

Supervision & Evaluation 2 Reflective Journal- FINAL Outcome

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One thing I have always known is that change is constant and an inevitable part of any ongoing activity. While speaking to a member of my cohort the other day she revealed that several of the administrators who had mentored her commented that she was ‘lucky’ to be able to see how other districts did things.” The administrator went on to remark that so many of the current administrators have been in the district so long that they keep doing things virtually the same way because they haven’t had that professional development. SO when considering how to proceed with the supervision and evaluation of support staff, it is clear that some new approaches can be gleaned from other districts. The attributes of an authentic school community as they related to engagement with the larger community still remain Professional Learning, Moral Principles, Inquiry and Democracy.” (Glickman, Gordan & Gordan, 2013)

Support staff pose an interesting dilemma for an already burdened administrator. Many time there is not an appropriate and consistently used tool to observe and evaluate paraeducators, social workers, custodians, nurses and the like. All to often, administrators have no way of really knowing they are doing their job correctly unless some unfortunate mishap occurs. In our school, I was informed by a roomful of instructional aides that they used to be evaluated, but not this year. When asked why, they were unsure. Fortunately these ladies were doing a terrific job and were all tenured, however that still doesn’t excuse the lack of oversight.

Tools that I would use would revolve around simple walkthroughs and communicate within a 24 hours period to them about what I witnessed. This is not unlike the Marshall format of evaluation used in one of the districts I shadowed. The Marshall evaluation model recommends that the administrator not take anything writing or recording tools into the room while doing the observation. They are required to remember what they saw and then record it later upon returning to their office. (I witnessed an administrator doing this in Old Tappan.)

The meeting with the support staff member allows time to flush out the walkthrough observation from their perspective. This allows for the stakeholders to all have a voice.

My leadership platform rests on the reality that is important to help people become the best they can be provided they have a desire to improve. Both last year and this year as well, a new teacher in my building came to me asking me for guidance in the area of classroom management. I provided her my thoughts and gave her examples of how what I was suggesting to her had worked for me. I even provided a book for her to peruse about how the brains of students coming from poverty work. She took it, returned and said it was useful. That same teacher has found herself receiving a Non-Renewal letter last week. The reason? She wasn't really receptive to the suggestions at all and seemed to be resigned to think of the students in her care as incapable. She had not wanted to extend herself to reach where they were.

When educators and support staff are willing to accept and utilize professional development (which all of us need so we do not get stuck in a rut), the improvements can indeed be great and noticeable.

For tenured professional educators, there is even a very cool project under foot in Old Tappan, where using the Marshall Evaluation Model and Self-Directed Growth Plan, tenured staff are required to do formal action research on a topic of their own choosing for the purpose of advancing their own professional development. I love this idea. There is a way to incorporate this into support staff evaluation as well because it keeps everyone fresh and up on their game. (see below)

OLD TAPPAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SELF-DIRECTED GROWTH PLAN (SDGP) PROPOSAL

Name: _____

SDGP Focus/Central Question:

Rationale:

Timeline: _____

Baseline Data: _____

Evidence to be Considered:

Adapted from The Harrington Park School District

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This information from the Old Tappan district was gathered during a shadowing experience for the Leaders as Learners program.

My role as an educational leader working with support staff is really no different from the educators and it focused on helping everyone be the best they can be in the position. Providing a nurturing environment with plenty of feedback is a must especially for the support staff members. Also including them in everything and allowing them to take on roles of leadership in the school community is crucial to their growth.

Our video presentations were an outstanding addition to the process because it allowed us to gather information from a variety of sources and make sure that as many people were included in the process as possible. Since my program evaluation focused on “Commonlit” a program for 3rd through 12th graders it really gave me an opportunity to reach out to educators and support staff in 6th grades. I chose to focus only on three grade levels – the middle school. The Special

Education teacher who spoke in my video, though not classified as support staff, did give a very good assessment of the program from a three grade level perspective. She works with three different teachers (6th, 7th & 8th).

The key ideas and concepts which I believe are important as they relate to supervision and evaluation of support staff are as follows:

1. Constant democracy when dealing with evaluating support staff
2. Provide opportunities for growth, e.g., sturdy and relevant professional development
3. Create an internal cohort of team members to provide support to each other. In other words, make sure no one is floundering alone unable to reasonably make improvements as support staff.
4. Do Marshall like walkthroughs keeping my finger on the pulse and heartbeat of the school community. Add parent response to intervention techniques so that their voices might be heard.
5. Share Share Share information and tools in frequent and regular PLC's. Develop a VAM for the paraprofessionals to exchange ideas about things that have worked for them
6. Constant communication and reassessment is key.
7. When someone doesn't fit realize that and make the decision to find them unfit for the job. This of course , after providing any professional development to address the problem.

Finally, as reflected in my leadership platform, here is my mantra. In his article, “Out-of-the-Box Leadership,” Paul D. Houston (2015) delves into some alternate ways of leading as we writes:

Bridges take us from what we know to what we don't know – from place that is familiar and safe to someplace that may be less safe....And yet that is exactly the role of education and leadership. The role of an educational leader is to build a bridge and lead people across it, because it is only by crossing that bridge that people can find a new place to stand. (Houston & Blankstein)

We must get out of our old way of thinking and explore new possibilities to make the change process be a win-win for all involved. Get out of your backyard and see how the other half lives and they likewise. The two administrator I met with in suburban districts are very much interested in doing a “teacher swap” to allow teachers and support staff to see other ways to do things- this would be a part of the professional development. Resiliency is a large part of the growth and change process.

References

- Glickman, C. D., Gordon, S. P., & Ross-Gordon, J. M. (2013). *Supervision and instructional leadership: A developmental approach (3rd Edition)*. Boston, Mass: Allyn and Bacon.
- Houston, P.D., (2016). *Out of the box thinking*. Retrieved from:
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