Using Classroom Observations to Improve Teaching and Learning

New Mexico State Work Session

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Session Objectives

Participants will:

- Gain a better understanding of strategies and structures to enhance instructional leadership.
- Determine how to prioritize and organize daily schedules to address instructional expectations.
- Identify and incorporate high yield administrative actions that focus school improvement efforts and enhance learning opportunities for students.
- Review three essential components for classroom observations.
What Effective Instructional Leaders Do: Supporting School Improvement and Instructional Quality
The Main Thing

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

Zig Ziglar
Teaching and Learning

What principal behaviors support improving teaching and learning?
Current Status

- With an elbow partner, answer each of the following questions:

1. How frequently do you complete teacher observations (15-20 minutes as a minimum)?

2. What type of feedback is provided to teachers and/or departments?

3. How do these observations support improvement efforts on your campus?
What does this word mean?
Semantics—Definitions to Focus the Discussion

- **Observation**—formal classroom visit that lasts 15-20 minutes or more and provides written feedback to teachers
- **Walk-through**—informal classroom visit that lasts no more than 15 minutes; feedback can be provided to teachers but can also be compiled into site or departmental statistics
Semantics—Definitions to Focus the Discussion

Teacher Evaluation

- Student Achievement Data
- Observation
- Other Measures
School Action: Focus on the How not just the What

There really is no secret about **what it takes to turn a school around.**

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The challenge is in **how to implement.**
The What: Research-based Continuous Improvement

Curriculum
- Program of studies with concentration
- Align academics to college-ready core
- Career/technical studies
- Work-based learning

Instruction
- Students actively engaged
- Literacy across the curriculum
- Engaging mathematics and science instruction
- Integrating academics into CT instruction

Culture
- Effort
- Functional mission
- High expectations
- Data for continuous improvement
- Teachers working together

Support
- Purpose
- Extra help
- Guidance
- Importance of school

Process Measures for Research-based Indicators
The landscape of American middle grades and high schools is littered with add-on projects and purchased programs that fail to make a lasting impression on student achievement because they leave in place old beliefs based on the idea that most students cannot learn at high levels; such programs encourage schools to get better at implementing old practices designed around their old beliefs.
Our Focus Today

Using Observations and Walk-Throughs to Change the Face of Instruction
The How: Systems of Support for Deliberate Interactions that Lead to Implementation
The Need for Leadership

There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around in the absence of intervention by talented leaders. While other factors contribute to such turnarounds, leadership is the catalyst.

Kenneth Leithwood

How Leadership Influences Student Learning
The How: Top Down

- Distributed Leadership is a must, however...
- Leaders must message:
  - Vision: where we are going?
  - Urgency balanced with persistence. “We just can’t go on like this anymore.”
  - This is what we do well; these are our challenges; and this is what we are doing to address our challenges.
  - Mission: this is why we are here. (STUDENT FOCUS! and TEACHING AND LEARNING FOCUS!).
  - Data with all stakeholders, small victories
Developing a Language About Teaching and Learning

- Expectations must be identified by and within the community itself.

- One challenge is the lack of organizing structures or language to talk about major teaching and learning ideas.

- Quick Question: How would your teachers define rigor and engagement?
Structures → Culture

Leaders influence culture through the design and operation of structures (routines, procedures, processes) that are aligned with core beliefs. These structures are:

- **Concrete**.
- **Observable** (can be documented and described).
- **Supported by artifacts** (tangible evidence of the operation of structures).
Clusters of Effective Leadership Practices

Focus

Efficacy

Monitoring
Why Establish Focus?

As a table team:

1. Read pages 26 and 27 of *The Essential Cluster of Leadership Practices* about Focus

2. Determine three actions that principals can take to establish Focus for their teachers
More than a check-list—

Using observations to improve quality instruction and promote student success
The Process

Common Definitions are Established
- Administrators/Leaders
- All Faculty

Priorities for Teaching Are Communicated
- Via PD
- Within Observation Forms

Observation Feedback is Provided
- Individually
- Collectively Via Statistics
The Observation Cycle

- Expectations are Clarified
- Walk-Through Observation with Feedback (Formative)
- Formal Observation with Feedback (Formative and Summative)
- Each Semester
- Walk-Through with Feedback (Formative)
- Formal Observation with Feedback (Formative and Summative)

Each Semester

- Formal Observation with Feedback (Formative and Summative)
- Walk-Through Observation with Feedback (Formative)
Supervision of Instruction and Planning

- Supervision must be part of your normal routine.
- Supervision cannot be something you get to when the opportunity presents itself.
## Organizing Time for Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
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</table>
Table Activity

- Complete the activity as a table team
- Read the provided article, *What’s A Principal To Do? When You Can’t Do It All, What Are the Highest-Leverage Activities?*
- Create a similarities and differences chart for the main ideas found within the article and the key points from our morning conversation
Three Broad Observation Inspection Areas

- Artifacts
- Student Behavior
- Teacher Behavior
First Artifact: Lesson Plans

Elbow partner discussion:

How do you currently review lesson plans?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st Day</td>
<td>Labor Day</td>
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<td>17th</td>
<td>Parent/Teacher Conf</td>
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<td>22nd</td>
<td>Instructional Prep</td>
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<tr>
<td>23rd</td>
<td>Secondary Parent/Teacher Conf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24th</td>
<td>Secondary Instructional Prep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27th</td>
<td>4-5th Day</td>
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<td>29th</td>
<td>Fall Break</td>
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<td>1st wk grade period</td>
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<tr>
<td>15th</td>
<td>4th wk Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th</td>
<td>End of wk grade period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Holiday</td>
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<td>Veteran's Day</td>
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<td>8th</td>
<td>End of School</td>
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<td>15th-16th</td>
<td>1st-2nd Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>17th</td>
<td>3rd-4th wk grade period</td>
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<tr>
<td>13th</td>
<td>Prep/Prof Dev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20th</td>
<td>Winter Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27th</td>
<td>Winter Break</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*BYS*:

BY THE DOOR
Review Lesson Plans in the Classroom

Folder inside the classroom door should include:

- Daily Lesson Cycle (One day of instructional planning that you can observe being delivered)
- Standards-Based Units (Series of lessons linked into a Unit of Study)
- Curriculum Pacing (Calendar on outside of folder)
Lesson Planning

- Units of study are developed.
- How is as important as what.
- A variety of instructional delivery modes are incorporated into teaching and learning.
  - modeling, demonstrations, small-group instruction, whole group instruction, one-on-one instruction, etc.
- Assessment for learning.
- Instructional time is maximized, and there is a block of time for uninterrupted reading/writing.
What Artifacts Should you See?

- **Board at the front of the room should display:**
  - Standard or Essential Question (not just an agenda)
  - Agenda
  - Do Now Activity (Literacy)

- **Displayed Around Classroom:**
  - Rubrics
  - Student Work (with teacher commentary)
**Agenda**

1. Concept Map
2. Cornell Notes

**PERIODS**

1 and 5
The Student will:

1. Data table
2. Venn diagram
3. Summary

**PERIODS**

2 and 3
The Student will:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Bell**

**Venn**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>Working with Polynomials</td>
<td>Unit 1 Test Polynomials</td>
<td>MAPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>ACE Systems</td>
<td>Unit 1 Test Systems</td>
<td>MAPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LESSON AGENDA**

1. Bell Ringer
2. Taken for "Granite"
3. Game Review Accuracy Skills
4. Rock Cycle assignment

*Note: Some sentences of Mineral bundling.*
Bell Ringer

- Reduce Non Productive Student Time
- Establish Routine
- Department Address of Numeracy and Literacy
Use the Distributive property to solve.

\[3(x + 5) = 45\]

\[7(x - 4) = 7\]

\[6(2x + 6) = 72\]
You Should See Artifacts

Helping Students Understand Expectations.
The Carbon Cycle

Carbon in atmosphere

Plants are eaten by animals

Plants die

Decomposed

Animal

Animal has an irregular shape
Text Rich Environment

- Walls that Teach
  - ACE
  - Cornell Notes
  - Word Walls
  - Student Artifacts
  - Rubrics
Clusters of Effective Leadership Practices

Focus

Efficacy

Monitoring
Components of Monitoring

As a table team:

1. Read pages 28 through 30 from *The Essential Cluster of Leadership Practices*

2. Identify three key points that the author makes about monitoring
Student Behavior: What Should you See Students Doing?

- Students may be grouped by interest, needs, learning styles heterogeneously, etc.
- Students are working in a variety of settings (pairs, groups, and independently).
- Students have a clear understanding of the standards.
- The classroom is arranged to support a variety of delivery modes.
What Should You See Students Doing?

- Collaborating with other students
- Regularly asking questions and acting as decision makers
- Making connections to other learning
- Understanding their personal responsibility to meet the standards
  - the rewards of meeting standards
  - the extra work necessary should they need it
- Accurately self-assessing their work
- Maintaining portfolios of their work
- Receiving additional expert instruction when they don’t meet a standard
Four Types of Student Engagement

1. Intellectual
2. Emotional
3. Behavioral
4. Social

Source: Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students’ Motivation to Learn. National Research Council, Institute of Medicine of the National Academies
Four Types of Engagement

1. *Intellectual* engagement
   - engaging in active problem solving, logic, and meta-cognitive strategies

2. *Emotional* engagement
   - interest, enjoyment, and choice

3. *Behavioral* engagement
   - behaviors, habits and rituals

4. *Social* engagement
   - attachment to school and community
Intellectual Engagement Survey Items

- Students have used knowledge and skills from different courses to complete assignments weekly.
- They have used math in other classes than mathematics weekly.
- They have used computer skills or programs weekly.
- They have used the internet to retrieve information for a project or report weekly.
- Their teachers often clearly indicated the amount and quality of work necessary to earn a grade of A or B at the beginning of a project or unit.
- Most of their teachers often encourage them to do well in school.
Intellectual Engagement
Survey Items

- They read an assigned book outside of English class and demonstrated understanding of the significance of the main ideas at least monthly.
- They analyzed works of literature in English class at least monthly.
- They used graphs, charts and diagrams to interpret and explain scientific phenomena at least monthly.
- They used formulas and equations to solve questions in science at least monthly.
- They usually spent one or more hours on homework each day.
Intellectual Engagement

Source: HSTW Assessment, 2008
Intellectual Engagement

- What does engaging instruction look like?
- What do students enjoy?
- What gets students intellectually engaged?
Instruction that Promotes Intellectual Engagement

- Varied
- Authentic, meaningful tasks
  - connected to students’ culture, life out of school
- Involves active participation & collaboration
  - experimentation, simulation, debate, role playing
- Intellectually challenging
  - investigation, problem asking and solving
  - “academic press”
- Multiple resources
  - including native language
  - technology
Emotional Engagement Survey Items

- The teachers know their subject and make it interesting and useful often.
- Their teachers have set high standards and are often willing to help students meet them.
- Their science teachers often showed them how scientific concepts are used to solve problems in real-life situations.
- Someone in the student’s family often emphasizes the importance of education for them to be successful.
- Students strongly agree that the courses they have taken in high school have successfully prepared them for a career or further education.
**Emotional Engagement**

Source: *HSTW* Assessment, 2008
Behavioral Engagement Survey Items

- They **often** worked hard to meet high standards on assignments.
- They **never or seldom** fail to complete or turn in their assignments.
- They have **often** had to develop and analyze tables, charts and graphs in their school work.
- They **often** arrive to class on time.
- They **often** know when projects are due.
- They **often** keep their notes and handouts for each class separate.
- They believe it is **very important** to attend all of their classes.
Behavioral Engagement Survey Items

- They believe it is very important to have grades that are good enough to get them accepted into college.
- They believe it is very important to take a lot of college-preparatory classes.
- They believe it is very important to graduate from high school.
- They believe it is very important to continue their education beyond high school.
- They strongly agree that with hard work, they can understand the material being taught in their classes.
Behavioral Engagement

Source: HSTW Assessment, 2008
Social Engagement Survey Items

- Teachers have encouraged students to help each other and to learn from each other often.
- They have been part of a team or small group in class often.
- They discussed or debated with other students about what they read in English or language arts classes at least monthly.
- They worked with other students in their class on a challenging science assignment at least monthly.
- They took a leadership role when working in a team often.
- They participated in after-school activities (e.g., sports, bands, clubs, community service, etc.) often.
Social Engagement

Source: HSTW Assessment, 2008
What Should You See Teachers Doing?

- **Warm Up/ Review**
- **Mini-Lesson, Opening, Setting the Stage**
  - Opening with the Standards/Identifying the Lesson’s Purpose with Rigorous Essential Questions
- **Work Period, Activity Period**
- **Closing, Summary Period**
  - Answering the essential question to scaffold students’ knowledge base to the “Big Idea” or unit focus.
You Should See Teachers
Helping Students Make Connections

Learning often occurs only when students process new information or knowledge in such a way that it makes sense in their frame of reference.
Learning in Context

Involves linking new information to students’ familiar frame of reference

• Hands-on activities combined with teacher support to allow students to discover new understandings
• Application of new knowledge to real world situations
• Working in collaborative groups to solve problems
• Transfer understanding to new situations and problems
Assignment

Spell the word FACE in code.
SREB

Southern Regional Education Board

Cain and Cain. *Making Connections*  
## Marzano’s Effective Strategies

### Instructional Strategies that Affect Student Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
<th>Achievement Gain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying similarities and differences</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summarizing and note taking</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>Reinforcing effort and providing recognition</td>
<td>.80</td>
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<td>Homework and practice</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>Nonlinguistic representations</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperative learning</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting objectives and providing feedback</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating &amp; testing hypotheses</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions, cues, and advance organizers</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Should You see Teachers Doing?

- Basic daily cycle and behavioral student engagement practices
  - Have we established rituals and routines?
  - Do we post daily and unit essential questions?
  - Do we incorporate acceleration strategies?
  - Do we make use of learning organizers?
  - Do we utilize introduction strategies?
  - Do we include summarizing activities as part of our daily lessons?
**Teacher Action:** Connect real-world learning opportunities and students’ interests to rigorous courses.

- Students at most-improved middle grades schools make greater use of technology, hands-on learning and career exploratory opportunities.

- Students at high-graduation and high-performing high schools experience more hands-on learning in academic classes, use academics in CT classes and complete a ready college-prep core with a career/technical concentration.
Teacher Action: Embed reading and writing standards and strategies into all courses to advance reading and academic achievement in middle and high school.

- Reading to learn is dependent upon mastering the language of the discipline.

- Deeper subject matter understanding is dependent upon an ability to comprehend, paraphrase and analyze content both orally and in writing.
What Should You See Teachers Doing?

- Finally, this is the **most important action** teachers can take.

- Relentless academic press for all students
  - What is the **purpose** of a grade?
  - What is the **purpose** for assessment?
Teacher Action: *Create a Culture Where ‘Failure is Not an Option.’*

- Formative assessment
- Measuring mastery
- Reteaching
- Extra help
- Extra time
- Differentiated instruction
- Response to intervention

*Are all just a new language to restate the most fundamental aspects of teaching.*
Teacher Action: *Create a Culture Where ‘Failure is Not an Option.’*

- “You are going to do this over and over until you get it right!”
- “I believe in you as a student.”
- “I believe in me as a teacher.”
- “I will not baby sit you or administer assessments over and over and tell someone you are not ready; I will **TEACH you, and you WILL** learn in my classroom.”
Clusters of Effective Leadership Practices

Focus

Efficacy

Monitoring
Efficacy

- Silently read pages 30-32 about efficacy
- With an elbow partner, identify actions that will enhance efficacy on your campus
HOMEWORK

Your Current Status

1. Share what you have learned today with your administrative team

2. Complete 12-24 walkthroughs and document the following
   a. Classroom Artifacts
   b. Student Behaviors
   c. Teacher Behaviors
### Keep it Simple

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher:</th>
<th>Date/Time:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Classroom Artifacts:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student Behavior:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Behavior:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So you observed classes, now what?
Day 2—Use of Observation Data

- Should be collected and communicated back to staff (whole faculty or departmentally)
- Can communicate where the school is in addressing priorities
- Should be used as the foundation for Professional Development
- Can be used to address collective instructional deficiencies before Growth Plans are implemented
Session Objectives

Participants will:

- Gain a better understanding of strategies and structures to enhance instructional leadership.
- Determine how to prioritize and organize daily schedules to address instructional expectations.
- Identify and incorporate high yield administrative actions that focus school improvement efforts and enhance learning opportunities for students.
- Review three essential components for classroom observations.
THANK YOU

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