Instructional Leadership: The Principal as Leader of Professional Learning

Ann Cunningham-Morris

www.ascd.org

04 September 2008

SAPA Conference
All rights reserved. These handouts are intended for personal use in connection with this presenter’s staff development program. For any other use of these materials other than personal use, please contact the ASCD Rights and Permissions Department at permissions@ascd.org.

ASCD Publications present a variety of viewpoints. The views expressed or implied in this publication are not necessarily official positions of the Association.
Instructional Leadership: The Principal as Leader of Professional Learning

2008 SAPA Conference
Presenter: Ann Cunningham
Managing Director, Professional Development
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
ASCD
www.ascd.org

South African Principals Focus Groups
October 2007- ASCD’s Research Director Conducted Leadership Development Needs Assessment Focus Groups

Needs/Issues:
- Learning communities for leaders and teachers
- Resources - materials, time, staff
- Distributed leadership
- Instructional expertise capacity building for leaders and teachers
- Professionalism
- Community and social issues impact on instruction

The Roles of the Principal
ASCD’s Leadership Development Framework- Aligned with Leadership Standards Worldwide
- Principal as Visionary
- Principal as Instructional Leader
- Principal as Manager
- Principal as Influencer
- Principal as Learner
Instructional Leadership

Directly influences all other roles and includes:
- Leading the implementation of research-based best practices in instruction
- Leading the implementation of curriculum aligned with standards
- Leading the implementation of classroom balanced assessment
- Leading effective professional learning that includes distributed leadership and capacity building

WHO DO WE REALLY WORK FOR?

Professional Development Best Practices Include

Professional development that:
- is results-driven
- is differentiated
- includes developing teacher leader experts to build capacity
- includes learning built-in to what teachers and leaders are already doing during the school day
Results-Driven Professional Development…
… judges the success of professional learning by whether it alters instructional behavior in a way that benefits students.

Professional development is effective only when focused on clear targets for student learning,

and

does not just train teachers but involves teachers and administrators in collaborative work about student performance.

Capacity Building Results-Driven Professional Development Plans

Include a focus on teacher leadership for capacity building…

- Developing their own expertise in specific instructional practices and strategies
- Leading school-based professional development

Include teachers/teacher leaders in…

- Initial and follow-up professional development opportunities to support implementing practices
A Variety of Approaches
Teacher Leadership & Collaboration in:
- Small group workshops or work sessions
- Developing professional learning communities
- All meetings used as opportunities for learning
- Virtual and face-to-face unit, lesson, & assessment development
- Observation & peer coaching
- Protocols for examining student work & other student data
- Follow-up instructional and assessment planning based on student learning data

Differentiated Professional Development Plans
- Level 1..... Awareness or Introductory
- Level 2..... Skill Development
- Level 3..... Implementation
- Level 4..... Institutionalization of Practices

Capacity Building Results-Driven Professional Development Plans
Plans developed before implementation should not focus only on:
- Level 1- Participant Satisfaction
- Level 2- Self-reporting of what was learned

From: Does It Make A Difference, T. Guskey, Educational Leadership, March 2002 p.48-51
Capacity Building Results-Driven Professional Development Plans

Include an evaluation plan developed before implementation focused on:

- Level 3- Organization Support and Change
- Level 4- Use of New Knowledge and Skills
- Level 5- Student Learning Outcomes

From: Does It Make A Difference, T. Guskey; Educational Leadership, March 2002, p.48-51

Professional Development Evaluation Plan Focus Areas

- Level 5- What student learning goals/outcomes do we want to impact or achieve?
- Level 4- What instructional practices and policies will be selected to achieve student learning goals/outcomes?
- Level 3- What organizational support needs to be in place?
- Level 2- What knowledge, skills, and understandings do adult learners need to implement practices and policies?
- Level 1- What set of experiences will enable adult learners to acquire needed knowledge, skills, and understandings?

Adapted from: Does It Make A Difference, T. Guskey; Educational Leadership, March 2002, p.48-51

Include for Each Level...

- Questions that will be addressed to determine what has occurred
- How information will be gathered
- What is being measured or assessed

Adapted from: Does It Make A Difference, T. Guskey; Educational Leadership, March 2002, p.48-51
Thinking About Your Professional Development Leadership Efforts

Choose 2 areas that you think are the most important to concentrate on first in your school.

Think About and Write Down...
2 next steps you will take to move forward with a focus on effective school-based professional learning.

We Must Remember...

“Children are the living message we send to a time we will not see.”

John W. Whitehead

www.wholechildeducation.org
Differentiating Professional Development

- Level 1..... Awareness or Introductory
- Level 2..... Skill Development
- Level 3..... Implementation
- Level 4..... Institutionalization Practices

Level 1 professional development only starts the process of change, raising awareness and introducing new constructs and terminology.

Level 2 is an intense level of PD. The adult learner typically experiences some major discomfort while making the initial attempts to try out new behaviors. For the adult learner to continue during Level 2 requires a considerable amount of support and massed practice in order to learn new content to a level of comfort.

Level 3 professional development focuses mostly on helping the adult learner make necessary refinements and adjustments in newly learned content so that it fits the particular context well. Problem solving about real implementation problems is a key to motivating the Level 3 adult learner to use the new practices and get positive results with students.

Level 4 professional development focuses on maintaining or institutionalizing the behaviors and protocols. Sometimes Level 4 is reserved for trainers, coaches, teacher leaders and other professional development leaders who learn various strategies for helping other adult learners use new instructional practices.

What is Capacity Building Professional Development?

ASCD is committed to providing effective professional development that will build local capacity, allowing human and financial resources to be used more effectively. We know that people learn new strategies and techniques and master the art of teaching in many ways. We know that in order for teachers to be their best, an environment of professional learning, modeled by the administration, and supported through institutionalized structures that allow for risk-taking and collegial relationships, must be in place. Capacity Building Professional Development promotes these structures, processes and policies while promoting teacher leadership.

Specifically, ASCD is committed to providing the range of professional development services required to develop teacher leaders and administrators into local experts in specific instructional and leadership practices, including: (a) Workshops scheduled at various intervals with teacher leaders or other groups to teach specific instructional topics and practices (b) ongoing work with teachers in targeted classrooms for observation and feedback; (c) facilitation by ASCD Faculty members of meetings with teacher leaders with follow-up lessons and classroom visitations, focusing on objectives determined by teachers and teacher leaders (d) regular meetings involving ASCD Faculty members and district administrators, principals and other school leaders to assess and reflect on program implementation and progress in achieving the school’s student achievement goals and objectives; (e) ongoing work with principals and other administrators on a regular basis to plan ways to support teachers and teacher leaders in implementing specific instructional practices.

Professional Development Planning and Evaluation- ASCD Professional Development staff will work with district, school, regional, or other leaders to develop a professional development plan focused on capacity building and including the five levels of professional development evaluation. This will include ongoing follow-up with the leadership to assure the appropriate data gathering along the way, collaborating with ASCD regional program staff to conduct user groups/focus groups of implementers successes, challenges, and follow-up needs, and ongoing work/communication with ASCD Faculty, Regional Program staff, and district/school/regional/other leadership to monitor and assure quality implementation.

What are the Capacity Building Professional Development Models Offered?

Consortium Model
A consortium is a group of districts or schools interested in working together to build capacity. ASCD Faculty members will guide teams from participating complexes as they learn content and how to teach the content to their colleagues. Complex teams should include complex-level administrators, school-based administrators and teacher leaders from each school within the complexes.

The Consortium will meet five-to-ten times over the course of a year at a central location. Each session includes presentations from ASCD Faculty members, problem-solving, networking activities, and action planning. Between sessions, participants will have assignments to complete in preparation for the next session. ASCD Faculty members and ASCD staff will be available via phone or email to answer questions.

An important feature of the Consortium model is building local capacity. District personnel will attend consortium meetings as partners with school teams, and get additional training from ASCD Faculty members in supporting implementation of the content.

Between sessions, ASCD Faculty members and/or complex team members will work with school teams in their buildings. Possible work may include curriculum seminars, meetings with school-based coaches and administrators to reflect on implementation issues, and classroom observations and conferencing. At midpoint in the implementation, ASCD Faculty or staff will be available to facilitate an Implementation Self Assessment during which Action Plans will be monitored and adjusted, as necessary for continuous improvement.

Teacher Leader Model

The teacher leader model builds capacity within a school or district. Teacher leader teams work with ASCD Faculty members to learn content in depth and learn techniques for teaching the content to their colleagues. The ASCD Teacher Leader criteria can be used to select teacher leaders for school or district-based teams. Although it is unlikely all teacher leaders will meet the criteria prior to selection, the goal of the district or school should be to have them meet these standards during the time they are developing expertise in the identified instructional practice approach. ASCD Faculty members will support the development of teacher leaders by providing the following: workshops on the content, model lessons, curriculum development support, school-based coaching of teacher leaders, and observation of demonstration classrooms. In addition, teacher leader teams will participate in sessions emphasizing adult learning and effective school-based professional development practices. An additional important aspect of this model is workshops and ongoing support for school-based and district-level administrators in learning what the teachers are learning and the instructional leadership practices and policies that will support implementation at the school and district level.
School Improvement Coach Model

ASCD Faculty members are assigned to individual schools focused on a specific instructional and leadership approaches as a result of the needs assessment process. The faculty members work with selected teacher leaders and the school level administrators in learning concepts, strategies, and developing a plan for implementation, all customized for the school. In addition leadership coaching is provided for the principal and administrative team in instructional leadership to support implementation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participants’ Reactions</td>
<td>Did they like it? Was their time will spent? Did the material make sense? Will it be useful? Was the leader knowledgeable and helpful? Were the refreshments fresh and tasty? Was the room the right temperature? Were the chairs comfortable?</td>
<td>Questionnaires administered at the end of the session.</td>
<td>Initial satisfaction with the experience</td>
<td>To improve program design and delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participants’ Learning</td>
<td>Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills?</td>
<td>Paper-and-pencil instruments</td>
<td>New knowledge and skills of participants</td>
<td>To improve program content, format, and organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Organization Support and Change</td>
<td>Was implementation advocated, facilitated, and supported? Was the support public and overt?</td>
<td>District and school records, Minutes from follow-up meetings, Structured interviews with participants and district or school administrators, Participant portfolios</td>
<td>The organization’s advocacy, support, accommodation, facilitation, and recognition</td>
<td>To document and improve organization support. To inform future change efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Participants’ Use of New Knowledge and Skills</td>
<td>Did participants effectively apply the new knowledge and skills?</td>
<td>Questionnaires Structured interviews with participants and their supervisor. Participant reflections (oral and written), Participant portfolios Direct observations, Video or audio tapes</td>
<td>Degree and quality of implementation</td>
<td>To document and improve the implementation of program content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Student Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>What was the impact on students? Did it affect student performance or achievement? Did it influence students’ physical or emotional well-being? Are students more confident as learners? Is student attendance improving? Are dropouts decreasing?</td>
<td>Student and school records Questionnaires Structured interviews with students, parents, teachers, and/or administrators Participant portfolios</td>
<td>Student learning outcomes: Cognitive (Performance &amp; Achievement) Affective (Attitudes &amp; Dispositions) Psychomotor (Skills &amp; Behavior)</td>
<td>To focus and improve all aspects of program design, implementation, and follow-up To demonstrate the overall impact of professional development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GETTING MORE RESULTS FROM FORMAL AND INFORMAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Adapted from “Good Principals Use Informal and Formal Approaches to Develop Staff” by Robby Champion, ASCD 2002

1. Introduce new professional learning topics in more efficient ways so that you don’t have to spend group meeting time building awareness. For example, make it convenient for staff to gain an introduction to new topics via the Internet or give every staff member a book of their own on the topic to read at their leisure before launching an initiative.

2. Require that every new initiative start with a staff knowledge assessment, such as a pre-assessment or performance task to find out which staff members need very basic information, which ones already have some skills in the area, and which staff members are already fully implementing the approach effectively in their classrooms. You can then differentiate the professional learning more precisely. Accurately differentiating professional development can accelerate learning and avoid having staff bored by sitting through what they already know.

3. Prioritize the content that staff is expected to learn. Avoid professional development experiences that teach the obvious. Scrutinize professional development plans to make more strategic decisions about the learning experiences for your adult learners. Incorporate learning activities that promote adults to construct their own knowledge, and avoid unnecessary activities that have minimal learning payoff.

4. Slice any new content information into much smaller pieces. This approach requires that those leading the learning think through the content, prioritize it, and then conceptualize it into small modules. The modules then can be introduced, practiced, measured for results, and assimilated into practice in a short time frame.

5. Redefine professional development so that it does not need to be a whole faculty or large group activity. You can probably much more easily find chunks of time for staff to learn alone, in pairs, in problem
solving teams, professional learning communities, or within their departments.

6. Collaborate with staff in estimating how much time each would need to learn, practice, and move to full implementation of any new approach. Adult learners often respond positively to taking responsibility for their own progress and their personal commitment to a change effort.

7. Commit to using some faculty meeting time and department or team meeting time for collegial learning. Whether you have one group teach another, conduct study group activities, examine student work to make instructional decisions, develop curriculum maps/units, or develop common assessments the message about what is important in this culture becomes evident.

8. Encourage and reward those staff willing to demonstrate their best practices to colleagues in their classrooms.

9. Build in the assessment of progress in implementing new professional development initiatives by using a variety of formative evaluation techniques with your adult learners throughout the implementation phase.

10. If you must participate in a one-time-only professional development activity (such as a required-attendance event), be proactive by doing some readiness learning for your staff.

11. Be a role model when it comes to professional development. Share with your staff members your own professional journey, the hurdles you faced, the vision you have developed for your role and for schools, how, when, and where you find time for professional learning, and the new areas in education you are exploring as a learner.
Improving
Relationships within the Schoolhouse

Relationships among educators within a school range from vigorously healthy to dangerously competitive. Strengthen those relationships, and you improve professional practice.

Roland S. Barth

One incontrovertible finding emerges from my career spent working in and around schools: The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else. If the relationships between administrators and teachers are trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative, then the relationships between teachers and students, between students and students, and between teachers and parents are likely to be trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative. If, on the other hand, relationships between administrators and teachers are fearful, competitive, suspicious, and corrosive, then these qualities will disseminate throughout the school community.

In short, the relationships among the educators in a school define all relationships within that school’s culture. Teachers and administrators demonstrate all too well a capacity to either enrich or diminish one another’s lives and thereby enrich or diminish their schools.

Schools are full of what I call nondiscussables—important matters that, as a profession, we seldom openly discuss. These include the leadership of the principal, issues of race, the underperforming teacher, our personal visions for a good school, and, of course, the nature of the relationships among the adults within the school. Actually, we do talk about the nondiscussables—but only in the parking lot, during the car pool, and at the dinner table. That’s the definition of a nondiscussable: an issue of sufficient import that it commands our attention but is so incendiary that we cannot discuss it in polite society—at a faculty or PTA meeting, for example. (For more on this topic, see my article “The Culture Builder” in the May 2002 issue of Educational Leadership.)

Consequently, the issues surrounding adult relationships in school, like other nondiscussables, litter the schoolhouse floor, lurking like land mines, with trip wires emanating from each. We cannot take a step without fear of losing a limb. Thus paralyzed, we can be certain that next September, adult relationships in the school will remain unchanged. School improvement is impossible when we give nondiscussables such extraordinary power over us.

Relationships in Schools
So let’s discuss the elephant in the room—the various forms of relationships among adults within the schoolhouse. They
might be categorized in four ways: parallel play, adversarial relationships, congenial relationships, and collegial relationships.

**Parallel Play**
Parallel play, a wonderful concept from the preschool literature, is thought to be a primitive stage of human development through which 2- and 3-year-olds soon pass on their way to more sophisticated forms of interaction. To illustrate, imagine two 3-year-olds busily engaged in opposite corners of a sandbox. One has a shovel and a bucket; the other has a rake and a hoe. At no time do they share their tools, let alone collaborate to build a sandcastle. They may inadvertently throw sand in each other’s face from time to time, but they seldom interact intentionally. Although in close proximity for a long period of time, each is so self-absorbed, so totally engrossed in what he or she is doing, that the two of them will go on for hours working in isolation.

Parallel play offers, of course, a perfect description of how teachers interact at many elementary, middle, and high schools. The term also aptly describes the relationship between one school principal and another whose school is only blocks away. One teacher summed it up with discouraging accuracy: “Here, we all live in our separate caves.” A playful notice on the wall of a faculty lounge captured it even better: “We’re all in this—alone.”

The abiding signature of parallel play in education is the self-contained classroom, with the door shut and a piece of artwork covering that little pane of glass. The cost of concealing what we do is isolation from colleagues who might cause us to examine and improve our practices.

**Adversarial Relationships**
I once heard a Boston school principal offer this sage observation: “We educators have drawn our wagons into a circle and trained our guns—on each other.” Adversarial relationships take many forms in schools. Sometimes they are blatant: The 7th grade algebra teacher about their practice—about discipline, parental involvement, staff development, child development, leadership, and curriculum. I call these insights craft knowledge. Acquired over the years in the school of hard knocks, these insights offer every bit as much value to improving schools as do elegant research studies and national reports. If one day we educators could only disclose our rich craft knowledge to one another, we could transform our schools overnight. But I find educators reluctant to make these gold nuggets available to others. Sadly, when one educator persists in repeating the failures of the past while schools are full of good players.

**Collegiality is about getting them to play together, about growing a professional learning community.**

More often, we educators become one another’s adversaries in a more subtle way—by withholding. School people carry around extraordinary insights about their practice—about discipline, parental involvement, staff development, child development, leadership, and curriculum. The cost of concealing what we do is isolation from colleagues who might cause us to examine and improve our practices.

No wonder so many teachers engage in parallel play. Barricaded behind their classroom doors, they escape the depleting conflicts so rampant among the adults outside.

More often, we educators become one another’s adversaries in a more subtle way—by withholding. School people carry around extraordinary insights about their practice—about discipline, parental involvement, staff development, child development, leadership, and curriculum. I call these insights craft knowledge. Acquired over the years in the school of hard knocks, these insights offer every bit as much value to improving schools as do elegant research studies and national reports. If one day we educators could only disclose our rich craft knowledge to one another, we could transform our schools overnight. But I find educators reluctant to make these gold nuggets available to others. Sadly, when one educator persists in repeating the failures of the past while
world of schools, we become competitors for scarce resources and recognition. One teacher put it this way: “I teach in a culture of competition in which teaching is seen as an arcane mystery and teachers guard their tricks like great magicians.”

The guiding principles of competition are, “The better you look, the worse I look,” and “The worse you look, the better I look.” No wonder so many educators root for the failure of their peers rather than assist with their success.

**Congenial Relationships**

Fortunately, schools also abound with adult relationships that are interactive—and positive. We all see evidence of congeniality in schools. A lot of it seems to center around food: One teacher makes the coffee and pours it for a colleague. Or around the activities of daily living: A principal gives a teacher a ride home so she can care for her sick child.

Congenial relationships are personal and friendly. We shouldn’t take them lightly; when the alarm rings at 6:00 in the morning, the alacrity with which an educator jumps out of bed and prepares for school is directly related to the adults with whom he or she will interact that day. The promise of congenial relationships helps us shut off that alarm each day and arise.

**Collegial Relationships**

Congenial relationships represent a precondition for another kind of adult relationship highly prized by school reformers yet highly elusive: collegiality. Of the four categories of relationships, collegiality is the hardest to establish.

Famous baseball manager Casey Stengel once muttered, “Getting good players is easy. Getting ‘em to play together is the hard part.” Schools are full of good players. Collegiality is about getting them to play together, about growing a professional learning community.

When I visit a school and look for evidence of collegiality among teachers and administrators—signs that educators are “playing together”—the indicators I seek are:

- Educators talking with one another about practice.
- Educators sharing their craft knowledge.
- Educators observing one another while they are engaged in practice.
- Educators rooting for one another’s success.

**Creating a Culture of Collegiality**

The good schools in which I’ve worked and observed have replaced parallel play and adversarial relationships among adults with congenial and collegial relationships. Let me offer a few examples of what I have seen teachers and other school leaders do to create a culture of collegiality in their schools.

**Talking About Practice**

I once had an appointment with a teacher in the faculty lounge. On the way in, I noted a sign on the door that read, “No students allowed in the faculty room.” It seemed a bit unfriendly, but I remembered during my days as a teacher needing a few moments of fire-free time. When I asked the teacher about the sign, she said, “That’s the written rule in this teachers’ room.”

“What’s the unwritten rule?” I asked.

She replied, “No talking about teaching in the faculty lounge.”

Regrettfully, I find that unwritten rule firmly in place in many teacher and administrator gatherings. A conversation about the Red Sox or the Yankees can be noteworthy and lively—an example of congenial behavior. But a professional learning community is built on continual discourse about our important work—conversations about student evaluation, parent involvement, curriculum development, and team teaching.

I know one principal who boldly suggested to the faculty that for one week, they try permitting in the faculty lounge only education-related conversations. A conversation about the Red Sox or the Yankees can be noteworthy and lively—an example of congenial behavior. But a professional learning community is built on continual discourse about our important work—conversations about student evaluation, parent involvement, curriculum development, and team teaching.

I know one principal who boldly suggested to the faculty that for one week, they try permitting in the faculty lounge only education-related conversation. To everyone’s amazement, this simple trial worked, giving permission to teachers and administrators alike to talk about their work. They decided to continue the practice. They banished the Yankees and the Red Sox to the hallways and the parking lot—at least until the playoffs!
**Sharing Craft Knowledge**

In some schools, a typical meeting begins with a participant or two sharing a front-burner issue about which they have recently learned something important or useful. A teacher new to the school might explain how students were evaluated in a previous workplace. A parent might share in a PTA meeting an idea about helping children with homework. A principal might share with other principals a new policy about assigning students to classes.

Once the exchange of craft knowledge becomes institutionally sanctioned, educators no longer feel pretentious or in violation of a taboo by sharing their insights. A new taboo—against withholding what we know—replaces the old. Repeated practice soon embeds generous disclosure of craft knowledge into the culture of a school or a school system.

**Observing One Another**

Perhaps no practice evokes more apprehension among educators than the prospect of one of our peers camping out in the back of our classroom for a few hours and watching us engage in the difficult art of teaching. Another unwritten rule in most schools seems to be, "If you want to see me, come in before school, during recess, at lunchtime, or after school. If you come in and plunk yourself down while I am teaching, you die!" I used to think this was a message only parents received. But I now see that we educators telegraph it to one another as well.

Making our practice mutually visible will never be easy, because we will never be fully confident that we know what we’re supposed to be doing and that we’re doing it well. And we’re never quite sure just how students will behave. None of us wants to risk being exposed as incompetent. Yet there is no more powerful way of learning and improving on the job than by observing others and having others observe us.

In one school I know, the principal and a few teachers wanted to do away with the taboo against observing in one another’s workspaces. They decided to hold each faculty meeting in the classroom of a different teacher. The host teacher devoted the first 10 minutes to a show-and-tell: "Here is my reading area. Here is my science corner, and these are student projects on the weather."

In two years’ time, everyone had observed the sacred space of everyone else and had in turn been observed in their own space. Follow-up conversations often ensued: "When I was in your classroom last week, you mentioned your work with cooperative learning. Can you tell me more?" Such mild observations reduce the anxiety surrounding visits that probe a teacher’s practices.

But general, unfocused “bathing” in one another’s classrooms usually yields only modest results. Deeper and more instructive peer observations emerge when both parties forge an agreement beforehand. Elements of an effective contract might include some of the following:

- **Our visits will be reciprocal.** You visit me this week; I visit you next week.
- **What we see and say will be confidential, between us.**
- **We will decide together, beforehand, just what I will attend to during the visit—for instance, how you are handling two students with attention deficit disorder.**
- **We will agree on the day, time, and length of the visit.**
- **We will have a conversation afterward to discuss our observations and share our learning.**

These contracts increase the ownership of mutual observation, reduce the fear surrounding it, and increase the likelihood of worthwhile learning. Nonetheless, as a principal, I found that creating a school culture in which mutual visits were commonplace was enormously difficult. So I created an array of carrots and sticks, each intended to address the litany of reasons why “we can’t possibly do this”:

- **Time:** “I’ll cover for you or get a sub.”
- **Administrative fiat:** “Before March 31, I expect each of you to observe for one half-day in the classroom of each teacher.”

**Someone has to make relationships among adults a discussable. I can think of no more crucial role for any school leader.**
offered our observations.

All too common in our profession is widespread awareness of a fellow educator in trouble: the principal under siege from a group of parents, or a beginning teacher being worked over by a tough classroom of kids. We monitor the situation from afar as another person is hung out to dry—and we do nothing.

Imagine, on the other hand, a school in which all 32 teachers not only are aware of the punishment that you are experiencing at the hands of those difficult students but also offer to help. To take a youngster or two into their own classes. To invite you into their classrooms so you can observe them handling these same students. To meet with you after school to reflect on the day and help plan the next. To share manipulative curriculum materials capable of engaging students with a short attention span.

Imagine each of these 32 teachers being vitally interested in the current front-burner issue of every other teacher. One teacher might be working on integrating language and social studies instruction. Another might be working on multi-age grouping. Colleagues put relevant articles into your mailbox. Others share effective practices from other schools in which they have worked. Everyone on the faculty periodically asks how things are going and what they can do to help. I suspect that every one of us would give a lot to work in this school.

What School Leaders Can Do

Leadership has been delightfully defined as "the ability to foster consequential relationships." Easier said than done. To promote collegial relationships in the school, someone has to make relationships among adults a discussable. Someone must serve as a minesweeper, disarming those land-mines. I can think of no more crucial role for any school leader.

What else can a school leader do to promote a culture of collegiality within the schoolhouse? Researcher Judith Warren Little found that school leaders foster collegiality when they

- State expectations explicitly. For instance, "I expect all of us to work together this year, share our craft knowledge, and help one another in whatever ways we can."
- Model collegiality. For instance, visibly join in cheering on others or have another principal observe a faculty meeting.
- Reward those who behave as colleagues. For instance, grant release time, recognition, space, materials, and funds to those who collaborate.
- Protect those who engage in these collegial behaviors. A principal should not say, for instance, "Janet has a great idea that she wants to share with us today." This sets Janet up for a possible harsh response. Rather, the principal might say, "I observed something in Janet's classroom last week that blew my socks off, and I've asked her to share it with us." In this way, leaders can run interference for other educators.

A precondition for doing anything to strengthen our practice and improve a school is the existence of a collegial culture in which professionals talk about practice, share their craft knowledge, and observe and root for the success of one another. Without these in place, no meaningful improvement—no staff or curriculum development, no teacher leadership, no student appraisal, no team teaching, no parent involvement, and no sustained change—is possible.

Empowerment, recognition, satisfaction, and success in our work—all in scarce supply within our schools—will never stem from going it alone as a masterful teacher, principal, or student, no matter how accomplished one is.

Empowerment, recognition, satisfaction, and success come only from being an active participant within a masterful group—a group of colleagues.

1 For my thinking about collegiality, I am deeply indebted to the work of Judith Warren Little: School Success and Staff Development in Urban Desegregated Schools (Center for Action Research, 1981) and "Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation" (Education Research Journal, 1982).

Editor's note: This paper is based on the 11th Annual William Charles McMillan III Lecture, delivered by the author at Grosse Pointe Academy, Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, March 2, 2005.

Copyright © 2006 Roland S. Barth.

Roland S. Barth (rsb44@aol.com) is a former public school teacher and principal and Founding Director of the Principals' Center at Harvard University. He is author of Lessons Learned: Shaping Relationships and the Culture of the Workplace (Corwin Press, 2003).