

## **Assessing the Instructional Management Behavior of Principals by Philip Hallinger and Joseph Murphy (1985)**

Part 3 of 3

### Dimensions of Instructional Management

- 1 Defines the Mission
  - a. Framing school goals
  - b. Communicating school goals
- 2 Manages Instructional Program
  - a. Supervising and evaluating instruction
  - b. Coordinating curriculum
  - c. Monitoring student progress
- 3 Promotes School Climate
  - a. Protecting instructional time
  - b. Promoting professional development
  - c. Maintaining high visibility
  - d. Providing incentives for teachers
  - e. Enforcing academic standards
  - f. Providing incentives for students

In this last part of the review, we look at School Climate, very timely considering the Climate Survey is this year.

According to Hallinger & Murphy

#### **Promoting a positive school learning climate**

**School learning climate refers to the norms and attitudes of the staff and students that influence learning in the school. This dimension consists of primarily indirect, though important, activities. The principal communicates expectations for students and teachers through the policies and practices promulgated by the school. Principals can influence student and teacher attitudes through the creation of a reward structure that reinforces academic achievement and productive effort; through clear, explicit standards embodying what the school expects from students; through the careful use of school time; and through the selection and implementation of high-quality staff development programs.**

#### **Protecting instructional time.**

**Research conducted during the late 1970s and 1980s indicates the substantial effects of time on student learning. In particular, the work of Jane Stallings and others on allocated learning time calls attention to the importance of providing teachers with blocks of uninterrupted instructional time. Teachers' classroom management and instructional skills are not used optimally if instruction is frequently interrupted by announcements, tardy students, and requests from the office. The principal can control this area of activity through the development and enforcement of schoolwide policies. Principals who successfully implement policies that limit interruptions of classroom learning time can increase allocated learning time and, potentially, student achievement.**

### **Promoting professional development.**

Principals have several ways of supporting teachers' efforts to improve instruction. They can inform teachers of opportunities for staff development and lead in-service training activities. They can ensure that staff development activities are closely linked to school goals and that participation is either schoolwide or centered on natural groupings (e.g., primary or upper elementary grades). This function also involves helping teachers integrate skills learned during staff development programs and assisting in classroom implementation.

### **Maintaining high visibility.**

Although a significant portion of their time is taken up by mandatory meetings and functions, principals can set priorities for how the remaining time is to be spent. Visibility on the campus and in classrooms increases interactions between the principal and students as well as with teachers. Informal interaction of these types provides the principal with more information on the needs of students and teachers. It also affords the principal opportunities to communicate the priorities of the school. This can have positive effects on students' and teachers' attitudes and behaviours.

### **Providing incentives for teachers.**

An important part of the principal's role in creating a positive learning climate involves setting up a work structure that rewards and recognizes teachers for their efforts. Principals have few discretionary rewards to use with teachers. The single salary schedule and the tenure system severely limit principals' ability to motivate teachers. However, research has begun to show that money is not the only way to reward high levels of performance. In one study, money was only slightly more effective than praise as an incentive. This finding has been substantiated in different types of organizations. Other forms of reward available to principals include privately expressed praise, public recognition, and formal honors and awards.

### **Developing and enforcing academic standards.**

Clearly defined, high standards reinforce the high expectations necessary for improving student learning. One study that compares successful and less successful schools found that academically successful schools tended to require mastery of a defined set of skills prior to entry into the following grade. High standards are also promoted when increasing numbers of students are expected to master basic skills.

### **Providing incentives for learning.**

It is possible to create a school learning climate in which students value academic achievement by frequently rewarding and recognizing student academic achievement and improvement. In low-income schools, students need frequent, tangible rewards. The rewards need not be fancy or expensive; recognition before teachers and peers is the key. Students should have opportunities to be recognized for their achievement both within the classroom and before the school as a whole. The principal is a key actor in linking classrooms and school reward systems, ensuring that they are mutually supportive. These job functions constitute the conceptual definitions for the principal variables examined in this study. These definitions were used to help generate the specific policies, practices, and behaviors that form the questionnaire used to collect data on principal behavior.

Not all of the above will apply perhaps in our schools. Still there is much to glean.

Protecting instructional time has become important to us. I doubt any of us use the public-address system indiscriminately to get someone. A student sent from class to class to get some names for some competition is a practice of my distant past. But sometimes in the classroom, teachers may not have the skill to get the class down to work to fully reap the benefits of a full thirty to thirty five minute lesson period.

Promoting professional development is almost a given with the 100 training hours teachers are given. But don't always go for an outside vendor. Try training your teachers yourself some of the time. Because you know where you want the school to go and you know the teachers' foibles far better than any outsider, you'll probably be a lot more effective than someone not from the school (sometimes, not even from education!). For me, I found my communication of school goals much more under control when teachers were not distracted by an outside trainer's style.

Maintaining high visibility had an interesting Hokkien take in the 1980s. Now retired principal Johnny Lau called it KLKK – kia lai kia ke – walking here and there, apparently aimlessly, but really to get a feel of the school and for the school to get a feel of you. I know you are busy at meetings but in the mornings when teachers have to be teaching anyway and not available for meetings, walking around will help you maintain visibility.

Providing incentives for teachers – I was surprised how much teachers wanted to know how they were doing, class-wise, department-wise and career-wise, and the performance bonus is too blunt an instrument to quell all their anxieties. I had an invaluable vice principal who kept his ear to the ground, alerting me now and then that so-and-so was restless or disappointed or disillusioned, and then we would take some action before that festered into a negative swell of feeling against the school.

Academic standards have already been developed through our centralised system so it might appear there is nothing for us to do here. But there is. You know there is a gap between the pass criteria and what is needed to achieve at the next stage. For example, in secondary school, the criterion is such that a student could actually fail mathematics all the way and still be promoted. But he will not qualify for both the polytechnic and the junior college without mathematics. Similarly, a student needs to pass only 3 subjects to be promoted from Sec 3 to Sec 4 yet at O levels, merely passing even all 5 subjects will not get him into the polytechnic. Enforcing academic standards could mean requiring such borderline students to undertake remediation and perhaps even a supplementary exam to bring them up to mark.

Providing incentives for learning cannot mean just book prizes. There will be the same few winners and the majority are left un-incentivised. Kudos to our many dedicated teachers who think of different ways to recognise progress especially when the progress is not stellar. For me, the most telling sentence was this **“In low-income schools, students need frequent, tangible rewards”**. We may not have low-income schools but we definitely

have low-income students in our classes and distressingly with more at the lower achieving end of each level. With such students, every little progress needs to be encouraged because there may be so much going against them in the home circumstances and even with the friends they have.