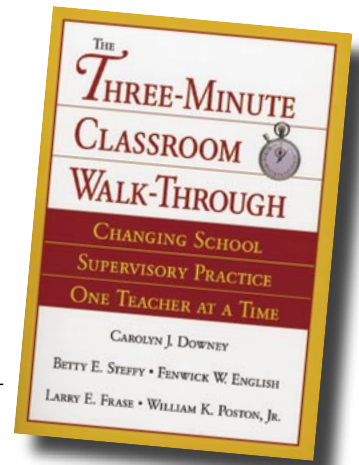
Change the entire school culture with this collaborative method of supervision.

For years, the classic supervision model has frustrated both principals and teachers by fostering superior-subordinate relationships, focusing on teacher conformity rather than growth, or producing checklist data that is irrelevant to the curriculum. The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through offers a practical, time-saving alternative that impacts student achievement by cultivating self-reliant teachers who are continually improving their practice.

Easy to understand and adopt, this method will answer the questions most important to principals:

- Are my teachers aligned with the district curriculum?
- Are they using research-based "best practices"?
- Are they choosing the instructional strategies that will promote student achievement?

Also known as the Downey Walk-through, the method presented in The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through has been developed over a 40-year period, tested and refined in actual teaching environments, and taught internationally. (Back Cover)



QUOTE CORNER

Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.

Will Rodgers



Real Change is Real Hard The Change Process – How to Accomplish Positive Change in a School

*Sue Reynolds, Executive Director,
Indiana Student Achievement Institute, www.asainstitute.org*

Sandy Hillman, Assistant Principal at Center Grove High School, once said to a group of teachers, “Real change is real hard.” She explained that while surface-level change is relatively easy to implement, gut-level change is much more difficult to accomplish. Asa Hillard, renowned expert in transforming failing schools, puts it this way, “Current educational reforms are nothing more than rearranging the technical and logistical chairs on the educational Titanic.” What is real change and how do we bring about real change in our schools?

Real change is not about implementing the latest strategy. If that were the case, all Indiana schools would see 100% of their students passing ISTEP+ since most schools have been implementing the latest strategies for years. Real change occurs when people change on the inside – when they remember why they became educators to begin with, when they rediscover the hope and idealism they had as first-year teachers, when they commit to doing “whatever it takes” to enable ALL students to reach high standards. Real change occurs when we throw out traditions, when we agree to have no “sacred cows,” and when we commit as a faculty and community to create a system that supports high achievement for all students. That type of real change doesn’t happen by accident. It is the result of a carefully designed process that involves administrators, counselors, teachers, students, parents, business representatives, and community members.

The process begins with the creation of a collegial environment in which trust exists and tough questions are asked on a regular basis. Do we really believe that all students can learn? Do we really believe that schools are responsible for teaching all students, even those who are disengaged and unmotivated? Are we ok with the achievement gaps that exist in our school? Are we committed to rolling up our sleeves and doing “whatever it takes” to reach all students? Do we want to work on this together so our change process reflects the perspectives of many different people? When educators, students, parents, and community members answer yes to these questions, the foundation for real change exists.

Once the foundation for change is established, schools are ready to work through a change process such as the Vision-to-Action school improvement process used by the Indiana Student Achievement Institute (InSAI). Schools work through a series of discussions and activities involving the full faculty, entire student body, and representatives of community stakeholder groups. The steps are outlined below:

Vision: While some people think of visioning as a nice, but meaningless exercise, a common vision for student success is paramount for real change. A vision, unlike a mission statement, is a detailed picture of what the school will be like if all of our dreams for students come true. It results in a shared image of the ideal state, a clear direction for change, a focus on the

future, and increased energy levels. InSAI schools develop a vision statement that answers four questions: 1) Why do we believe all students deserve to be highly successful learners (core convictions)? 2) If the adults in the school and community were living by these core convictions, what would be their behaviors and attitudes? 3) If the adults in the school and community were living by these core convictions, what would be the students’ behaviors and attitudes? 4) If all of our dreams for students came true, what would be our school’s achievement data? Almost all of the vision statements created by InSAI schools describe schools where 100% of the students are achieving at high levels, although some schools have extensive debates before reaching that point. Once a school has created this lofty vision of success for all, they can no longer be satisfied with ISTEP scores being above state average or with a PL221 category placement (next year) of “exemplary progress.” Satisfaction only comes when 100% of the students reach high academic expectations. The vision becomes a lofty destination that gives schools a foundation for academic goals and strategies.

Current Data: The next step in the Vision-to-Action process is to look at the school’s current achievement data. Achievement data for each school is easy to find on the DOE website (www.doe.state.in.us/asap/data.html), including the percentage of students passing ISTEP+, earning the Core 40 diploma, graduating, etc. Additional data may be available in the schools such as the percentage of eighth graders passing Algebra I or high school students passing Core 40 End-of-Course tests. For some schools, examining the current data is a very difficult step since the vision and reality are often so far apart. As schools analyze current data for the various student groups identified by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, data analysis may be even more disturbing as schools find huge achievement gaps.

Data Targets: As schools analyze their current data, they ask “Which of these data fields bother us the most? Are there data fields that upset us so much that we have to work on changing them?” Once these data fields have been identified, schools establish data targets, or realistic steps toward the vision that they will work to reach within a certain time period. Let’s consider a school where the vision is for 100% of the 3rd graders to master the Indiana Academic Standard related to reading comprehension. If 58% are currently mastering that standard, the data target might be set at 70% of the 3rd graders will master the reading comprehension standard by the end of the next year, and 85% by the end of the following year.

Force Field Analysis: In this step, schools and communities complete a self-study (sometimes called an environmental audit) to determine what local factors might be interfering with student achievement. Often schools discover major situations that inhibit student achievement such as instruction that is not aligned with the Indiana Academic Standards, students that aren’t engaged, and/or a faculty that doesn’t believe that all students are capable of mastering challenging content even when provided with extra help and extra time. As a result of the Force Field Analysis, schools identify the areas of concern that they want to address through their strategies.

Strategy Selection: Once schools have identified the concerns they are trying to impact, the next step is to search for high-leverage strategies that will impact those concerns. InSAI’s Indiana Conference on Learning,



open to all schools, is designed to help schools discover strategies that will address their school's concerns.* It's important that strategies aren't just surface add-ons. Schools who raise student achievement tend to implement strategies aimed at significantly changing the delivery of education at the "gut level." These strategies often address the alignment of instruction and assessment with academic standards, student engagement, and extra help/time initiatives to enable students to reach a higher bar.

Strategy Plans: This part of the change process ensures that strategies are successfully implemented. Each strategy plan consists of four parts. The Action Plan identifies who is going to do what by when in order for the strategy to be successfully implemented. The Professional Development Plan ensures that teachers have the knowledge and skills required to successfully implement the strategy. The Evaluation Plan identifies what will be counted (strategy data) to determine if the strategy is having the desired impact on the behavior, attitude, or perception it was designed to address.

Action: In this step, the strategy plans are implemented and follow-up data (strategy data and achievement data) is collected as it becomes available.

The change process results in the school improvement plan: a vision statement, report of current data, set of achievement data targets, list of areas that are interfering with achievement, and strategies designed to address those areas. The school improvement plans are revised on a continuous basis as schools analyze new strategy data and achievement data. For example, when ISTEP+ data becomes available each fall and when year-end data become available in June, schools assess whether or not the achievement data targets and strategy plans need to be continued, revised, or omitted.

Many schools feel that systemic change is overwhelming. They're right! But help is readily available. The National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform (<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/catalog/index.shtml>) reports that a necessary component for school change is "high-quality external technical support and assistance from an external partner with experience and expertise in school wide reform and improvement." In 2001, the Indiana State Board of Education approved twenty-one organizations as providers of continuous school improvement planning (www.doe.state.in.us/accreditation/models.html). Schools seeking technical assistance in the change process may want to explore these organizations. Each offers a unique approach to school improvement planning with various costs and levels of technical support.

Real change involves a framework for collegiality and a process that engages the full faculty, entire student body, parents, and community. Real change is comprehensive. It doesn't happen overnight and most likely will take years. Real change is real hard, but not impossible. When educators, students, parents, and community members join forces to raise student achievement and close achievement gaps, and when schools employ a successful process for managing change, real change is not only possible, but likely.

Footnotes

* The 2006 Indiana Conference on Learning will be held on February 1, 2006 in Indianapolis and will feature sixty promising practices as presented by Indiana teachers, counselors, and administrators.

(Effective Principals: continued from page 1)

BELIEVES AND PRACTICES SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Journalist Walter Lippmann wrote, "The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on." Effective school leaders take their role seriously in making a difference. Schools successful in promoting buy-in for and ownership of change have participatory cultures where principals develop teacher leaders for the present and the future. Successful principals drive the process, value differing viewpoints, and keep efforts focused on achieving school goals. They believe in the mission of the school and are committed to its vision. They serve that purpose.

Outstanding principals are exemplars of courage in this time of high accountability and public scrutiny. They are committed to overcoming obstacles so that all children have opportunities to grow and learn. Anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Maybe she was thinking about school principals.



Indiana DOE Resources NEED HELP? JUST ASK!

Is it hard to find the dates for ISTEP, Grant Deadlines, and DOE Conferences?

The Indiana Department of Education has streamlined the process to locate these items. A new feature of the DOE web site is the Event Calendar. Located on the DOE home page at www.doe.state.in.us, you can now look up events, deadline, and information by division or for the entire DOE. The nine services centers are also incorporated into this system. Now, planning a school event has become even easier!

IPLA is utilizing our email database more to send out information concerning important dates, conferences, and workshops. Do we have your updated email address? Unless you are a current participant, we probably do not.

Please email Becca Lamon at blamon@doe.state.in.us with your current email address.

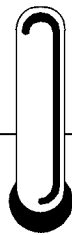


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June 7, 2005	IPLA+ Aspiring Principal Academy's Graduation Indiana Department of Education
June 13, 2005	Group 42 Orientation Season Conference Center, Nashville, IN
June 14-15, 2005	Group 41 and 42 Sessions Season Conference Center, Nashville, IN
June 15-17, 2005	Facilitator Training Hotel Nashville, Nashville, IN
June 23, 2005	IPLA Alumni Scholarship Interviews
June 23-24, 2005	IPLA Alumni Board Retreat Indiana Department of Education
July 28-29, 2005	IPLA+ Coaching Training (2 of 5 Training Dates)

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