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Instructional Leadership ideas from The National SAM Project, October, 2009

Participants in the National SAM Project work to increase time spent on instructional leadership to drive improvements in teaching, parent engagement and student success. This e-book contains instructional leadership practices organized in five sections:

[Instructional Leadership with *Teachers*](#)

[Instructional Leadership with *Parents*](#)

[Instructional Leadership with *Students*](#)

[Instructional Leadership with *Support Staff*](#)

[Instructional Leadership with *All & Others*](#)

Readers can click, or control+click, on a section title, above, to go directly to that part of the e-book to browse. Readers may also elect to review the table of contents pages to find a specific entry.

Readers are encouraged to submit their own Instructional Leadership Practice by completing the a template [**CLICK HERE**](#).

Thanks to the SAMs, principals, coaches and project coordinators who agreed to share their ideas. Thanks to volunteer editor Carol Merritt and National SAM Project support staff members Jim Mercer and Melissa Page. Special thanks to The Wallace Foundation for continued support and Dr. Jody Spiro for suggesting the creation of this instructional leadership practices e-book.

Sincerely,

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Section 1: Instructional Leadership with *Teachers*

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

(The school mascot is the Golden Eagle)

Michael Bregy, Robin Lasak and Char Gaul, Illinois

Description:

The principal shadows a student for the entire day. Students fill out applications to be selected for shadowing that are sent out by the principal and then the SAM schedules the shadow day with the teachers and student involved. The SAM also requests the homework due on the day of shadowing so that the principal is familiar with the curriculum and how the homework connects to the daily lesson.

The principal participates as a student in all lessons and activities on the shadow day, including dressing and acting like a student. After the shadowing experience the principal meets with the teachers to discuss the lessons from the student perspective as well as from an informal administrative evaluation perspective.

Impact:

The impact of these experiences has been nothing short of amazing! Visit michaelbregy.com for more information.

Variations or Things to Consider:

This instructional leadership practice is in use at a high school with 175 certified teachers and 2500 students.

WE TEACH HOW THEY LEARN

Monica Wesley, Illinois

Description:

The principal structures classroom visits to all the classes in a specific curricular area on a single day. This enhances the principal's ability to focus on effective teaching practices in a content area and to share good practices with the teachers in that subject area.

The principal inquires if students know the class agenda for the day, and students earn incentives for their knowledge. In addition, an assistant principal or other administrator shadows the principal.

Impact:

Teachers learn effective strategies used by their colleagues and improve their skills.

Students are eager to find out each class agenda and are more focused on the daily lesson.

Assistants and other administrators learn effective instructional leadership behaviors through their shadowing of the principal.

TEACHERS WRITE IN REFLECTION JOURNALS

Pam Cooper and Angela Gunther, Kentucky

Description:

At the start of faculty meetings teachers are immediately involved in reflective activity by writing in a reflection journal and then sharing their reflections in small groups, or, occasionally, in the large group. Teacher topics are sometimes focused on individual professional goals, but during the discussions many find inspiration from the reflections of their colleagues.

The principal collects the journals, provides timely written feedback and returns the journals. Teachers are encouraged to reflect in the journals on their own at other times and to share instructional successes and effective strategies. This assists in the building of a professional learning community. A teacher may share a best practice as a faculty meeting demonstration lesson that is called a BRAVO Award.

Impact:

Reflection has become an important part of professional school life; teachers are anxious to get their journals back and see the principal's feedback. Instructional effectiveness and inspiration are a large part of faculty meetings.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Consider the structure of reflective writing goals; they could be daily, weekly, or in some other structural pattern.

Reflective writing will lead to colleagues sharing growth experiences and their needs in the area of professional growth.

Structures for sharing of effective strategies such as the BRAVO AWARD provide opportunities for teacher leadership development.

Written feedback to journal writers is critically important, although it need not be lengthy.

TEACHERS WRITE IN REFLECTION JOURNALS

Dan Ludwig and Chris Kircher, Iowa

Description:

The principal now schedules significant time with teaching teams to work on lesson design. The principal attends grade level meetings for approximately 45 minutes each week to discuss with the team the structure of the lesson and how it will relate to achievement goals. Grade level teams and principal will often share ideas and concerns regarding the lesson and how it can be adapted to meet individual student needs. Of particular importance is the opportunity to discuss how specific lessons will positively impact student achievement.

Impact:

As a result of the weekly planning meeting classroom teachers will readily consult the principal for ideas and suggestions related to the lesson. Teachers will also receive appropriate feedback that the principal has obtained during an observation of the lesson.

The principal is able to focus on best practices and assist teachers in designing effective lessons more often and to a greater degree because of the role of the SAM in the school.

INSTRUCTIONAL WALK THROUGHS

Eric Wells and Ginger Fagels, Delaware

Description:

The principal conducts walkthroughs weekly with all teachers and provided positive feedback where appropriate publicly to the teachers and students when possible. Document observations from the walkthrough privately (outside the classroom) and engage the students and teacher in the lesson activities. The duration of the walkthrough should exceed 10 minutes if the visit is once a week.

Impact:

Through regular and frequent classroom visits, the principal can monitor pacing guides, delivery technique, student engagement, build relationships with students and teachers. Thus affecting student achievement provided the curriculum is standards based and aligned to the assessment.

Variations or Things to Consider:

When walking into classrooms most administrators move to the perimeter of the classroom so not to interrupt instruction; however I believe walking in and engaging the lesson at the appropriate segway can change the appearance of observation to that of interest in topic and interaction with the class groups.

COMMON WALK THROUGH TOOL

Diane Jones and Jaymie Bral, Teresa Coenen and Beau Ruleaux, Iowa

Description:

A common district walk through tool was developed for administrator use to collect data on student engagement and the use of Robert Marzano's Nine Instructional Strategies. Administrators have placed the templates for this tool on Palm devices.

Impact:

Teachers are implementing the Nine Instructional strategies on a more frequent basis and have also increased the number of engagement methods they use on a regular basis.

Placing the templates on Palm devices has reduced administrator time needed to transfer notes and data to computer hard drives.

Variations or Things to Consider:

All effective strategies used by teachers are not included in Marzano; these additional strategies may be included in the next revision of the tool.

USING THE SAM

Marcie Stallcup and Debra Bilyeu, Missouri

Description:

Getting the principal into the classroom for instructional purposes has been the greatest success for this beginning SAM program.

Impact:

The principal expands time spent as an instructional leader and coach. The SAM has developed a pro-active stance in helping the principal schedule into classrooms.

Variations or Things to Consider:

In some situations it may be necessary for the SAM to learn to delegate some former responsibilities to others to carry out the SAM mission.

THE VALUE OF A SAM

Leo Peckenpaugh and Don Swanson, Kentucky

Description:

The SAM has assumed responsibilities formerly overseen by the principal or assistant principal. This has freed these administrators to be in the classrooms more frequently to observe and coach teachers. It has also provided principal time for analyzing data, meeting with teams or teachers by grade level, time to work on long range planning, and an opportunity to observe best practices in the school.

Impact:

The administrators are more knowledgeable about what is going on in classrooms and are able to share best practices with all staff members. More observation and coaching puts greater focus on student achievement.

TEACHER TIME

Kim Jackson and Michelle Millett, Missouri

Description:

Teachers in core subjects are provided a sub for one class period. The hour is used to observe another teacher using a new instructional strategy. Following the observation they meet to reflect upon what worked and didn't work with the principal acting as facilitator. The SAM arranged the subs and schedule for this activity.

Impact:

Teachers are very thankful for the extra time, improving overall morale. Teachers are able to be more effective when they have the opportunity for reflection and the time to consider how to implement effective strategies in their own classrooms.

Variations or Things to Consider:

It is important to offer this regularly at least to all core area teachers. Is it possible to make this time available to all teaching staff? Can it be scheduled more than once each semester?

WALK THROUGH SCHEDULE

Jerry Lamey and Alesia Biddle, Delaware

Description:

The SAM makes a daily schedule for the principal's use, identifying all of the one hour walk throughs planned for that day. At the end of the day the principal returns the list to the SAM with any annotations regarding the amount of time actually spent in each classroom. This allows the SAM to keep an accurate ongoing record for the principal of exactly how much time has been spent in a particular classroom on a specific day.

Impact:

This system provides a specific and detailed record for the principal's use.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Further detail of activity during each classroom visit, (celebration, feedback, etc.) could be a part of this record.

SURVEY TEACHERS

Beth Thornton and Kathy Bullis, Iowa

Description:

The principal and SAM created a teacher survey asking their opinions of the SAM project and also what they hoped to gain from it. The baseline survey data is in hand and the plan is to continue to survey and analyze the data in order to maximize benefit from the SAM project.

Impact:

Teachers are better informed about the SAM project and its goals. They realize that their input has value to the principal and the SAM.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Surveys of parents and or students may also be a good idea.

USING TECHNOLOGY

Teresa Coenen and Beau Ruleaux, Iowa

Description:

The principal walks through every teacher's room at least once every two weeks. Observed data including lesson plans, district curriculum, Jerry Valentine's Instructional Practices Inventory and Robert Marzano's Nine Instructional Strategies is recorded by the principal on a Palm device. Teachers receive email feedback immediately. The principal is able to track various data by teacher using an Excel spreadsheet.

Impact:

The principal enjoys increased efficiency and easily retrieved data for use with teachers and other individuals and groups.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Currently, use of the measurement and technical devices are for scheduled observations. It might be useful to incorporate data from unannounced classroom visits as well. There may also be types of data that teachers would like to have measured, recorded and reported are not formally considered at this time.

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Rebecca R. Pruitt, Georgia

Description:

The SAM organizes and shares the teacher observation schedule with the administrative team each week.

Impact:

Administrator observations are more intentional. For example, an administrator will select a content area and target specific effective teaching practices for the observation.

ROUNDS MODEL

Camille Tyson and Phillip Breaux, Georgia

Description:

Teachers volunteer to be observed by a team of teachers, administrators, student teachers and professors. The lesson is reviewed prior to the observation and then afterward all parties review the lesson and what each person saw.

Impact:

This has been extremely powerful for our students because they see teachers working on common goals throughout the school. It has also created a much more collaborative and supportive instructional culture.

IMPROVING INSTRUCTION
“Teachers can’t be what they can’t see”

Reginald Evans, Illinois

Description:

At least ten teachers each year are chosen to attend content related conferences to develop their own skills and to build up the skill level in their departments.

Impact:

Teachers have become more open to considering their strengths and their areas of needed improvement. Teachers are also learning new skills and strategies.

MODEL TEACHING BY THE PRINCIPAL

Edward Heineman and Robin Musson, Illinois

Description:

At each faculty meeting a teacher name is drawn to determine the next classroom for principal model teaching. One principal-taught model lesson in the fourth grade developed into an eight lesson unit on the persuasive writing process.

Impact:

The principal has enhanced interaction with teachers, students and parents as a result of this program and is seen as an effective instructional leader with specific skills to offer teachers and students. The principal has the opportunity to directly impact student learning and achievement and is reminded of the amount of work involved in the preparation and delivery of lessons.

Variations or Things to Consider:

This program is highly valuable, yet very time consuming. Effective teachers might also do model teaching for one another if scheduling could be worked out.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

“Do the students know what they are learning?”

Audrey Howard and Janet Young, California

Description:

The principal helps teachers identify clear, focused objectives for lessons based upon grade level standards. Teachers are encouraged to write the objective on the board in student friendly language and to check with students to see if they know the objective or the learning intended as the lesson progresses. During walk throughs the principal asks students about what they are learning. The principal transcribes student responses verbatim and shares this information with the teacher. This provides specific feedback as to whether the objectives or learning are understood.

The principal also works with parents to encourage them to ask students, “What did you learn today” as opposed to, “What did you do today?” in home discussions.

Impact:

It is clear to students that meeting lesson objectives is important. Even kindergarten and first grade students can articulate what they are learning and why. Teachers get immediate feedback in the form of actual student response from the principal’s notes during walk throughs. Parents who ask about learning are likely to get a more valuable answer about academic work at school than those who merely ask about what activities took place.

Variations or Things to Consider:

In one school the teachers use the principal’s entrance to the classroom as a cue to say, “Turn to your neighbor and explain what you’ve just learned.” This 30-60 second activity promotes student engagement.

FLIPPING THE SCRIPT: OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

Carolyn Hart, Georgia

Description:

The central office staff developed an Observation Instrument for teachers in order to support principals in their goal of placing maximum time on instruction. A central office staff member is currently working with consultants to align this instrument with the district's evaluation instrument.

Impact:

SAMS are at work in our district in order to allow principals to spend more time in the classroom. SAMS were trained in conjunction with principal's secretaries, which was extremely helpful in achieving the principal's goal of spending more time in classrooms. The new instrument will assist them in classroom observations.

Variations or Things to Consider:

The instrument does take a great deal of time.

CLASSROOM WALK THROUGH WITH TEACHER LEADERSHIP TEAM

Larry Irvin and Beverly Parylak Illinois

Description:

An instructional leadership team, (ILT), meets twice each month with a focus on improving classroom practices and student achievement. The team conducts classroom walk throughs utilizing portions of Charlotte Danielson's Third Domain that lend themselves to walk through use. Three to four small groups complete the Danielson walk through protocol and then debrief and turn in their recording forms. From this information the ILT generates a list of accolades and recommendations using the language from Danielson's rubric. The SAM takes all of these notes and emails the data to faculty members for feedback, goal setting, focus areas, celebrations, etc.

Impact:

By using the Danielson model a common language of instruction is built among all educators at the school. Teachers are part of a communication feedback loop regarding instruction. Teacher leadership skills are developed and emphasized.

FEEDBACK

Terri Villa and Lynn Cox, Delaware

Description:

The principal engages in a feedback session with the teacher on the same day as the observation so that communication is fresh and timely. The principal and teacher then schedule a follow up feedback session within the next week to discuss outcomes that have transpired subsequent to the first feedback.

Impact:

The value of feedback is enhanced and there is opportunity for a double focus on important areas of observation.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Adding feedback sessions to weekly walk throughs and scheduling the principal to teach model lessons are ideas to consider.

SMALL GROUP READING LESSON OBSERVATION TEMPLATE

Lucas DeWitt and Laurie Murray, Iowa

Description:

Development of “best practices” of instruction for the teaching of small group reading and a concomitant observation template focused on these best practices lead to effective professional development in the school. The principal focused on best practice elements while observing and in feedback sessions with teachers. From this beginning the principal has also modeled lessons using best practices and teachers have made peer observations to help one another improve effectiveness. The SAM plays a major role in scheduling these activities and assisting with the organization of data.

Impact:

The principal enjoys more meaningful and focused conversations about instructional effectiveness with teachers. Teachers are positive about observations and feedback based upon a known template. Awareness of effective practice has increased and student basic reading scores have improved.

Variations or Things to Consider:

The SAM’s ability to set up scheduling for observations and assist with data management from observations is critically important to the success of this practice.

EVALUATION ORGANIZATION

Chris Deely and Jonathan Kempf, Kentucky

Description:

The principal, SAM and secretary have developed a folder system and Excel file that facilitate the organization and distribution of evaluation materials for the summative evaluation process. The folder system includes conference summaries, copies of emails, lesson planning feedback sheets and growth plans. The SAM has also developed an Excel file which tracks classroom visits and notes made by the principal.

Impact:

All pertinent information is quickly available to the principal throughout the evaluative process, resulting in a more thorough and productive outcome.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Doreen Knuth and Bob Sortino, Iowa

Description:

During classroom walk throughs the principal looks at student work and talks with students about their learning as it relates to the school's improvement plan and a rubric of observational criteria. The principal is also involved with students through book club, goal setting and intervention groups. Classroom walk throughs occur daily and the principal writes a weekly feedback letter for teachers. The principal also meets bi-weekly with grade level teachers to share implementation ideas, analyze student achievement and study new strategies.

Impact:

The walk throughs and feedback letters support teachers as they continue or modify instructional practices based upon input received. Grade level meetings have caused a deeper commitment to implementation ideas and teachers are more reflective about their practices. Implementation of effective practices is achieved more rapidly. Students who work with the principal have expanded their perceptions of the principal's role; the principal's priority is student learning, not just student discipline.

DESIGN TEAM

Thomas E. Kenner and Antoinette Rankins, Georgia

Description:

The principal facilitates Monday after school meetings which focus on instructional issues. All content lead teachers attend; any interested staff are invited. The purpose is to review and improve ongoing instructional programs: Additional Learning Time (ALT), After School Tutorial, Standards Based Teaching, Professional Development, etc.

Impact:

The design team has an opportunity to reflect upon student achievement, effective strategies and organizational issues. Needed changes are facilitated.

Variations or Things to Consider:

It is important to follow the instructional agenda and stay on task.

TIMETRACK™

Paul Thompson and Alma Encarnacion, New York

Description:

The principal uses TimeTrack™ not only for information about the use of principal time, but uses the data itself as a powerful indicator of teacher progress. The principal has a record of direct instructional support provided to specific teachers.

Impact:

Use of time track data results in improved teacher performance.

BALANCING TIME

Annabell Martinez and Karen Lane, New York

Description:

With scheduling help from the SAM, the principal is able to expand classroom visitation to all grade levels instead of delegating the early grades to an assistant. The principal does successful read aloud activities with the pre-K and kindergarten students which modeled effective strategies for those teachers. The principal followed up with observations and additional visits to these and other early grade classrooms.

Impact:

The principal has opportunities to interact with all students in an instructional setting and all of the teachers have an opportunity to see the principal as an instructional leader.

CLASSROOM WALK THROUGH AND FEEDBACK SHEET

Jeanette Nuckolls and Sharla Brown-Ajayi, Illinois

Description:

The principal uses an NCR duplicates notepad which makes an immediate copy of handwritten notes from observations and classroom walk throughs. This allows the principal to leave the teacher immediate feedback including a written note suggesting when the principal and teacher may meet to discuss the observation.

Impact:

Although it is not a formal evaluation document, this feedback sheet provides timely information for reflection and further communication or follow up work.

Variations or Things to Consider:

The principal is considering adding one of the Skillful Observations and Coaching Laboratory models during feedback sessions.

UNIVERSITY FACULTY CONVERSATIONS

Linda Irwin-DeVitis and Amanda Hall

Description:

The SAM schedules a 30 minute visit to a faculty member's office at least three times per week to talk about good things going on in their classrooms or to talk about initiatives, research or issues on which that faculty member has talent or expertise.

Impact:

Faculty reflection and communication on intellectual issues is helpful as is the positive relationship development which occurs.

Variations or Things to Consider:

In the culture of higher education faculty collectively own the curriculum and instruction; it is important to be collaborative.

COLLABORATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING

Carol Seid and Rhonda Neal, Iowa

Description:

The principal shared the data collection information and resulting goals with staff, introducing them to the idea that the principal would be far more present and involved in classrooms and in instructional planning. Then, the principal planned a co-teaching math unit with a teacher who was very receptive to the idea and carried out that unit.

Impact:

Students, families and teachers commented upon the positive aspects of having the principal actively involved in instruction and revised their concepts of the role of the principal. A formerly reluctant teacher initiated instructional planning with the principal after observing the initial co-teaching project. Students report that they enjoy being taught by the principal and want to know when the principal will be teaching in their classrooms again.

MONITORING PROGRESS OF NEW TEACHERS

Mark Neil and Christy Wagers, Illinois

Description:

In addition to observations and walk throughs, the SAM schedules new teachers for a regular meeting with the principal every 7-10 days on a rotating basis. The meetings focus on any questions or concerns new teachers may have as well as on program or instructional issues.

Impact:

New teachers may be reluctant to come in on their own with concerns. This process allows them a scheduled forum to meet with the principal. The principal also has the opportunity to get to know new teachers better and monitor their progress.

OBSERVATION BLITZ

Kim Marshall and Jeff Coursey, Kentucky

Description:

Having a SAM has allowed the administrative team of six principals to schedule walk through or observation “blitzes”; all six principals are in different classrooms at the same time. Following the classroom walk throughs or observations all six meet together to debrief, reflect, analyze data and plan the communication process with teachers, including improvement and professional development needs.

Impact:

The team of six principals can focus on a cohesive set of observable traits. Principals develop a common vocabulary to use in communication with teachers. Greater consistency results when working with/coaching teachers.

ROTATING THE WALK THROUGH SCHEDULE

Anastasia Epstein, Kerry Resendez and Jill Fox, Illinois

Description:

The principal walks through the building each day checking in with each class and teacher, rotating the grade level where the walk through begins each day. For example, Monday's walk through may start with 5th grade, then progress to 4th, 3rd, 2nd, 1st then kdg. Tuesday may find her in 3rd grade to start, then moving to 2nd, 1st, kdg, 5th and finishing with 4th. This assures that she will see and be seen by all staff and students each day, but not at the same time or in the same order.

Impact:

Teachers and students are far more comfortable with the principal's presence in the classroom since it occurs on a frequent, but not entirely predictable, basis. Because she is a daily presence, she has become part of the learning community, not just a visitor. This gives her daily snapshots of learning in each classroom, collected at different times and during different activities. Observations made over many days, weeks and months hold more credibility than a one time glimpse and allow the principal to see trends, both positive and not so positive.

Variation or Things to Consider:

Alternating such a rotation with random selection of the next classroom to visit could provide an interesting opportunity to compare and contrast primary vs. intermediate or 1st vs. second on a daily basis. For example, walking through a 1st grade classroom during our Power Hour, while the Daily 5 is happening and then moving on to a 5th grade classroom engaging in the same literacy event could add greatly to the all-school vision of what our final objective in literacy is – students reading independently. Since our principal is our instructional leader, it is essential for her to have the “big picture” in mind constantly. She has total control in structuring her walk-through and therefore can see what she wants to see, when she want to see it. She can also be the bridge conveys “scathingly brilliant” ideas from one classroom to the next in real time!

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES INVENTORY

Kim Stephens and Jarrett Garcia, Illinois

Description:

The principal uses the Instructional Practices Inventory to give teachers feedback on the type of student engagement that is occurring in the classroom. Data is recorded and shared with staff. The SAM's focus on managerial duties provides the necessary time for the principal to function as an instructional leader and spend time in classrooms.

Impact:

The quality of instruction and the level of student achievement improve.

Section 2: Instructional Leadership with *Parents*

CHATS WITH THE PRINCIPAL

Alice Phillips and Ilda Villegas, Illinois

Description:

One Saturday each month parents can visit and chat with the principal, discussing any topic they choose on a first come, first served basis. Refreshments are served and chats are held in ten minute intervals to allow time for everyone to participate. The SAM organizes these events and communicates with parents. The principal is bilingual and advertised in the invitation that chats may be held in the preferred language of the parents.

Parents talk about many subjects. The subjects include the academic progress of their children, the socio-emotional welfare of the children, safety and security and cultural insights into the culture of the community. Some parents simply come to talk and chat.

Impact:

The chats have provided an additional “safe” zone for the parents to communicate with the school. Parent involvement increased and parents were especially comfortable talking to the principal in their own first language.

BREAKFAST or TEA WITH THE PRINCIPAL

Annabell Martinez and Karen Lane, New York

Description:

The SAM analyzed the school's Learning Environment Survey and suggested to the principal that more time spent with parents would be a positive activity. The SAM schedules a monthly Tea or Breakfast for the principal to be accessible to parents regarding instructional matters.

Impact:

The principal got to know students and parents better and developed a better understanding of parent needs. The principal works with a parent coordinator to stay in touch with parents and to set up workshops or help find needed resources. The principal experiences increased communication with teachers about students.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Have the parent coordinator attend the Teas and Breakfasts to streamline communications.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH PARENTS

Cheryl Rigsby and Wayne Muscar, Kentucky

Description:

During the school's New Student Orientation at the start of school, the principal introduces the SAM to parents and students. She explains the involvement of the SAM in handling most non-instructional duties at the school, i.e. budget development, non-instructional staff supervision, discipline issues, schedules, etc. There is also follow-up with parents at PTA meetings and other school-wide activities. All non-instructional letters and memos to parents are then sent out under the name of the SAM rather than the principal as reinforcement to these differentiated duty areas. This may include information about classified staff, buses, school scheduling, discipline, etc.

Impact:

It has become increasingly obvious to parents that non-instructional issues are to be handled by the SAM and not the principal. This is continually reinforced by office staff transferring calls to the SAM instead of the principal; requests for returned phone calls involving non-instructional matters being returned by the SAM; the decline in requests to contact the principal regarding non-instructional matters; and the increased time the Principal has available to spend in instructional activities.

THE SAM CONNECTS WITH PARENTS

Kim Stephens and Jarrett Garcia, Illinois

Description:

The SAM works to establish a presence and rapport with parents, fielding their questions and addressing their concerns.

Impact:

Parents recognize the role of the SAM in the building and the SAM's credibility. The SAM gains the trust of parents and is able to help them, freeing the principal for instructional work in classrooms.

Section 3: Instructional Leadership with *Students*

LET'S HAVE LUNCH

Diane Jones and Jaymie Bral, Iowa

Description:

The SAM schedules six students from each grade level for a lunch meeting with the principal. Topics facilitated by the principal include: what causes students to feel motivated in the classroom, learning goals of students, student opinions about school programs/issues and informal discussions of student hobbies and interests. The principal also works with students to set learning goals, including goals for the ITBS testing.

Impact:

Students view the principal as someone who wants them to succeed and who can help them do so. The principal gains first hand knowledge of how students feel, what they think and how they view the learning process.

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONAL MEETINGS

Douglass High School, Georgia

Description:

Twice each month the SAM identifies 4-8 students representing all grade levels who are invited to a meeting with the principal that focuses on instruction. Students give feedback regarding their perceptions of the quality of instruction and discuss ideas for improving their own academic achievements. The principal shares expectations for student achievement and instructional excellence.

Impact:

Students appear to be more comfortable talking with the principal and talking about their own learning. Students have the opportunity to request resources which would help them achieve learning goals. Support staff get to know students they normally would not meet as students come in for the meetings.

Variations or Things to Consider:

This concept could be revised for use with parents.

MORNING MEETING CELEBRATION: HONORING DISTINGUISHED WORK

Rachelle Schjoll, Kentucky

Description:

The school day starts with a school-wide Morning Meeting to honor student achievement for distinguished work. A different grade level is featured each day. Students may be honored for high test scores, homework completion, attendance or any act of excellence that meets or exceeds learning goals. Those recognized also receive small gifts such as beads, bracelets, ice cream tickets, etc. The Morning Meeting also provides an opportunity for everyone to say the Pledge of Allegiance together and to hear school-wide announcements, but its main purpose is to celebrate student learning.

Impact:

The Morning Meeting has created a culture of high expectations and celebration at the school. It has brought the school together into a community.

**CARE FOR KIDS:
MORNING MEETINGS AND END OF DAY CHECK IN MEETINGS**

Cheryl Rigsby and Wayne Muscar

Description:

The CARE FOR KIDS program creates a child- centered community of learners. Each classroom meets for the first 10-15 minutes of the day and then again for the last 10 minutes of the day. The early meeting is structured for a greeting and morning message. Students share together and learn from one another.

Impact:

The school climate is improved as are interactions between student/teacher and student/student. Teachers are more effective because they have better connections with students.

CELEBRATING STUDENT PROJECTS

Beth Thornton and Kathryn Bullis, Iowa

Description:

Students share a project with a group of multi-grade level students at a meeting facilitated by the principal. For example, a fourth grade student shared a PowerPoint presentation in a content area that was then discussed by the group. The principal asked about coming to the student's classroom when the project was presented there, and the student was thrilled.

Impact:

Students participate in a wider learning community and realize the high value put on learning by their peers and by adults. The principal gains greater first hand knowledge of student work and of student ability to discuss content presentations.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING PLANS AND GOAL SETTING FOR STUDENTS

Brad Fox and Jody Bandy, Iowa

Description:

Each full time teacher and administrator has a group of 10-15 students for whom they are responsible, meeting with these students weekly. They develop personalized learning plans for each student including academic goals, career plans and social/personal goals. Families of students are also involved in this process.

Impact:

Students benefit from a closer connection with adult educators. Peer conflicts in the school are fewer. Student success on standardized tests has improved.

Variations or Things to Consider:

This activity must be well organized and fully planned.

WORKING WITH STUDENTS

Terri Villa, Lynn Cox, and Hilary Mead, Delaware

Description:

The principal meets with teacher identified students who are not engaging in the classroom to discuss why they are not participating. The principal follows up with lunch time tutoring for these students. All students are invited by letter to reserve a “coffee time” with the principal; the first 50 to RSVP will have the opportunity to come and review their achievements, learning goals, and to ask questions of the principal. Students also see the principal model teach a segment of various classes. For example, the principal modeled use of a word wall in the auto shop classroom.

Impact:

Students understand the principal’s role as an instructional leader and academic resource.

GOAL SETTING

Lorraine Williams, Kentucky

Description:

The principal, assistant principal and math coach meet with individual students and small groups of students in grades 4 and 5 in order to set goals for this year's KCCT state test. Students see their results and discuss them and then set goals for the year. Classroom teachers follow up by helping students monitor progress.

Impact:

Students are increasingly more knowledgeable about their own performances. Teachers are learning to use goal setting as a powerful student engagement strategy.

READING INCENTIVE CELEBRATION

John Zimmerman and Tesha Moser, Iowa

Description:

The principal celebrates reading achievement by inviting students to lunch for a book discussion experience. The principal also helps students write book talks which are shared with the school via intercom.

Impact:

Students are highly motivated to participate in this reward/celebration. All students realize the high value placed upon reading activities and achievement. The principal has an informal opportunity to interact with students within a content framework.

EXIT INTERVIEWS

Tom McDonald and Ben Macumber, Iowa

Description:

The principal conducts exit interviews with second semester seniors. Two seniors come in at one time for a 15 minute meeting. The principal gathers feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the learning experience as the students see it, asks for suggestions students may have, and answers any questions. The principal also meets with students of all grades who are making significant gains in achievement and celebrates student academic achievement through appropriate school announcements.

Impact:

Students believe that their points of view and opinions are valued. The principal learns from the different frames of reference that students have.

WORKING WITH STUDENT GROUPS

Lynette Mehall and Dan Lamboley, Illinois

Description:

The SAM schedules lunch hour time for the principal to meet with groups of students to plan their involvement in the National Dairy Council's project, "Fuel Up to Play". The principal and students work collaboratively on an all-school instructional program.

Impact:

The principal has an opportunity to listen to student ideas and benefit from their feedback. Students have ownership in the upcoming school activities.

Variations of Things to Consider:

This format could be very useful for working with teachers on a project.

HAWK'S FLIGHT

Eric Wells and Ginny Fagles, Delaware

Description:

The principal plans to shadow individual or small groups of students over a period of several months and discuss observations with those students. Lunch meetings with students will also be scheduled as the principal and SAM schedule student interaction as a principal priority.

Impact:

Students will understand the importance the principal places on classroom learning and on their successes at school. The principal will be better informed about classroom practice and will gain insight into student learning and motivation.

SUPPLEMENTAL AND INTENSIVE INSTRUCTION

Steve Seid and Heather Sanderson, Iowa

Description:

The SAM schedules time for the principal to meet with teachers in order to identify students who would benefit from supplemental or intensive instruction in a particular area. They consider instructional strategies that have been used with students to date and they look at student assessment data as a part of this process. The principal then works with the identified students in a small group setting.

Impact:

Students who have been part of this program demonstrate increased achievement.

Variations or Things to Consider:

The instruction currently occurs outside the regular classroom. It might be possible for the principal to do small group work within the classroom setting.

WORKING WITH STUDENTS: CELEBRATIONS AND GOAL SETTING

Greg Williams and Louise Dobbins, Kentucky

Description:

The SAM helps the principal collect data for several celebrations highlighting student success. Students are recognized for behavioral and academic achievements. The SAM schedules monthly lunches with students who meet school-wide behavior goals. There are quarterly celebrations for student achievement. The SAM also schedules the principal for individual academic goal setting meetings with students. Data from previous assessments are used to guide the conversation.

Impact:

Students are more aware of their own learning, including their own strengths and areas for further growth.

CONTINUOUS CLASSROOM IMPROVEMENT (CCI)

Marcie Stallcup and Debra Bilyeu, Missouri

Description:

Students provide input to teachers based on a posted PDSA board that teachers create:

P = Plan: the target goal for the week

D = Do: what the teacher will do and what the students will do to meet the goal

S = Study: was the goal reached?

A = Act: what should be changed based on reaching or not reaching the goal?

Students give feedback on each section except the initial target goal.

Impact:

Students and teachers are more aware of their learning goals and styles.
Students become more independent learners.

Variations or Things to Consider:

The principal can use the same structure at faculty meetings.

SAM ENHANCES STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY

Jeanette Nuckolls and Sharla Brown Ajayi, Illinois

Description:

When the school is approached by community organizations for student volunteers or participants the request is routed to the SAM. The SAM does the legwork of disseminating information and connecting interested students to worthy projects.

Impact:

The principal is no longer swamped by these requests and more students have been involved in community projects, some of which have resulted in scholarships for students.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IMPROVED THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Scottie Long and Joyce Lutz, Kentucky

Description:

The administrative team changed assigned responsibilities to best utilize the strengths of the individuals involved. Eighty five percent of the assistant principal's time will be spent in curriculum and one guidance counselor will spend 20 to 25% of the time involved with the math curriculum. The principal will take a more active role in discipline and the SAM will support these changes.

Impact:

The school anticipates an increase in student achievement.

DELEGATING STUDENT DISCIPLINE ISSUES TO SAMS

Kim Marshall and Jeff Coursey, Kentucky

Description:

The six principals of this 2000 student high school were spending 98% of their time on disciplinary issues. Two SAMS now relieve the administrators from disciplinary issues such as skipping, class misconduct and other similar transgressions. They split these disciplinary chores and also handle other managerial duties, freeing the principals to be in classrooms working with teachers.

Impact:

The principals are able to function as instructional leaders. Teachers receive feedback and assistance in their classrooms. Students see the value that principals place upon learning and get to know the principals in a non-disciplinary role. Student behavior has improved.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Principals have not given up all discipline work; discipline does impact student achievement.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Ronda Cosby and Linda Hill, Kentucky

Description:

When students meet their academic or behavioral point goals the teacher allows the student to go to the office. A member of the administrative staff, (principal, counselor, SAM or other) then calls the parent to celebrate the achievement and build student self-esteem.

Impact:

Students perform better in the classroom both academically and behaviorally.

Section 4: Instructional Leadership with *Support Staff*

BEST UTILIZATION OF SUPPORT STAFF

Dan Ludwig and Chris Kircher, Iowa

Description:

The addition of a SAM has allowed support staff members (called ed. associates) to provide more support for students and to be better organized. The SAM holds monthly meetings with the associates and is a direct line of communication and advocacy for them with principals. Support staff have decreased clerical work time and increased student support work time.

Impact:

The additional student support results in increased student achievement.

INCLUDING THE SECRETARY IN THE SAM/PRINCIPAL TEAM

Brad Fox and Jody Bandy, Iowa

Description:

Incorporating the secretary into the SAM/principal team provides additional support. The secretary can assist with the schedule when the SAM is not at a desk and can also enter information on Time Track.

Impact:

It is easier for the principal to stay on schedule when the SAM is not available. More than two people know what is going on in the office.

Variations or Things to Consider:

When the secretary enters information on Time Track the SAM needs some way of identifying that the secretary has done so.

WEEKLY CUSTODIAL MEETINGS

Chris Deely and Jonathan Kempf, Kentucky

Description:

The SAM meets with the evening custodians each Friday to review weekly progress. The first order of business is to go through the weekly custodian review checklist completed in the morning of the days before.

Impact:

The building is getting more positive evaluations from the district and custodial issues are satisfactorily addressed in a timely manner.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Rebecca Pruitt and Bernetta M. Jones, Georgia

Description:

The principal initially walked through the school with the SAM and identified areas of concern that are dealt with by the facilities engineer. The SAM then took over participation in the weekly meeting with the facilities engineer and assistant principal and developed a follow up system to check on completion of facilities tasks. The SAM also walks the building with the facilities engineer and helps the engineer prioritize the tasks.

Impact:

The principal has more time to spend on instructional work in classrooms.

Section 5: Instructional Leadership with *ALL and Others*

THE PRINCIPAL PASS

Pam Cooper and Angela Gunther, Kentucky

Description:

Teachers have “Principal Passes” in their classrooms. When a student achieves a goal or experiences success that the teacher would like to especially acknowledge the teacher fills out the pass with the student’s name and a description of what is being recognized. The student brings the pass to the office, where the office staff members make a big deal of the achievement and congratulate the student. The student signs the posted Principal Pass Board out in the hall by the office and then chooses a small treat from the office treasure box. The Principal announces the student’s name during the end of day announcements and the student takes the pass home to share with parents and family.

Impact:

Students are spotlighted and encouraged. Students have very positive interactions with office staff. Parents are involved so they can also celebrate student achievement.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Always seek things to celebrate.

BLOGGING

Anastasia Epstein, Jill Fox and Kerry Meo-Resendez, Illinois

Description:

The principal set up a blog to increase communication. It is a venue for sharing ideas on instruction, time management, teaching, learning, culture and climate.

Impact:

Reactions of staff and parents have been very positive. One teacher commented that she was looking forward to hearing about the SAMS conference on the blog.

SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Missy Riley and Christy Davis, Missouri

Description:

The staff looks at detailed lists of quality indicators. Everyone on staff is part of a quality indicator group that studies its indicator and descriptors in depth, (looking for proof of evidence and self-rating). The group then gets together as a whole to rate all descriptors in all indicators and looks for areas of improvement to use as goals or focus in a plan-do-study-act model.

Impact:

All staff members understand how all parts fit together and how their performance impacts all others.

PRINCIPAL/SAM CODE
“I need a minute” or “It’s time”

Larry Irvin and Beverly Parylak, Illinois

Description:

The principal and SAM have developed a code that allows the SAM to free up the principal when conferences and appointments are going beyond their scheduled times. The SAM makes a call into the room that the principal can identify as coming from the SAM. If the principal welcomes the opportunity to draw the meeting to a close he picks up the call and “discovers” that it’s time to move on. If this help is not needed the principal doesn’t pick up.

Impact:

The principal and SAM have an effective yet respectful strategy to help keep the principal’s schedule on track.

CHANGE OF VENUE

Gerald Morrow and Monica Wesley, Illinois

Description:

The principal moved his office from the first floor into the counseling office on a different floor. This location is where 95% of everyday contact occurs for students, staff and parents.

Impact:

It allows for more time on instructional focuses as they relate to uniformity, structure, school-wide initiatives, monitoring and accountability. Most importantly, it creates an atmosphere for personalization.

Variations or Things to Consider:

The actual “pulse” of a building can be overwhelming; be prepared for a less isolated location. You will notice almost everything that takes place as it relates to instruction, climate and culture.

DISCIPLINE REFERRALS

Robert Sortino and Doreen Knuth, Iowa

Description:

A discipline referral form for teachers to fill out prior to sending a student to the office has streamlined the discipline process. The form includes a description of the infraction and what the teacher has already attempted to resolve the problem, including any parent contact.

Impact:

This strategy gives the administration more information and makes the discipline process more efficient. The principal has more time to work with students and staff. Parents are also better informed because they receive a copy of the referral and must sign it.

INSTILLING SELF-ESTEEM

Lucas DeWitt and Laurie Murray, Iowa

Description:

After major changes in school leadership we have re-established positive relationships in buildings among teachers, between teachers and teacher associates and between students and adults in the school.

Impact:

Teachers and teacher associates are sharing instructional ideas more often. Students greet each other and adults in the morning and afternoon, beginning and ending the day happy to be in school. A positive attitude toward studies has raised reading scores.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Relationships must be continually nurtured and cared for.

HIRING THE SECRETARY AS THE SAM

Christa Erolin and Lynn McHugh

Description:

The principal capitalized on the relationship, skills and knowledge already established with the secretary by hiring the secretary as the SAM. The SAM already knew and understood the mission, passion and purpose of the principal and jumped right in to the role of supporting the principal as instructional leader. The SAM prints the principal's weekly schedule on Monday and inputs it into Time Tracker. The principal and SAM meet daily.

Impact:

The principal has increased time spent in classrooms and giving feedback. The principal and SAM know exactly the percentage of time spent in instructional leadership.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Consider involving secretaries and hiring them as future SAMS.

DIVIDING AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Leo Peckenpaugh and Don Swanson, Kentucky

Description:

The school is developing a culture that points all academic opportunities and responsibilities toward the principal and assistant principal. Non-instructional issues are dealt with by the SAM. Decisions as to who will exercise authority in non-instructional areas is based upon talent and strength areas of each administrative person. Parents have learned these “paths” and are beginning to use them. Instructional leadership time for the principal is now at 50% and for the assistant principal, 70% of total time.

Impact:

There is a more positive work environment, better planning and staff development. Teachers get more immediate feedback. MAP scoring has improved.

CHARTING AND ORGANIZING

Ilda Villegas, Illinois

Description:

The principal and SAM organized a chart with office staff responsibilities and made copies for everyone. This helps staff and faculty know to whom to go when something is needed. The team also set up a “Chat With the Principal” event for parents and students for informal discussions on Saturdays.

Impact:

Office work is handled more efficiently and the principal is freed to spend more time as an instructional leader. This has improved student test scores.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Consider more PD opportunities for SAMS including office management skills.

THE THREE LEGGED STOOL

Audrey Howard and Eva Barriga, California

Description:

The principal's primary focus is on instruction: student achievement, certificated staff and overall operations. The SAM'S focus is operational: classified staff, assisting in running a safe and orderly learning environment and assisting with the budget. The secretary's focus is schedule: Time Track, coordination of daily activities for certificated staff and calendar.

Impact:

This structure has powerful impact because roles are clear; teachers, students support staff and parents are better served. The principal is more empowered and able to build a strong educational force with maximum student results.

OBSERVATION SCHEDULING

Thomas Kenner and Antoinette Rankins, Georgia

Description:

The principal and SAM work together to maximize principal time with teachers and students. The SAM schedules individual feedback time for teachers and principal and “gently encourages” the principal to relinquish some of the managerial duties.

Impact:

The principal is able to spend more time as an instructional leader.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Consider more feedback or PD for SAMS.

TASK SHEETS

Melessa Avery and Janet Huger, New York

Description:

Task sheets are a management tool to delegate tasks that will take up too much principal time during the school day. These are often broad and multi-step problems or issues.

Impact:

The principal is able to create teacher leaders and discover strengths in teachers that may previously been undiscovered. The principal has more time for direct instructional leadership.

Variations or Things to Consider:

The principal has to be ready to step in if the selected initiator cannot follow through with the task. The task could be re-delegated.

FIRST CONTACT

Christy Wagers and Mark Neil, Illinois

Description:

Whenever a parent, student or community member needs to talk with the principal, that person must speak with the SAM first. About 98% of the time the SAM can take care of the question or concern and the principal does not have to take time away from instructional leadership to handle it.

Impact:

The principal can spend more time on instruction.

Variations or Things to Consider:

To facilitate this change the principal sent out a letter to parents explaining the SAM job description and letting them know that this first contact practice was being established.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CALENDAR

Wendy Boatman and Toni Vose, Illinois

Description:

Daily meetings with SAMS produces a daily calendar that is posted for all target groups to view. Commitment to the process includes teacher adaptation to principal expectations for weekly informal visits.

Impact:

The daily calendar keeps the principal on schedule and eliminates some fragmentation. Productivity is increased.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Consider adding a space on the calendar for teacher/staff requests for principal time.

WORKING WITH THE SAM

Javier Arriola and Lillian Medina, Illinois

Description:

The principal and SAM meet to analyze principal data and how it impacts instruction. They also engage in critical thinking regarding how the SAM might delegate some managerial duties to other clerical staff.

Impact:

The principal develops instructional relationships with teachers that involve discussion of learning, teaching and best practices.

MEETING AT 7:30

Lynette Mehall, Illinois

Description:

Each morning at 7:30 the principal and SAM meet to go over the principal's schedule. The priority is to schedule events related to instructional leadership with teachers and students. They discuss non-instructional items on the calendar that could be done by others.

Impact:

The principal has more time to go into classrooms and work with student groups.

ASSIGNMENT OF DUTIES

John Zimmerman and Tesha Moser, Iowa

Description:

The SAM deals with classified personnel, discipline and scheduling issues. The principal uses this “saved” time to work with guided reading groups, math groups, to read with students and to catch up on curriculum. The principal’s door displays two lists: one of the principal’s responsibilities and one for the SAM’s responsibilities.

Impact:

The principal has the opportunity to be more familiar with the curriculum, to work with different students, and to see where instructional efforts are most needed.

DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Jerry Lamey, Delaware

Description:

The school has developed an instructional leadership team that meets monthly and an operational leadership team that also meets monthly.

Impact:

Leadership meetings have greater focus with a more streamlined charge.

Variations or Things to Consider:

Consider scheduling these meetings twice each month.

FILTERING

Reggie Evans and DeAnna Riley, Illinois

Description:

The SAM handles the filtering of teachers, parents, students, etc., whether it's in person or over the telephone. Many people believe that they have to see and/or speak to the principal to get things accomplished, but they are learning that seeing and/or speaking to the SAM can satisfactorily address at least 90% of their needs, wants or requests. The SAM may re-direct people to other staff members, or the SAM may have the information or help that people are looking seeking.

Impact:

The principal has more time to be in classrooms, teacher and/or student meetings and also act as an instructional leader to improve and enhance teaching and learning.

SAM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Debbie Daniels, Kentucky

Description:

Harvard Business School offers an on line program, “Stepping Up to Management”, six modules designed to help managers become more efficient. This could be a useful tool for SAMS. Other Harvard online PD programs include: “Leading for Understanding” for principals and “Teaching for Understanding” for teachers.

SAMS can also benefit from monthly group meetings using WEBEX. This provides an opportunity to work through concerns.

Impact:

Some SAMS have begun to see the professionalism involved in the position. SAMS have an opportunity to share and reflect together during the monthly meetings.

Variations or Things to Consider:

It is sometimes difficult to work with 30+ SAMS online all at once; at times there are difficulties with the technology as well. It can be challenging for educators to find the time for online professional development work.

USE OF TIME TRACK™ WITH THE LEARNING PERFORMANCE PLANNING WORKSHEET (LPPW)

Bill Bet, NYC Leadership Academy

Description:

The LPPW is a tool designed to assist principals in developing leadership behaviors that will lead to the instructional improvement of their schools. It is comprised of core behaviors organized into nine leadership dimensions. Of the nine, Focus on Student Performance, Supervision of Instructional and Staff, Management & Technology closely aligns with the SAM Project core principles. They do so in the following ways:

MANAGEMENT: “Leader clearly establishes daily priorities and objectives. Leader distinguishes between interruptions that are (a) important, (b) urgent, or (c) represent distractions. Leader aligns organizational priorities and daily activities. Leader removes or delegates non-essential tasks.”

FOCUS ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE: “Leader organizes around instructional priorities to address standards that will leverage student learning. Leader provides structure for looking at student work to identify instructional next steps for teachers and students. Leader uses student performance data for instructional decision making.”

SUPERVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF: “Leader creates systems to provide a variety of ways to meet with teachers, share expectations, provide feedback and clearly check for understanding. Leader organizes environment to hold staff accountable. Leader uses observation information systematically to identify patterns needing improvement. Leader actively coaches instructional staff for improvement in classroom practice.”

TECHNOLOGY: “Leader uses technology personally in a competent manner and links technology initiatives of the organization to specific teaching and learning objectives.”

Impact:

As Time Change coaches visit with SAM teams, the conversations center on using the Time Track software and LPPW Leadership Dimensions as tools that will enable them to develop their leadership skills and close the achievement gap with

