

Supervisory Platform

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I am strongly oriented toward a developmental philosophy. During my time as a classroom teacher, this led me to push my students to achieve high standards, to advocate for children with learning differences, and to become a champion for students who had historically struggled with school. I believed in my students' ability to start fresh and to meet or exceed their goals. My goal as a classroom teacher was to remove as many hurdles as possible for my students, maximizing the impact of their efforts and allowing them to experience success as often as possible.

As I move on to the role of school leadership, I find my orientation is largely unchanged. I want to push the teachers I work with to achieve high standards. I want to advocate for teachers who are not thriving in the classroom. I want to be a champion for those teachers who have struggled in the past. My goal is to remove as many hurdles as possible for the teachers I supervise, maximizing the impact of their efforts and allowing them to experience success as often as possible. I think this will require a commitment on my part to helping teachers toward a path of continuous improvement.

My worldview tends to be very optimistic, so it is not a challenge for me to encourage and praise teachers who are doing well or to find the good in most situations. However, I am also a very direct communicator. I know helping teachers reach their potential in the classroom will often require my willingness to confront problems directly and honestly, and I am prepared for that as well. The process of collegial supervision serves both of these approaches:

Collegial supervision requires a peer relationship between teachers and supervisors;
involves teachers in the supervisory process; focuses on developing teachers' potential,

rather than earning their obedience; requires leaders who support and facilitate collaboration; and places value on reflective practice. (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014, p. 111)

It is my intention to come alongside teachers, as a colleague and peer, to help them improve their practice. Even the best teacher can become better and it is the role of the supervisor to help them see their teaching (and their students' learning) objectively. I will help teachers find discrepancies between their teaching objectives and the evidence of their students' learning. I will help teachers use data to guide their instruction. I will encourage them to reflect on what they can alter in their planning and delivery of instruction so they continuously improve in the craft of teaching.

It is inevitable I will encounter teachers who are beyond my ability to help. From time to time, I will have to face the difficult process of recommending a teacher for termination. I believe it is my first responsibility, above all others, to safeguard the educational environment for my students. When a teacher is doing more harm than good, and that teacher has had the opportunities and support necessary to improve or correct, it is the responsibility of the teacher's supervisor to protect students from further damage or ineffective teaching. This means that I have a corresponding responsibility to document my supervision of teachers. My well-documented observations and conversations will form the basis of both positive and constructive feedback. In the worst cases, my documentation will provide clear data-driven evidence for a teacher's dismissal.

The purpose of educational leadership is to guide. Much like a coach is responsible for watching the big picture involved with all of the action on the field, calling the most effective plays, the leader of a school is responsible for guiding teachers and students toward achieving a shared vision. This means working with individual teachers to mentor them and help them

overcome challenges with instructional approaches and classroom management. It means celebrating the successes teachers have and encouraging them to continue innovating and growing, even after they have developed into master teachers. It means pairing strong teachers with weak teachers so that both can learn from the other, problem-solving together and continuously improving their practice. In such a pairing, strong teachers will be forced to reflect on what works in their own practice, asking themselves, “Why do I teach that lesson that way?”; weak teachers will have the support of a more experienced or effective colleague to help them answer the same question about their own teaching. Effective guidance also means being willing to have difficult conversations with teachers who are not meeting their instructional goals. Direct, honest communication gives teachers the best chance to alter and improve ineffective practices and builds a foundation of trust between teachers and their supervisors.

Achieving a shared vision also requires an effective leader to watch the big picture involved with all of the action in the school, pushing the whole team of teachers toward a more positive and productive school climate. I view supervision as an ongoing conversation between colleagues. As a school leader, I will have the benefit of perspective—the big picture of what is going on in the building. Although I will certainly bring my own vision to any leadership position, it is my goal to listen to those I supervise, understanding the values that are important to them. In this way, our individual visions can overlap to form a shared vision.

This shared vision will make our ongoing conversations more productive. For example, if a teacher is achieving great things in the classroom, our entire faculty can celebrate those successes in the shared language of our vision for the school’s success: “Let’s look at how Mr. Robertson is implementing project-based learning this month. We can really see evidence of the increased student engagement we are committed in our school.” Similarly, individual,

constructive conversations using the supervisory feedback cycle will be more productive: “You know, we’ve talked about how increased student engagement is a really important value in our school, but when I was in your classroom, I didn’t see a lot of that. What do you think is going on there? Are there ways you could approach this lesson differently to encourage more of those student engagement indicators we’ve talked about in professional development?” In short, when the school leader is an advocate for the school’s shared vision, everyone benefits.

Finally, because each teacher learns in his or her own way, I will also be vigilant about curating a variety of formal and informal learning opportunities for my faculty. This will allow me to direct teachers toward the resources that will help them improve their teaching or solve problems they are grappling with in the classroom. Likewise, I will encourage collaboration between and among colleagues, supporting teachers’ observations of one another’s classrooms and making shared planning times a priority. Although these types of organizational supports are not directly related to the process of supervision, they provide an instant outlet for teachers’ ongoing learning. I will be able to guide both successful and struggling teachers toward these outlets: “What about working through this lesson during your next planning meeting?” or “You know, Mrs. Adams is doing a really nice job with writer’s workshop. Why don’t you find a time to go in and observe how that’s working in her room?” Part of being an effective guide is ensuring our organizational structures support these types of learning opportunities.