

Adapting the Framework: Assistant Principals

Although the AWSP Leadership Framework is written for school principals and their supervisors, the Leadership Framework can be easily adapted for principals to use to evaluate assistant principals, vice principals, deans of students, and other entry-level leadership roles. These positions are critical in that they are often stepping stones for an administrative career. Further, these positions serve as important linchpins in the school. Without strong and effective assistants, the principal cannot be successful, particularly at the secondary level. As one publication recently noted,

[T]he assistant principalship holds a critical position in education organizations for several reasons. First, it is a ***frequent entry-level position for administrative careers***. A majority of assistant principals expect to move upward in administration. For this reason, assistant principalships often provide opportunities for observing and interacting with supervisors and learning the behaviors necessary for professional advancement. Second, assistant principals ***maintain the norms and rules of the school culture***. They are usually the first ones to handle the most difficult disciplinary problems. Social issues such as poverty, racism, and family disruption help define the world in which assistant principals find themselves.... [Further,] assistant principals must ***frequently play the role of mediator***, addressing the conflicts that emerge among teachers, students, and community.⁴

Thus, the evaluation of assistant principals cannot be taken lightly. Effective mentoring provided early in the administrator's career can lead to a lifetime of successful advancement, whereas inadequate mentoring and insufficient support can easily detour future leaders from the principalship.

Aim of Evaluating Assistant Principals

Given their unique role in the school, the AWSP Leadership Framework must be adapted to effectively evaluate the work of assistant principals. The aim of evaluating assistant principals, however, is no different from that of evaluating principals. Assistant principals must be evaluated on the basis of their performance in each of the eight criteria. However, in addition to focusing on the day-to-day practices that define the assistant principal's work, it is imperative that the principal also provide opportunities for the assistant principal to share his or her long-term professional growth goals as well as an opportunity to provide the principal with ideas about expanding their responsibilities to support expanded confidence as a building

⁴ C. A. Marshall & R. M. Hooley, 2006, *The Assistant Principal: Leadership Choices and Challenges*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press, p. 2.

administrator. The aim of evaluating assistant principals is thus to nurture them toward their next professional goal while honing their skills as instructional leaders.

Defining the Assistant Principal's Authority

As principals prepare to evaluate their assistant principals, it is important that the assistant principal's scope of authority be considered relative to the performance criteria. As with principals, it is unrealistic and unproductive to hold assistant principals accountable for that which they lack authority. Questions that building administrator teams might want to address as they consider assistant principal evaluations:

- *What leadership responsibilities have I asked the assistant principal to assume?*
- *To what extent have I provided clear expectations for the assistant principal and/or modeled for them the type of leadership that I expect?*
- *To what extent have I provided support to the assistant principal (e.g., training, mentoring, professional development, modeling, etc.)?*
- *How frequently have I discussed the assistant principal's practice with them? What was the substance of the conversation?*
- *How has the assistant principal received the support I have offered them?*

Mentoring Assistant Principals

The evaluation provides an important opportunity for principals to mentor assistant principals toward their larger professional goals. Mentoring is compatible with supervision; in fact effective supervisors often serve as mentors. How principals approach this task will depend on their relationship with the assistant principal as well as their hopes for the conversation. The User Guide presumes that the evaluation conversation is about asking questions related to the assistant principal's current goals as well as to identify their long-term professional goals. The following questions illustrate how a principal might approach this task:

- *What are your current career goals and how can I help you achieve them?*
- *Where do you see yourself in three to five years?*
- *What experiences or leadership opportunities can I provide that would help you advance your professional capacities or develop new skills?*
- *What professional learning opportunities have you identified for the coming year?*
- *How might I provide additional resources (e.g., books, readings, etc.) to guide your professional reading and expand your professional repertoire?*
- *What leadership responsibilities would you be interested in assuming to help you develop and/or expand your professional repertoire?*

An Example from the Field

We asked Shannon Ritter, Assistant Principal at Marshall Middle School in the Olympia School District, to share her thoughts about how she and her principal used the Leadership Framework for her own evaluation and the sources of evidence that she was able to retrieve. What follows is her reflections on how this framework might apply to assistant principals.

TPEP and the State 8 - Certified Principal or Assistant Principal
 Shannon Ritter, Assistant Principal
 Marshall Middle School - Olympia School District

Things to remember or consider:

- ✓ Some criterion will be easier to measure with more responsibilities based on position
- ✓ Evidence collected in one area may be transferrable to other areas
- ✓ How do I modify my responsibilities to meet the requirements and show evidence, especially in the areas that may be more difficult to measure with regards to evidence?
- ✓ How does my work as an Assistant Principal support?
- ✓ The following is certainly not a comprehensive list of responsibilities

Criterion 1: Creating a Culture

The Assistant Principal plays a critical role in creating a positive school culture that promotes the ongoing improvement of learning and teaching for students and staff. It is important to ensure a balance between instructional leadership and management while providing support for students, staff and families. Areas of evidence might include:

- Associated Student Body (ASB) Adviser
- Athletic Director
- Fundraising and Assemblies
- Professional Development
- PBIS/Discipline
- Schedules – Master, Bell schedule, student classes
- Student, Staff and Parent Recognition
- New Teacher Support
- Parent Communication

Criterion 2: Ensuring School Safety

Administrators and key school personal must work collaboratively to ensure a safe and secure learning environment in order for staff to maximize student achievement. Areas of evidence might include:

- Progressive Discipline and Consistent Procedures
- Monthly Drills and Clear Emergency Plans
- Office Staff knowledgeable regarding student safety plans/legal requirements

- Custodial staff included in security measures
- Partnership and support of School Resource Officer and Thurston County Juvenile Court personnel

Criterion 3: Planning with Data

Administrators as instructional leaders lead the development, implementation, and evaluation of data-driven plans for increasing student achievement. In order to increase student achievement, multiple student data points must be used and analyzed. Areas of evidence might include:

- Late Start Collaboration, Professional Development, Staff Meetings, PLC, Conferences
- Master Schedule and Class placement
- Special Education and LAP Allocations
- Progress Monitoring – Universal Screening, MAP testing
- Office Referrals - PBIS Modifications and celebrations
- Interventions – Rtl, MMS Academy (20 min class daily for students failing multiple classes)

Criterion 4: Aligning curriculum

Administrators can assist staff in working to better align the curriculum, their instruction, and assessments with state and local district learning goals. Areas of evidence might include:

- Late Start Collaboration, Professional Development, Staff Meetings, PLC, Conferences
- Departmentalize – Math and Science
- Blocking – ELA and SS
- Special Education and LAP support classes
- Enrichment Rotations
- Common Core State Standards
- Common Formative Assessments (CFA) and Classroom Based Assessments(CBA)

Criterion 5: Improving Instruction

This criterion is critical for administrators as they work with teachers to enhance their professional practice. Monitoring, assisting, and evaluating effective instruction and assessment practices in order to improve instruction is at the heart of TPEP. Areas of evidence might include:

- Student Improvement Plan
- TPEP – Observations and Data Walks
- Instructional Goals – Depth of Knowledge
- Late Start Collaboration, Professional Development, Staff Meetings, PLC, Data Carousels/Wall, Conferences

Criterion 6: Managing Resources

The Assistant Principal must managing both staff and fiscal resources to support student achievement and legal responsibilities. Areas of evidence might include:

- District LAP Coordinator
- Para Educator Allocations/Schedules
- Medicaid Match Building Coordinator
- ASB Budget and Fundraising
- Athletics - Coaching, Pay to Play, Transportation, Officials, Supervision

Criterion 7: Engaging Communities

Administrators who partner with the school community are better able to support and promote student achievement. Areas of evidence might include:

- Parent Group (PTO/PTA/MCC)
- Orientation, Curriculum Night, Activity Events and Nights, Volunteers
- Theater Productions, Band, Orchestra, and Choir Concerts
- District and city events
- Website, Newsletters, Readers Boards, Phone calls, Social Media

Criterion 8: Closing the Achievement Gap

Finally, Assistant Principals demonstrating commitment can play an integral part in closing the achievement gap as they work collaboratively with school personnel. Areas of evidence might include:

- MMS Academy (AP led, daily, targeted support for students failing 2 or more classes)
- Attendance – tardies and absences
- Teacher and School Collaboration: in-coming and exiting students
- Late Start Collaboration, Professional Development, Staff Meetings, PLC, data carousel/wall
- Progress Monitoring & Common Formative Assessments