



## The Importance of Principals Having an Active Role in Teaching and Learning

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Principals have many roles and responsibilities in their schools. One of those roles must be academic instruction. School leadership is not for everyone. Teachers who desire to climb the ladder to become a school leader to escape teaching and learning should not be administrators. Strong administrators need to have a solid understanding of instruction and how to grow the teaching capability of the teachers they supervise.

To stay on top of teaching and learning, administrators need to be in the classroom observing what happens. This goes beyond formal observation times. If the only time a principal sees what is happening in a classroom is during an observation, the principal might not get a full understanding of teaching and learning. Some teachers can put on a good show when they are being observed, but it is hard to fake it or minimally teach on a day-to-day basis. A principal should be informally popping into classes each week. Teachers and students need to know that the principal could walk in at any time. This helps hold teachers accountable to doing their jobs, and it also sends the message that the principal actually cares about students learning in their classrooms.

The principal should also participate in professional development. Many schools have used the professional learning communities model that became widely shared in the late 1990s. Apparently, some principals believe they have arrived at excellence and do not need to attend PLCs. Not only should the principal attend, but they should also be actively participating. Physical presence while doing other tasks sends the message to teachers that the information being covered is not important. When the principal is participating it shows the principal wants to help students achieve academically.

The work does not stop at being actively engaged in PLCs. The principal also needs to make sure that the strategies are being implemented in the classroom. This helps give principals a target when they are observing classrooms and allows them to identify areas of support. Then, the principal should provide coaching to teachers who need it. Some schools do have academic coaches, so this task could be delegated. However, the principal should not be clueless about what the coach is doing.

The principal should make sure teachers are using formative assessments to gather data to know the areas of the curriculum that need reteaching. The principal should support the teachers in having the students involved in knowing what their data is. Students should be setting goals and reflecting upon their learning. If there is not an administrator ensuring this is the case, it might not happen.

Being a principal is a huge responsibility. That responsibility must include being directly involved in teaching and learning.