



Indicator: The principal monitors curriculum and classroom instruction regularly. (58)

Explanation: Improving student performance rests heavily on improving classroom instruction. Of course, a teacher's instructional practices depend upon the curriculum, the work of Instructional Teams, and the teacher's planning and preparation. The principal focuses on instruction. In fact, school turnaround literature calls this a "relentless focus on instruction." First establishing expectations and processes for team planning and for instructional delivery, the principal then monitors the work, meeting with teams, visiting classrooms, reinforcing good practice.

Questions: In what ways and how regularly does your principal monitor curriculum and instruction?

The principal is called upon to carry out several functions in the school—one of which is being the instructional leader in the building. What does this mean on a practical level? As the instructional leader of the school, the principal's visibility and focus on rigorous instruction are essential. "Visibility refers to the presence of the principal on the school campus and in classrooms. High visibility by executives has been called management by touring around. In schools, this touring has been associated with positive effects on students' and teachers' attitudes and behaviors" (Murphy, 2007, p. 77). In highly functioning schools, Murphy found that:

Personal involvement means that these administrators are directly involved in leading the school's educational program. Leaders in turnaround organizations in general and highly productive schools in particular have a strong orientation to and affinity for the core technology of their business – learning and teaching in the education enterprise. In the area of pedagogy, they are knowledgeable about and deeply involved in the instructional program of the school and are heavily invested in instruction, spending considerable time on the teaching function. They model the importance of teaching by being directly involved in the design and implementation of the instructional program. They are also knowledgeable about and heavily invested in the curricular program of the school. Finally, they are knowledgeable about assessment practices and personally involved with colleagues in crafting, implementing, and monitoring assessment systems at the classroom and school levels. (p. 77)

In the IES study, they found that "Principals spent a large part of their time in the classrooms—as much as 40 percent in one school—to observe teaching and improve instruction" (2008, p. 17).

In one case study, the principal and the assistant principal made short, regular classroom observations. These observations gave school leaders informal and impromptu opportunities to see what instruction was like in classrooms throughout the school. The leaders prepared a one-page summary of the observation within 24 hours to share and discuss with the teacher. Rather than become part of the teacher's formal professional record, the summary was used to hone instructional practices (Whiteside, 2006). In another study, principals in turnaround schools indicated that they spent a lot of time in classrooms, monitored teachers closely, modeled good teach-

ing practices, and were highly visible throughout the school. They were also involved in every phase of instructional planning (Duke, n.d.). (Herman, et al., 2008, p. 18)

Hattie (2012) found that “teachers are often driven by having information about their impact...Effective school leaders, however, support teachers in their daily progress in this meaningful work, and thus set a positive feedback loop into motion” (p. 177). Much like teachers are encouraged and expected to give regular and timely feedback to their students, teachers need feedback on their professional practices. Levin (2012) reiterates this point, “In order to improve, people need honest and supportive feedback that helps them see where their current performance falls short—and where it is already strong” (p. 106).

References and Resources

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