

NEW SUPERINTENDENT UPDATES

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Do you want to continue on the list to receive these Updates?

Last week we sent a copy of the New Superintendent Updates to all superintendents on our email list by mistake. As a result I have discovered that many of you would like to continue receiving these updates. This publication normally only goes to new superintendents and veteran superintendents who have requested to receive the publication. If you would like to continue to receive these updates please email my assistant Deana Crenshaw at dcrenshaw@iasaedu.org and indicate you would like to continue as a member of this list. If we do not hear back from you we will assume you do not want to receive this publication.

Reflecting with Employees You Evaluate

I am spending more and more time training teacher and principal evaluators to allow the people they are evaluating to reflect on their own practice rather than the evaluator "telling" the teacher or principal what to do.

Teacher and principal evaluation consists of collecting data in both informal and formal observations and sharing that data with the employee. In my opinion, it is best if the evaluator summarizes the observational data and shares this summary prior to the reflective conference. You might notice I am using the term "reflective" in this process and not the words "post" or "summative." The reason for the use of the word reflective is that I think the person being evaluated needs to do the reflecting. Too often the evaluator does all the thinking and talking in these conferences. The person doing the learning, in this case the person being evaluated, needs to reflect on their own behavior and determine if change is necessary. If the evaluator does all the talking after the observation the solutions belong to the evaluator and not to the person being evaluated.

Instead of asking a question such as "How could you involve more students in the questioning and discussion?" a more appropriate reflective question might be one or more of the following:

- How did you feel about the level of student engagement in this observation?
- What strategies have you used in the past to engage students in the questioning and discussion?
- What would an observation of questioning and discussion look like if 100% of the students were engaged?

- How could you make this happen in your class?

Following this reflective conversation during which the teacher does the vast majority of the talking the observer can ask the teacher if there is anything that they have talked about concerning questioning and discussion that the teacher would feel comfortable with writing into a Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic & Timely (SMART) goal? Once the teacher commits to a strategy that they are incorporating into the SMART goal, the teacher writes the SMART goal into the observational evidence and the administrator commits to returning to the classroom in the near future to see these strategies put into practice.

Sometimes teacher evaluators ask me what they should do if the teacher does not come up with strategies or suggestions. If the teacher is a first or second year teacher I consider this to be mentoring the teacher and the observer should give detailed specific recommendations. If the teacher is a veteran teacher then the observer can enter into a discussion concerning various strategies but it should be made clear to the veteran teacher that this is his/her responsibility to improve their own instruction.

In either case cited in the paragraph above, if the observer has to direct the learning then the rating of the teacher would be negatively effected by the teacher's lack of self reflection and desire to improve.

Superintendent Influence on School Boards

The January 2012 edition of the AASA School Administrator has a short article on [Superintendent Influence on School Boards](#). This is a great follow up article to the recent series I wrote on Board-Superintendent relations. The source for this article was a 2010 survey on The American School Superintendent. In this article the first sentence reads "An overwhelming percentage of superintendents said they have considerable influence with their school boards. Studies of district administration have established a nexus between influence and positive personal relationships..."

"In the study, 91 percent of the superintendents said 90 to 100 percent of their recommendations had been approved, and another six percent said between 80 to 89 percent of their recommendations had been approved." This evidence supports my recommendation that you establish a positive personal relationship with your individual board members.

As I work with school superintendents the biggest issue superintendents have trouble with is their relationship with individual board members. As a friend of mine used to say in jest, whatever four school board members tell me to do, I will do. When you establish a positive communication path with your school board you will find they will support your recommendations and what these four board members tell you to do will be what you want to do anyway.

Use Video for Teacher and Principal Evaluation

I have been a very vocal advocate of using video for teacher and principal evaluation purposes. When I mention the use of video for evaluation purposes I get mixed reactions. Teachers are generally opposed. Administrators are leery. Few stand up and say, "Let's do it!"

Why are teachers opposed? Some say it will be used as a punitive measure, others worry about the legal aspects of recording students, and I think others are worried because they feel they will not "look good" on video.

Administrators are leery because they think it will be an expansion of more time they will have to spend on teacher evaluation.

Those who feel they will not "look good" on video are not worried that their appearance will be bad, they are worried that the video will become evidence used against them for rating purposes.

The ability to use video for professional teaching improvement has been around for decades. When I was student teaching in the early 1970's my university methods teacher used to record my student teaching lessons and then meet with me to discuss my performance. Every teacher who earns the prestigious National Board Teacher Certification has to video record their own teaching and reflect on their teaching with fellow colleagues and professionals.

My enthusiastic support for video goes back to my coaching days. As a high school football coach we used to videotape all games and grade each player for each play. This took a huge amount of time but was well worth the effort. As an example, before grading game film my offensive linemen really were not accountable. From the sidelines I could not tell, most of the time, if the offensive linemen made the correct block or not. However, when grading film I would run the film back and forth and grade each player. I would prepare a chart with the grade I gave each lineman for each play and I would post this in my classroom. My players would arrive early on Monday's to read the chart and I even let them challenge the grade. We also awarded linemen helmet decal stickers for grading at 90% or better.

The result of this video grading is that each lineman knew I would be looking at his performance and they wanted the helmet decal and they wanted to score high. The best example of this is the performance of the backside tackle (the tackle on the opposite side of the ball that the running back was running to). Most of the time the backside tackle's job was to run downfield and block the safety. This was hard for the tackle to do because it meant running 10 to 30 yards down field and nine out of ten times the back was tackled before this block was needed. However, when the back did get this far, this block usually resulted in a touchdown because the tackle was there to block the safety. Before using video the tackle rarely made this block. After using video the tackle always at least attempted to make this block.

The importance for video recording teaching behavior is similar. If the teacher knows administrators will be videotaping the instruction, they will perform their best. Better yet, both the teacher and the administrator can actually play the

teaching back, stop the recording; replay the recording, etc... to talk about the teaching. This is extremely powerful.

Finally, the real advantage to using video for teacher evaluation is the fact that the video records everything that is happening in the class versus the administrator trying to script evidence of what is happening in the classroom. I often ask administrators if they can correctly verbatim record in writing every question asked by the teacher and every question asked by students. The answer is they cannot. No administrator can accurately record evidence of everything that is happening in a classroom while a properly positioned camera with good sound recording can.

Part I - Fit to Lead

At the beginning of a new year, many people resolve to improve or eliminate a health issue. This update will be the beginning of a three-part series about "taking care of you." As you know, I am an advocate of fitness and health to help you lead your school district at top efficiency. As a school administrator, I exercised regularly, spent quality time with my family, and assumed responsibility for my spiritual self. As a result, I believe I retired from the administrative profession in excellent health.

Seven years ago I read Fit to Lead by Neck, Mitchell, Manz, and Thompson. I was drawn to this book because the research was completed by the Cooper Wellness Program. Dr. Kenneth Cooper is the medical research doctor for the magazine, *Runners World*, to which I have subscribed for years. In the forward to Fit to Lead, Dr. Cooper writes "... 60% of adult Americans follow no form of regular exercise! Worse still is the fact that the rate of obesity among our children has tripled in just over a decade."

Do 60% of new school superintendents fall into the statistic of no form of regular exercise? You might agree that the obesity rate of children in your district is certainly higher than it was 10 years ago, and that rate seems to increase every year. Our role as school superintendents is to lead and to lead by example. This is as true for silent sustained reading, as it is for physical exercise.

Dr. Cooper continues, "Our research suggests that consistent, moderate exercise is the key to success. ...Huge benefits can result by simply making consistent activity a part of your life." Find a type of exercise that keeps you moving, such as walking, jogging, running, playing tennis, lifting, an exercise class, swimming, or other interests.

People often ask me how I find time to exercise. The simple answer is that I exercise the first thing in the morning. If you make exercise a priority, you will find time to work it in. Dr. Cooper says, "When patients tell me that they don't have time to exercise, I point out that being fit will make them more energetic and productive - in a word, more effective. In turn, this will actually allow them to accomplish much more each day."

The introduction to Fit to Lead includes a statement that, "A survey of executives from the top 3,000 U.S. companies (identified from Fortune 500, the Inc. 100, the Venture Fast Track 100, and Dun's List of Large and Small Companies) revealed that two-thirds of the executives exercised at least three times weekly, and for more than 90% of that group, aerobic exercise was the cornerstone of their workouts." If busy executives from Fortune 500 type companies can exercise at least three times per week, so can busy superintendents. Think of all the successful people you know. Would you be surprised at how many of them regularly exercised?

The authors of Fit to Lead included the following research information: "Individuals who are fit are also less likely to become obese and more likely to possess higher levels of energy and enjoy enhanced feelings of well-being. Further studies have shown that fit individuals tend to enjoy psychological benefits as well, including a reduction in anxiety, depression, tension, and stress."

Tip of the Week - "The Charles Schulz Philosophy"

A friend of mine sent me the following email:

You don't have to actually answer the questions. Just ponder on them.

Just read the e-mail straight through and you'll get the point.

1. *Name the five wealthiest people in the world.*
2. *Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.*
3. *Name the last five winners of the Miss America pageant.*
4. *Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.*
5. *Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.*
6. *Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners.*

How did you do?

The point is that no one can remember the headliners of yesterday.

1. *These are not second-rate achievers.*
2. *They are the best in their fields.*
3. *But the applause dies.*
4. *Awards tarnish.*
5. *Achievements are forgotten.*
6. *Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.*

Here's another quiz.

1. *List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.*
2. *Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.*
3. *Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.*
4. *Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special!!*

5. *Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.*

Easier? The lesson:

- *The people who make a difference in your life are not those with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards.*
- *They simply are the ones who care the most.*

Pass this on to those people who have made a difference in your life, like I did.