

Indicator: The principal challenges and monitors unsound teaching practices and supports the correction of them. (60)

Explanation: Principals, of course, celebrate and reinforce sound teaching practices, but teachers improve also by getting help in improving their practice. This means the principal must also notice teaching practices that need improvement and sees that the teacher gets help. Help may be directly from the principal, from other teachers, or in the teacher's personal professional development plan.

Questions: Is your principal judicious in both reinforcing sound instructional practice and in noticing and helping remediate areas of weakness? How does the principal determine what practices are sound or weak? By what means does the principal provide or arrange for help?

Research suggests that “successful school leaders articulate a vision for shared organizational purpose and shared authority and that the ability of principals to envision new ways to do this is critical to the work of teacher leaders” (Portin et al., 2009, p. 89). Principals can play key roles in establishing collaborative workplace routines, implementing school initiatives, determining teaching assignments, assigning students to teachers, setting expectations for ongoing professional development, defining instructional goals, and serving as intermediaries between policy and practice (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005).

Teachers account for one-third of a school's total impact on student achievement. Students with three consecutive years of effective teachers outperform students with ineffective teachers by 50 percentage points. What often gets lost in the policy conversation is the role of the principal in ensuring that there is a strong teacher in every classroom. Principals are best positioned to ensure that every student has a great teacher year after year. It is well known that strong teachers will leave a school if they do not feel that the principal provides a supportive environment. Today's effective principal is no longer just a building manager. They must be instructional leaders who can spot a teacher's weaknesses and provide the support and professional development to rectify the deficiency (Briggs, Davis, & Cheney, 2012). Teacher change can be supported over time with systematic and consistent professional development (Heritage, 2010).

Today, principals are in a paradoxical position. While *Race to the Top*, and *No Child Left Behind* before it, admonished educators to use “research-based” school-improvement strategies and models, the core strategies of both of these reform initiatives are basically asking principals to improve student learning by implementing mandated reforms that have consistently proven ineffective in raising student achievement (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). While *Race to the Top* emphasizes using more intensive supervision and evaluation of teachers to improve school performance, three of four teachers report that their evaluation process has virtually no impact on their classroom practice (Duffett, Farkas, Rotherham, & Silva, 2008).

The idea that more frequent and intensive evaluation of teachers by their principals will lead to higher levels of student learning is only valid if two conditions exist: educators know how to improve student learning but have not been sufficiently motivated to do so, and principals have the time and expertise to improve each teacher's professional practice by observing that teacher in the classroom. But according to DuFour & Mattos (2013), neither of these conditions exists.

When classroom observations by the principal or other teachers indicate a general need for improvement across the faculty, well-planned professional development is a way to improve. When classroom observations reveal areas where an individual teacher's needs improvement,

that teacher's personal development plan can include training or coaching to assist them in the area of need (Redding 2007).

There are numerous means for achieving continuous improvement of each teacher's skills, including whole-faculty workshops, consultations with Instructional Teams, the principal's work with individual teachers and with teams, and collegial learning – teacher to teacher (including peer observations, study groups, coaching, and mentoring). Teacher evaluation should include examination of the teacher's proficiency with the same indicators used to plan professional development for each individual teacher and for the faculty as whole (Redding 2007).

References and Resources

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