A Principal Leadership Framework for Enhancing Teacher Practice Through Coaching With Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has mandated school principals begin appraising teachers using the new Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). Central to this new instrument is the necessity for principals and other appraisers to improve professional practice through the reciprocal interaction, open dialogue, and continuous learning inherent to coaching. While the T-TESS rubric provides a structured process for the TEA’s vision of what coaching should look like, that vision lacks the inclusion of the soft skills we know are needed for effective success coaching and healthy school environments. In this article, we fill the gap by introducing a research-derived coaching framework that combines situational leadership with emotional intelligence for person-centered coaching and learning. Research directions are suggested based on this more robust model for principal coaching. Students, teachers, schools, and communities benefit when education policy is balanced with social-emotional learning.

INTRODUCTION

Bayer (2016) suggested that principal leadership ability has strong implications for student-learning outcomes. Playing a key role in change and student achievement, school principals must exercise confidence and competence as instructional leaders. Moreover, principals must refocus school reform initiatives by centering on improving teacher capacity (Anderson & Turnbull, 2016). Central to impacting teacher capacity is the ability to move beyond traditional walkthroughs, instructional rounds, and observations. Effective principals will move beyond student scores on standardized instruments to measure the effectiveness of individual teachers; and will instead provide high-quality support through mentoring or coaching.

The principal’s ability to develop capacity in teachers through coaching is essential for improving the quality of instruction. Davis (2008) proposed that targeted mentoring is imperative for improving professional capacity. Davis further expounded by suggesting that the principal serve as the lead mentor, having a significant role in teacher capacity building through the design of induction systems and professional development activities. Likewise, principals must be supportive of the work of teachers by shifting the focus from teaching to learning (Lunenburg, 2010; Holland, 2009). As teachers embrace the role of learner, the principal ascends to the role of instructional leader. Beyond formal education and credentialing, how do principals learn to be effective leaders? Lunenburg (2010) asserted that principals learn how to be leaders through collaborative relationships with teachers and other leaders, and through effective coaching experiences. Lunenburg emphasized five observable behaviors needed for principal and school effectiveness. These observable behaviors included (a) focus on learning, (b) be encouraging and collaborative, (c) use data to improve learning, (d) provide support, and (e) align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. To this list we would add the skilled behaviors of emotional intelligence (EI, Nelson and Low, 2011), and leader imagineering (Hoyle, 1995). It is most apparent and obvious when EI skills are not practiced, and we will talk more
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REFERENCES


