



Instructional Leadership: Responsibility for Results

Get to Great identifies six key attributes of results leadership: energy, bias toward action, results focus, personal responsibility, emphasis on teamwork, and skill in teaching and learning. Leaders who use these attributes to lift student achievement send the message and model the behavior that improved student learning and performance is the first priority. They focus time, energy, and resources to gain greater results. They are instructional leaders.

Here are some specific ways that leaders deepen student learning and raise achievement.

Analyze the data: Leaders pay close attention to all available data regarding how well students are learning. They determine the key areas of weakness in student performance and identify the points of leverage for improvement. By making the data understandable and accessible to teachers, they help teachers to acquire, analyze, and apply the data themselves to develop and track the most effective strategies for improvement.

Coach leaders and teams: Organizing teams of teachers who are responsible for the achievement of the same groups of students, such as grade levels or departments, enables colleagues to share best thinking and best instructional approaches. Each teacher team needs an identified leader to facilitate data analysis and the design and adjustment of classroom strategies. Instructional leaders, both principals and central office administrators, concentrate on coaching these teacher leaders and team members to become results experts themselves.

Spend time in the classrooms: The primary change that administrators cite when asked about becoming more effective instructional leaders is spending more time in the classrooms. But just being there is not enough. It is important to add value with each classroom visit, however brief, adding insight about a particular student, suggesting a new approach to instruction, offering a compliment to a committed teacher.

Approach observation and evaluation differently: So many observation reports are long on narrative and short on analysis and recommendations. Post observation and evaluation conference often fail to address necessary improvement. Using classroom observation and student performance data to directly address improvement where needed, is essential and can be done in a supportive way.

Track results and communicate openly: A key to better results is frequent feedback about performance for both students and teachers. What do the data show? What's working and what isn't? What are the most promising next steps for improvement?

Instructional leaders track results constantly through common local assignments, formal quarterly checkpoints, and school scorecards. They communicate the data openly to teachers, parents, and the community. Non punitive accountability is an important component of improvement. To promote learning across teams, leaders arrange for teacher teams to present and discuss their work at every opportunity, in department meetings, during conference days, and at board of education meetings.

See the big picture: As teacher teams pursue improved results, the data, both good and bad, will reveal the need for changes at the school and district level: closer curriculum alignment, additional professional development, changes in program and schedule, stronger and earlier intervention. Instructional leaders' school-wide or district-wide vantage point enables them to see the big picture and make adjustments in the overall improvement strategy.

Taking personal responsibility for the drive to greater results is the key to instructional leadership.