

What Makes an Effective Principal

Slides (These notes are the talking points for each slide)

1. **What Makes Principals Effective or The Evolving Job of the School principal**
2. **How Important Are Principals:** What Evidence do we have for the impact of school principals?

Professional Judgment: My 30 years experience (working along side principals, supervising principals, and being a principal) with Spectrum Center, you couldn't operate a sustained quality school without a quality principal.

- ✓ Despite Employing state of the art best practices in organizational management;
 - **Hiring well trained teachers:** Identification of preparation programs that matched well with our organization and empowering teams
 - **Clear expectations:** annual planning, written guidelines, manualizing the process, empowered teams
 - **Staff development:** orientations, minimum standards training and formal assessment, and on-going development
 - **Monitoring:** direct observations, monthly key indicator reports, site reviews conducted twice each year comprised of administrators and teachers from other school
 - **Creative management of contingencies:** Individualized performance compensation developed quarterly goals that aligned with strategic goals, key indicators, and personal growth
- ✓ Ineffective principals failure begat continuing failure:
 - Staff lost confidence in the school
 - Hard to hire the best personnel
 - High turnover: especially principals
 - Performance of staff and students deteriorated
 - Turnaround became very costly and painful
- ✓ Although professional judgment is compelling one must be cautious of **conventional wisdom**. Examples of conventional wisdom that has been proven to be incorrect.
 - **Four humors** theory gave rise to blood letting
 - **Stress theory of ulcers** – if we wish to think we are immune we are not
 - **Sugar** - causes children to be hyperactive

3. How do we go about assessing how important principals are? We obviously value principals because we pay them more than other staff in a school.

- ✓ But this isn't what we are most concerned about. We are interested in the impact of principals on student outcomes based upon rigorous research.

4. Factors effecting Student achievement:

- ✓ Unfortunately, school principals as a field of study was largely neglected in the past 1975-2002
- ✓ Only 296 papers could be found on the topic and only 27% could be classified as quantitative
- ✓ But that has changed. Marzano, Water, and McNulty found principals fall second behind teachers in factors influencing student performance

5. Principals Impact on Student Achievement: One study is sufficient to determine effectiveness. We require multiple studies over time and different research teams to increase our confidence.

- ✓ The impact of school principals has been confirmed by multiple meta-analyses of many studies which consistently support principals ranking 2nd
- ✓ Principals rank 2nd to teachers in impact (Leithwood, 2007)

6. The Evolving Role of the Principal: Historically principals were viewed as merely being the school manager providing a clean and safe facility, making sure teachers, insuring that teachers were hired and working, and staff were receiving their pay checks.

- ✓ As recent as 20 years ago principals responsibilities for high standards was left to those students who were college bound
- ✓ 1970 – 1983 the population in the US attending college rose by 47%
- ✓ 1985 – 20011 rose by another 78%
- ✓ This change comes in part as a response to twin realizations: global competitiveness and gap between have and have not in the US.
- ✓ **NCLB:** Principals held accountable for implement research-based curricula, and ensure teachers are trained in evidence-based instructional methods, and track the schools academic performance. Principals who fail can lose their jobs and those who succeed must prepare for sudden increases in student population.

7. The Impact of No Child Left Behind:

- ✓ Put pressure on principals, but didn't have significant impact on student performance. The analysis by Yeh 2007 that combines effect size with the cost effectiveness of an intervention helps tell that story.
- ✓ We have relied on structural interventions (examples: charter schools, lass size reduction, vouchers, and more money) that are not making a significant impact.

- ✓ Accountability at the heart of NCLB has a place, but expectations that on its own could improve student achievement has been proven inadequate and has had unintended consequences, overly stressed principals.
- ✓ This despite strong evidence for practices that can make a difference, focus on classroom instruction as viewed in the graph showing the power of formative assessment to improve performance.

8. Principal workload: What is causing the overload?

- ✓ New school initiatives: The number of new initiatives is staggering: class size reduction, technology, drug prevention, school discipline, professional development, common core, testing.
- ✓ Accountability
- ✓ Ineffectively preparation in classroom instruction and the responsibilities that research shows makes a difference.
- ✓ This on top of normal workload to maintain a school Principals typically work 10 hour days and many believe the job is just not "doable" as it is configured now (Usdan, McCloud and Podmostko 2000).
- ✓ What do we know about being overloaded, being held accountable when you haven't the skills or tools to be successful, people try to escape.

9. Retention of Principals Declining in Texas: Consequence of this load is significant principal turnover

- ✓ Only half have been in the job for 5 years
- ✓ The average tenure for a high school principal in Texas is just over three years
- ✓ The average high school principal will not see her/his first freshman class graduate
- ✓ If it takes 5 years to achieve implementation according to the work of Karen Blasé and, this means that the likelihood of any intervention succeeding must be called into question.

10. What is the Impact of Student Achievement and Poverty on Principal Retention?

- ✓ Almost doubling the turnover rate for the school requiring the most stability.
- ✓ Higher principal turnover in schools with low achieving student
- ✓ Higher principal turnover in schools of high poverty
- ✓ Unfortunately, these are the schools that require stable leadership

11. What is the impact on teacher tenure when principals depart?

When school experience high principal turnover rates teachers tend to look for work elsewhere. Consequence: Greater chaos into the system, floundering initiatives, and lower student achievement.

- 12. What is the Impact of ineffective leadership on teachers?**
- ✓ Ineffective leadership is primary reason for teachers leaving, North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, (2008)
 - ✓ Less effective teachers tend to leave under an effective principal, while more effective teachers tend to leave when the school is taken over by an ineffective principal.
 - ✓ Furthermore, effective principals are more likely to replace teachers who leave with more effective teachers (Beteille, Kalogrides and Loeb 2011, Branch, Hanushek and Rivkin 2012, Portin, et al. 2003).
- 13. What is the cost of teacher turnover because of principal turnover?** Increased teacher turnover and greater instability.
- ✓ How does this effect the effective operation of a school? Significant loss of precious revenue. Ranges from \$9,500 to \$26,052 per teacher
 - ✓ U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) estimate leavers cost in 2005, 2.2 billion per year and,
 - ✓ When transfers to other schools are added, that number rises to approximately \$4.9 billion per year. Ranges from \$15,835 to \$26,502 per teacher
- 14. Does Leadership Style Make a Difference?** What are we looking for in principal leadership?
- ✓ Instructional leadership: an approach in which the principal encourages educational achievement by making instructional quality the top priority of the school.
 - ✓ Transformational leadership: an approach in which the principal provides motivation through inspiration
 - ✓ It is clear schools need principals embracing instructional leadership if they want to show results. This is another piece of evidence for the need to focus on classroom instruction.
- 15. What can OBM tells us about effective school management?**
- ✓ Post WWII Japan where the American statistician W. Edwards Demings and Geary Rummler is credited along w/other of founding Six Sigma TQM. Focusing on quality and cost effective auto and electronics became the great success story of late 20th century.
 - ✓ What we can learn organization management is the need to address all parts of the system.
 - ✓ Very importantly, we need to place significant focus on the process: teaching.
 - ✓ Unfortunately, our focus and efforts have been directed to structural interventions have entirely missed the mark.

16. **What Roles Make the Greatest Difference Improving Student Performance:** “If principals are engaged in the right roles, it shouldn’t come as a surprised we don’t obtain the results we want”. Viviane Robinson and colleagues have conducted the most comprehensive research into what specific roles that offer the largest effect size.
- ✓ **Setting the standards and goals,** communicating expectations, sustain expectations over time, monitoring learning goals, and involve staff in the process
 - ✓ **Strategic Resourcing:** Aligning and allocating resources to teaching goals, and maintaining recruitment and hiring.
 - ✓ **Teaching and Curriculum:** Having a direct role in the support and evaluation of teaching, regular visits, on-going formative and summative feedback, direct oversight of curriculum, coordination across classrooms and levels, and aligning goals to curriculum and teaching.
 - ✓ **Teacher Development:** Promoting and participating in informal and formal development
 - ✓ **Supportive Environment:** Assuring and protecting time for teaching by reducing external pressures and interruptions, and establishing and supporting orderly classroom environments (classroom management and climate).
17. **How Effective Is The Average Principal At Their Job?**
- ✓ **Supportive Environment:** Schools are bombarded with new initiatives from all directions (federal, state, district, and school). Many are considered a waste of time, intrusions on intellectual freedom, too often effective school wide discipline impacts, and technology has teachers consistently responding to parental requests.
18. **How Principals Spend their Time:**
- ✓ This is a fun study because of its design. The researchers first interviewed principals to ask how much time they spend on instructional activities.
 - Principals perceived they spend most of their time on instruction
 - ✓ The researchers then had the principals record their own activities and the time they were engaged in the activities
 - The results showed the opposite of the first survey. Principals actually recorded spending 70% of their time on administrative activities outside of instruction.
19. **How Effective Are Principals at Identifying Valued Teachers?** This study examines another important role for principals, understanding how effective teachers are.
- ✓ Purpose: The study video taped teachers teaching lessons. Experts in classroom instruction to assess the skills of the teachers evaluated the video lessons. Principals were then asked to evaluate the

teacher's skills. Finally, the experts assessed the principal's abilities to identify the quality instructors.

- ✓ Results: Principals disappointingly were on average only able to ascertain the teacher skills at an emerging level of competency.
- ✓ This data supports other research on principal evaluations of teacher skills. New Teachers Project, 2009 - 98% of teacher evaluations were rated satisfactory or better (12 districts, but later 80% of the principals reported at least one teacher should not even be teaching).

20. **How Principals Spend they Time:** This study of principal time use employees a more accurate method than survey data by using direct observations to answer this important question.

- ✓ Principals spend less than 15% of their time in classroom instruction activities. This is not a surprise as Randy will present; Principals aren't trained in the area that make a difference and are not comfortable,
- ✓ They find the other roles more reinforcing, and
- ✓ They are often redirected away from instructional roles into crisis intervention.

21. **How Much Time do Principals Spend on Instructional Activities?**

- ✓ This study used direct observations to answer this question. Unfortunately, the least effective method was found to be preferred by principals.
- ✓ **Walk-through:** the most popular method of sampling can function for error detection, but not effective for improving performance
- ✓ **Coaching:** Joyce and Showers research reveals how important coaching is to continuous improvement, but principals neither have the time or expertise to meet this demand

22. **Summation**

- ✓ Professional judgment and research both support the importance of principals and leadership
- ✓ The role of the principals has expanded dramatically, but the stress of the job is increasing principal turnover and in turn is impacting teacher tenure, costing dollars, and impacting student achievement
- ✓ In spite of the heavily load, we know what is critical to principal success, focus on instruction, but that isn't where principals are investing their time.
- ✓ The Heroic Leader model is flawed and principals not currently prepared to meet the challenge
- ✓ Success requires well trained principals, working with a team to implement best organizational practices