

What School Principals Need to Know about Curriculum & Instruction

Superintendents and local school boards no longer can be satisfied with principals who simply place teachers in the classroom, provide textbooks, and get students to attend school. Future school leaders must have in-depth knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and student achievement.



1

Curriculum & Instruction

- **The “Big Ideas” of the Core Curriculum:** Are students being taught the body of knowledge, the understandings, and the skills that they are expected to learn?
- **State and National Standards:** Help teachers identify the things that students should learn in greater depth.
- **The Difference Between a Regular Course and a College-Preparatory/Honors Course:** Students in college-prep courses are expected to do more reading and produce higher-quality work.



- **Advancing Essential Literacy Skills:** Recognize whether teachers are advancing reading, writing, and speaking skills in students.
- **Assessment:**
 1. Are teachers’ exams and assessment guides appropriate to measure high school and middle-grades-level work?
 2. Lead teams of teachers who are working together to develop grading guides and common exams.

Instructional Practices

2

- **A Working Knowledge of Research-Based, Student-Centered Instruction:** Socratic method, project-based learning, cooperative learning, research studies, etc.
- **Are Teachers Using Instructional Strategies Effectively?**
- **How to Help Teachers Learn New Instructional Methods,** gauge the amount of time it will take for teachers to master new techniques, and “network” teachers as they implement new approaches.
- **The Amount of Time for Teachers to Plan Effectively.**
- **Identify Teachers Who Are Doing the Best Job of Raising Student Achievement:** Exemplary teachers can deliver “model” lessons and invite other teachers to observe instruction in the classroom.
- **The School and Classroom Conditions That Contribute to Higher Expectations** (“culture,” etc.).



3

Organizing a School for Greater Student Learning

- **How to Create Small “Learning Communities”:** Build an organizational structure allowing teams of teachers to develop ways to make learning more meaningful to more students.
- **How to Create an Organizational Structure That Promotes Higher Achievement,** with teams of teachers, team leaders, and principals all focusing on curriculum, instruction, and student learning.



Supporting Teachers with Continuous Opportunities for Growth & Development

4

- **How to Provide Opportunities for Teachers to Strengthen Their Subject-Matter Knowledge** while learning new research-based, student-centered instructional strategies.
- **How to Help Teachers Change Their Beliefs about Whether Students Can Learn Advanced Materials:** Have them talk with employers about workplace requirements, interview former students who had to take remedial courses at colleges and universities, and visit schools that teach advanced materials to all students.
- **How to Make It Possible for Teachers to Learn New Instructional Strategies** designed to involve students in learning once the decision is made to teach all students at a higher level.
- **How to Assign the “Best” Teachers as Mentors** and schedule a series of “learning experiences” for new teachers.
- **How to Make Follow-Up an Integral Part of Staff Development.**



5

Balancing Ongoing School Improvement with the Demands of Noninstructional Issues & Emergencies

- **How to Focus the Staff on the Important Things:** teaching challenging content, engaging students in learning, and constantly seeking ways to raise achievement.
- **How to Use Data to Promote Higher Standards** and the viewpoint that “effort matters.”
- **How to Delegate Effectively and to Involve School Teams** in an overall effort to change what is taught, how it is taught, and what is expected of students.
- **What Is Needed Now and What Will Be Needed in the Future** to make continuous improvement—be the “chief learners” and the models for higher performance.



Source: Gene Bottoms, “What School Principals Need to Know about Curriculum and Instruction” Southern Regional Education Board, 2001. <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/11627/11627.pdf>

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