THE BEST OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP FOR ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

Untapped Resources: Assistant Principals as Instructional Leaders
Selma K. Bartholomew, Genis Melendez-Delaney, Awilda Orta, and Sharon White | May 2005
The Math Collaborative Project examined the process of developing and implementing programs designed to help assistant principals network and strengthen their instructional leadership capacity in mathematics within an urban setting. With their enthusiasm for change in the mathematics culture, assistant principals can help teachers come to believe that they are valued, supported, and able to make mathematics less isolating for students.

Building Blocks for the New Principal
Leon Beckerman | January 2005
New principals adapt to their positions more quickly and effectively if they learn to read the school climate, communicate well, and properly manage time. By learning about problem areas and receiving suggestions on how to deal with them, new principals can acquire leadership skills and deploy them in real life.

Seize the Day
Tim Berkey | February 2008
Studies indicate that principals are buried in daily problems and expectations and have little time to improve what goes on in classrooms. But by taking a close look at how their time is spent each day and making adjustments to move away from managerial tasks toward strategy, principals can have a greater impact on teaching and learning.

The 10 Don’ts of Successful School Leadership
Allan Bonilla | March 2006
After reflecting on his role as a school leader and analyzing his observations of other administrators as well as feedback from staff and faculty members, a veteran middle school principal shares his insights into the problems that prevent so many administrators from creating truly successful schools.

Creating a Leadership Style
Charles A. Bonnici | January 2011
Positive school outcomes often depend on the ambience of a school, which is a direct result of the leadership style of its principal and assistant principals. But most school leaders lead intuitively and few analyze their strategies and styles to identify the values they lead by. This article presents 14 principles of school leadership that will help school leaders set a positive tone for their schools.

Grade-A Perfect
Joseph Brown | October 2004
Despite the wealth of information available, there is no consensus on best practices for grading. In this article, the author identifies four key philosophical questions that should guide the development of a teacher’s grading system and provides tips that can help principals guide teachers in developing a grading system.

The Survey Says
Philip Brown and Debi McNeal | March 2013
Like educators everywhere who constantly examine data to make decisions to improve their schools, the authors of this article looked for ways to lead school improvement instead of just pointing out flaws. This article describes how their high school used surveys to gather instructional feedback for teachers and administrators. The feedback changed some administrative practices and helped shape administrators and leaders professionally.
A Question of Experience
Mary C. Clement, Warren Kistner, and Wes Moran | May 2005

Developing best practices in the hiring of new teachers has become a necessity in times of teacher shortages. Administrators charged with recruitment must be able to distinguish the most qualified applicants. Using interview techniques that focus on prior job behaviors can help identify which teaching candidates will be more likely to succeed in the classroom.

APOY 2014: Professional Focus with a Personal Twist
Glenn Cook | September 2014

Courtney Voshell, the 2014 NASSP/Virco National Assistant Principal of the Year, believes that using data is necessary for school improvement, but that personalizing it is necessary to ensure that every student is known and supported. Learn how she played an integral part in the turnaround of Dover High School in Dover, DE.

Assisting the Assistant Principal
James Davis | October 2008

Hiring the right assistant principal—and then ensuring that he or she remains in a school for several years—can do a great deal for staff morale, student achievement, and the overall quality of leadership within the school. This article presents 10 strategies for principals in helping or supporting their assistant principals.

Principals Make Assignments Matter
Eleanor Dougherty | January 2013

Learn how one assistant principal was challenged to raise expectations for student work and used assignments—a specific kind of instructional task in which students are charged to think about an aspect of a discipline’s content—to improve student achievement. The strategy paid off and his high school earned a commendation for achievement.

Building Leadership Capacity
Dick Flanary | December 2009

The NASSP Breaking Ranks framework lays out multiple strategies for building capacity within a school, beginning with the leaders. School change begins with the principal, the assistant principals, and the leadership team members. This article presents a few things one can do to start building capacity now.

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports
K. Brigid Flannery, Elise M. Guest, and Robert H. Horner | September 2010

Effective schools provide access to both good instruction and a social culture that supports engagement, community, and success. Thousands of schools have adopted schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS) as a framework for improving their social and academic outcomes. Learn how the principal can use the SWPBS framework to establish a positive school climate and support students and staff members.

Master Leaders Produce Master Teachers
Mary Ellen Freeley and Diane Scricca | April 2012

Two district leaders developed a set of processes for their district’s principals, assistant principals, and curriculum directors. The professional development model they created included summer workshops, monthly seminars, observations, and workshops on effective hiring. The results affirmed that developing effective educational leaders is a systemic process that when conducted over time results in increased teacher quality and, ultimately, improved student achievement.
A Principal’s Entry Plan
Robert L. Furman and Mary Frances Grasinger | November 2004

Becoming a principal at a new school is exciting, but it can be equally scary. Principals should use a systematic approach in their first few days and weeks on the job to expedite learning and make the change in leadership as smooth as possible for all parties. The provided checklist can be used to approach a new position in a systematic way.

Sharing the Secrets
Rebecca Good | April 2008

Today, instructional leadership involves deep involvement in the “core technology” of teaching. Preparing for the principalship and its instructional demands before assuming the position can facilitate a principal’s efficacy. The author, a school improvement team leader, provides 10 practices that can help assistant principals develop their instructional leadership skills so that they can become more effective instructional leaders.

Zero Alternatives
Thomas R. Guskey | October 2004

Many teachers see zeros as their ultimate grading weapon. However, zeros and the low grades they yield more often cause students to withdraw from learning. There are far better ways to motivate and encourage students to complete assignments in a timely manner. The author offers alternatives that several schools have implemented and experienced great success.

Leader & Learner
Stephanie Hirsh and Shirley M. Hord | December 2008

One of the most powerful ways for principals to extend their learning is to participate in professional learning communities (PLCs), forums that are explicitly designed to convene educators for learning so that students perform at higher levels. Whether the principal participates in a school-based, a district-based, or a community-based PLC, the benefits will include increased satisfaction, higher efficacy, professional renewal, and support for student improvement.

Model Behavior
John Holloway | January 2006

To give principals and school leaders insight into understanding their role as instructional leaders charged with promoting the success of all students and sustaining character growth in the school community, the author discusses four components of professional practice and how to apply them in their school community.

Leading Together: Reculturing the Assistant Principalship
Beverly J. Hutton | December 2014

The demands on school leaders have changed and the deep-rooted, traditional role of one principal leading an entire school community is passé—and debunked. Principals are called to be instructional leaders who lead the implementation of a rigorous curriculum that prepares students with 21st-century skills. This article provides a synopsis of the book by the same title and looks at school leadership from a different lens.

A Philosophy of Learning Together
Patti Kinney | May 2009

This article presents an interview with Melissa Shindel, assistant principal of Patuxent Valley Middle School in Jessup, MD, and 2009 NASSP/Virco National Assistant Principal of the Year. In this interview, Shindel shares her philosophy and experience.
The Art of Campus Supervision
Troy Knechtel | January 2008

Campus supervision is a craft that must be learned. It requires both knowledge and skill to be effective. In this article, the author discusses skills that supervisors need to learn and practice. To effectively cultivate a safe learning environment for students, the author suggests that administrators should provide their supervisors with the training they need to work both harder and smarter.

Making Sense of All Your Data
Mary Ann Lachat, Martha Williams, and Stephen C. Smith | October 2006

This article discusses the three key components of effective data use—focusing on essential questions that guide data analysis, data warehousing technology that supports extensive data disaggregation, and a data team and data coach that ensures that the data is available and put to use. These components support a culture of inquiry, continuous improvement, accountability, and purposeful data-driven decision making.

Dancing with the Tensions
Sandra R. Lindsay, John D. Halfacre, and Frances C. Welch | November 2004

Principals’ work is filled with paradoxical dilemmas and days in which the questions are complex and void of definitive answers. In an attempt to balance the often-antithetical needs and expectations of the students, faculty members, community, and district, the principal struggles with a variety of oppositional forces. The authors offer advice and discuss how effective principals embrace the tensions of their role.

Time for a Tune-Up: Comprehensive Curriculum Evaluation
Lisa H. Meyers | September 2005

If curriculum is the engine that drives teaching and learning, then the curriculum improvement process becomes the tune-up for that engine through planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum. With careful attention, quality curriculum can motivate teachers, inspire students, and contribute to the highly effective education desired by all.

Advancing Toward Shared Decision Making
Lisa Muller and Judi Thorn | February 2007

Recognizing that teacher morale needed attention, the administrative team at one Oklahoma high school designed a series of activities to give teachers the opportunity to offer feedback, share their ideas, and propose solutions for the challenges facing the school. Through shared decision making, the administrators trust that they and their teachers will always be better able to see and seize opportunities to solve problems while they are manageable.

Eliminating Disparities in School Discipline
Vicki Nishioka | April 2013

Disparities in suspension rates for white, black, Hispanic, and American Indian students are more often a result of inequitable disciplinary actions than differences in behavior. Exclusionary discipline undermines students’ academic achievement by weakening their connection with school and removing them from the classroom. Although it is challenging, eliminating disparity in school discipline is an achievable and worthwhile goal. This article highlights nine features that schools have used to address this issue successfully.

Cultural Proficiency: Tools for Secondary School Administrators
Kikanza Nuri-Robins, Delores B. Lindsey, Raymond D. Terrell, and Randall B. Lindsey | September 2007

Cultural proficiency is an inside-out approach that makes explicit the values and practices that enable both individuals and schools to interact effectively across cultures. To achieve proficiency, educators must align their values and educational philosophies with their daily practices to create learning communities among and between educators, students, and their families. This article discusses four tools of cultural proficiency for secondary school administrators.
Everyone Plays a Part
Sharon Olson and Patricia Buschjost | April 2006

After a Colorado high school failed to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and faced being put on watch, administrators developed a plan that worked for the school and involved an unprecedented effort from everyone, including principals, teachers, support staff members, and students. In this article, the authors discuss how the school developed a plan to help students improve and began a multifaceted approach to making AYP.

Building Leaders
Therese Reddekopp | December 2008

The impending retirement of many principals and assistant principals has made succession planning a major concern for school districts. Many school systems are strategically cultivating up-and-coming administrators to replace the experienced school leaders who are retiring or changing careers. This article describes a successful example of how to train future leaders so that when leadership changes occur, the new leaders and the school system can accomplish a successful transition.

Great Schools Have Great Principals
Rebecca Roberts | September 2013

After noticing that ninth-grade students in her school were struggling in their transitions to high school, the author enacted a transition program to combat the resulting low grades and credit deficits. This article details how the program helped both incoming freshmen and the upperclassmen who helped them transition.

It’s All About Perspective
J. R. Rourke | November 2007

In many rural and urban areas, high poverty and geography lead to difficult situations for students. The principals of students in those situations must find ways to light the “fire” and help them see education as the means to a better and potentially more fulfilling life. At Rowan County Middle School, in order to build rapport with families and to get a better idea of their students, educators started a tradition of home visits.

Minority Scholars—Diversity and Achievement
Terrie Saunders and Kathy Maloney | December 2004

After realizing that few minority students were taking challenge classes and AP courses, one high school in Nebraska implemented a voluntary program that provides a support system for goal-oriented, high-achieving minority students. The program provides minority students with a variety of support services, including college planning, test taking, career exploration, and time management.

The Energy to Lead
Starla Sieveke-Pears | April 2010

Being an assistant principal can be difficult, but using a professional learning community (PLC) can help. The author shares her experience in serving as an assistant principal in a school district that supports the professional learning and growth of assistant principals. This article chronicles the PLC work of a district-wide group of assistant principals and provides a glimpse of what gives, takes, and wastes the energy of the group.

Preparing for Your Principal Interview
Gene Spanneut | May 2007

Being invited to the initial round of interviews for a principal opening is an opportunity; preparing for it is an investment. A successful interview requires that you create a detailed plan and take specific steps. This article provides tips on how to prepare for a principal interview.
Doing Discipline Differently
Randy Sprick | January 2009

Reactive and exclusionary approaches to discipline are common in secondary schools, but they don’t improve behavior or ensure safety. In this article, the author highlights two promising models that schools can combine to improve climate and discipline for all students. The combined models of PBS (positive behavior support) and RTI (response to intervention) can reduce student misbehavior and increase student responsibility, motivation, and academic achievement.

Putting Testing in Perspective: It’s for Learning
Rick Stiggins and Stephen Chapuis | October 2005

There is no greater need in the development of effective, standards-driven schools than to create opportunities for teachers to learn how to create assessment for learning environments in their classrooms. Within the last few years, formative assessment has emerged as an increasingly prominent school improvement strategy. This article explores three general strategies to increase formative assessment.

Making Space for New Leaders
Sarosh Syed | January 2015

Cultivating assistant principal talent ensures that school districts can benefit from a steady stream of well-prepared instructional leaders. This article explores how some principals are working to balance the needs of their schools with the needs of their assistant principals.

Working with Ineffective Teachers
Susan Trimble, Ed Davis, and Marsha T. Clanton | November 2003

Legislation demanding highly qualified teachers has brought teacher accountability for student learning to the forefront of educators’ concerns. Within the context of the No Child Left Behind Act, administrators have increasing responsibility to address ineffective teaching and deal with marginal teachers. This article will help you learn how to recognize ineffective teachers and choose strategies to improve their skills or remove them from your school.

Restoring Relationships
Jan Umphrey | September 2013

Matthew R. Willis, an assistant principal at William C. Hinkley High School in Aurora, CO, was the 2013 NASSP/Virco National Assistant Principal of the Year. In this interview, he is asked to relate what he believes are his largest accomplishments in his role as assistant principal at William C. Hinkley.

Strategic Collaboration
Jan Umphrey | September 2012

This article presents a brief conversation with Denise Khalaalid, the 2012 NASSP/Virco National Assistant Principal of the year. Khalaalid shares the various responsibilities of being an assistant principal at South Pointe High School in Rock Hill, SC. She talks about her greatest accomplishments in her role for curriculum and instruction and explains how working beyond one’s comfort zone builds leadership capacity.

Striving for Excellence
Jan Umphrey and Michael Shepherd | September 2011

This article presents an interview with Michael Shepherd, the 2011 NASSP/Virco National Assistant Principal of the Year. In the interview, Shepherd shares how the role of assistant principal is defined at his school. He also talks about how he practices instructional leadership.
Always What's Best for Students
Jan Umphrey | September 2010
This article presents an interview with Nathan McCann, the 2010 NASSP/Virco National Assistant Principal of the Year. He discusses his multifaceted role and how he contributed to students’ and teachers’ successes through curriculum and instruction.

Producing Learning: A Conversation with Robert Marzano
Jan Umphrey | January 2008
Robert Marzano has spent his career researching how teachers teach and students learn. His latest thinking on how to work with teachers to ensure that students are learning gives schools a model to follow or adapt to provide systematic, nonevaluative support for teaching and learning.

Leading with Joy
Jan Umphrey | May 2008
Hilca Thomas, the 2008 NASSP Assistant Principal of the Year, believes that learning should interest and engage all students. This article explores her constant pursuit of innovative ways to raise student achievement and how she emphasizes relationships with students and parents, innovative curricula, data analysis, and professional development.

Leading with Heart
Jan Umphrey | May 2007
This article presents an interview with Patricia Buschjost, the 2007 NASSP Assistant Principal of the Year. Buschjost shares her experiences with empowering teachers, earning trust through personalization, and maintaining a good relationship with the principal.

The Instructional Capacitor
Elizabeth Walton | April 2012
Many administrators are so overwhelmed by the basic responsibilities of their daily work that there seems to be little or no time left for providing quality leadership in instruction. At the heart of building instructional capacity lies the philosophy, vision, and values of the principal, supported by the assistant principals. The author contends that those administrators must lead the school in embracing a culture of continual focus on and improvement in instruction.

Feedback for Teachers: Focused, Specific, and Constructive
Tim R. Westerberg | March 2013
Across the country, there is a renewed emphasis on using teacher evaluation not only to rate teachers, but also to give them formative feedback that will help them improve classroom instruction. Research shows that applying the strategies teachers use to give students effective feedback to the teacher evaluation process produces promising results. The article includes a survey of teacher evaluation factors to help administrators compare their own beliefs with best practices.

On the Path to Personalized Teaching
Dale Worsley, Joan Landzberg, and Ann Papagiotas | December 2004
Personalized teaching takes students’ individual characteristics and needs into account when planning and organizing the learning environment. Principals as instructional leaders are key to guiding a school to this form of leadership. In addition to ensuring that teachers are given the professional development and structural supports they need, principals must also engage the district, community boards, parent bodies, and other leaders in a partnership to guarantee that the support is sustained and informed.
Restorative Resolution
Jay Zaslaw | January 2010

Many schools have adopted zero-tolerance policies as a means to curtail negative student behavior. Such policies persist although there is little evidence that they contribute to improved student behavior or overall school safety. This article discusses the philosophy, purpose, and principles underlying restorative dispute resolution practices, which have been effective for years in the juvenile justice arena.