

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

Hallinger & Murphy embarked on a study reported in 1985 to investigate what principals do to manage curriculum and instruction. The study was small, just 10 elementary school principals.

However you might find their table of dimensions in instructional management useful though certainly not new.

TABLE 1. Dimensions of Instructional Management		
Defines the Mission	Manages Instructional Program	Promotes School Climate
Framing school goals Communicating school goals	Supervising and evaluating instruction Coordinating curriculum Monitoring student progress	Protecting instructional time Promoting professional development Maintaining high visibility Providing incentives for teachers Enforcing academic standards Providing incentives for students

In this Part 1 of a 3-part review, I will look first at Defining the School Mission.

According to Hallinger & Murphy

“Defining the school mission

An important dimension of the principal's role as instructional manager is to define and communicate a mission or purpose for the school. Instructional leaders are often said to have a ‘vision’ of what the school should be trying to accomplish. Defining a school mission involves communicating this vision to the staff and students in such a way that a sense of shared purpose exists, linking together the various activities that take place in classrooms throughout the school. The principal's role in defining the mission involves framing schoolwide goals and communicating these goals in a persistent fashion to the entire school community.

Framing school goals.

This function refers to a principal's role in determining the areas in which school staff will focus their attention and resources during a given school year. Instructionally effective schools often have clearly defined goals that focus on student achievement. The emphasis is on fewer goals around which staff energy and other school resources can be mobilized. A few coordinated objectives, each with a manageable scope, appear to work best. The goals should incorporate data on past and current student performance and include staff responsibilities

for achieving the goals. Staff and parent input during the development of the school's goals seems important. Performance goals should be expressed in measurable terms.

Communicating school goals.

This function is concerned with the ways in which the principal communicates the school's important goals to teachers, parents, and students. Principals can ensure that the importance of school goals is understood by discussing and reviewing them with staff periodically during the school year, especially in the context of instructional, curricular, and budgetary decisions. Both formal communication (e.g. goal statements, staff bulletins, articles in the principal or site-council newsletter, curricular and staff meetings, parent and teacher conferences, school handbook, assemblies) and informal interaction (e.g. conversations with staff) can be used to communicate the school's mission.”

I believe our biggest challenge as school leaders is not in our having the vision. It is in communicating this vision and purpose in such a way that both students and teachers share the same direction. As you probably have guessed, staff may know the words of the vision statement but they may not actually link it to what they do. Some can hardly remember the title of each strategic thrust. Getting staff to own the vision as much as you do is something we would all wish to achieve. Fresh from your mid-year SEM stock-take, I trust some of the above will resonate with you.

A tip : Keep your statements of vision, mission and strategic goal short. Above all, avoid motherhood statements that encompass everything education should be to all people. No one can remember something that is longer than 7 words, according to practitioners of brain-based learning.