

1: Improving Education in Senegal | Fact Sheet | Senegal | U.S. Agency for International Development

*This dilemma is the focus of editor Stephen E. Anderson's *Improving Schools through Teacher Development*, an evaluation of a fifteen-year period of the Aga Khan Foundation's school improvement projects (SIPs) in East Africa.*

Rick DuFour and Mike Mattos Instead of micromanaging teachers, principals should lead efforts to collectively monitor student achievement through professional learning communities. Principals are in a paradoxical position. No Child Left Behind admonished educators to use "scientific, research-based strategies" to ensure that all students learn. Likewise, Race to the Top requires educators to use "research-based" school improvement models. Unfortunately, the core strategies of both of these reform initiatives largely ignore this call for practices grounded in research. Principals are being asked to improve student learning by implementing mandated reforms that have consistently proven ineffective in raising student achievement. The current emphasis on using more intensive supervision and evaluation of teachers to improve school performance illustrates this irony. Ultimately, the evaluations should reward highly effective educators with merit pay and remove those deemed ineffective. Faulty Logic At first glance, this approach to improving schools seems to make sense. After all, research does say that teacher quality is one of the most significant factors in student learning. Like the children of Lake Wobegon, almost all teachers are deemed to be above average, if not superior. Tenured teachers are almost never found to be unsatisfactory. So why not make tougher evaluation of teachers a cornerstone of school improvement? Why not require principals to spend more time in classrooms supervising and evaluating teachers into better performance? The premise that more frequent and intensive evaluation of teachers by their principals will lead to higher levels of student learning is only valid if two conditions exist. The first is that educators know how to improve student learning but have not been sufficiently motivated to do so. Neither of these conditions exists. Do Carrots and Sticks Motivate Teachers? We can find no research to support the assumption that educators choose to use mediocre instructional strategies and withhold effective practices until they receive increased financial incentives. As former principals with almost six decades of experience working with teachers, we found that the members of our faculty, almost without exception, started each day with honorable intentions, worked tirelessly on behalf of their students, and used the best strategies they possessed to promote student success. A research-based program for improving schools would not be tied to merit pay. As for wielding sharper sticks, in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Daniel Pink presents compelling evidence that this approach has a decidedly negative effect on the performance of knowledge workers like educators. This is not new information. Edwards Deming argued that leaders must "drive out fear" from their organizations because appeals to fear resulted in short-term thinking, fostered competition rather than collaboration, and served as a barrier to continual improvement. A research-based program for improving schools would not be tied to sanctions and punishments intended to generate fear. The American Educational Research Association declared that "neither research evidence related to growth models nor best practice related to assessment supports the proposed requirement that assessment of teachers and principals be based centrally on student achievement" Viadero, A research-based approach to school reform would not define improvement solely as higher scores on an annual standardized achievement test. But even if we set the research aside, questions remain: Do principals have the time and expertise to enhance student learning through classroom observations? Is this the best way to improve a school? To answer these questions, consider Tennessee, one of the first states to receive a Race to the Top grant. Principals or evaluators must observe new teachers six times each year and licensed teachers four times each year, considering one or more of four areas—instruction, professionalism, classroom environment, and planning. These four areas are further divided into subcategories. Principals must then input data on the observation using the state rubric for assessing teachers. Principals report that the process requires four to six hours for each observation. What We Learned As Principals But beyond the time demands, the premise behind the policy of having principals observe teachers and help them improve is fundamentally flawed. We typically found that teachers were unpersuaded by our recommendations. After all, previous principals had found them satisfactory, if not exemplary. Further, as

middle and high school principals, we often observed teachers in content areas in which we were clueless. We were ill-equipped to enhance the pedagogy of an industrial arts teacher when we were mechanically inept. Because we frequently were unable to determine the appropriateness of either the content or the level of its rigor, we had to resort to generic observations about teaching and apply what we knew about effective questioning strategies, student engagement, classroom management, and so on. As a new pair of eyes in the classroom, we were sometimes able to help a teacher become aware of unintended instructional or classroom management patterns. We could express appreciation for the wonderful work a teacher was doing because we had witnessed it firsthand. We observed powerful instructional strategies that we were able to share with other teachers. We increased our own knowledge about what constitutes effective teaching. So classroom observations can be meaningful and beneficial to some extent, but principals should not use them as their key strategy for improving their schools. Perhaps intensive supervision of teaching would be a viable strategy for improving student learning—“if good teaching could be reduced to a single template, rubric, or checklist aligned to program fidelity. The Case for the PLC Process If principals want to improve student achievement in their school, rather than focus on the individual inspection of teaching, they must focus on the collective analysis of evidence of student learning. Of course, teaching and learning are not divorced from each other. The key to improved student learning is to ensure more good teaching in more classrooms more of the time. The most powerful strategy for improving both teaching and learning, however, is not by micromanaging instruction but by creating the collaborative culture and collective responsibility of a professional learning community PLC. As a review of the research on PLCs concluded, The collective results of these studies offer an unequivocal answer to the question about whether the literature supports the assumption that student learning increases when teachers participate in professional learning communities. The answer is a resounding and encouraging yes. A report from the International Academy of Education Timperley, concluded that the key to improving teaching was ensuring that educators "participate in a professional learning community that is focused on becoming responsive to students. Improve student achievement and their professional practice at the same time that they promote shared leadership Louis et al. Experience the most powerful and beneficial professional development Little, In traditional schools, the question of who will determine what constitutes the right work becomes a question of power: Will the principal or teacher teams have the authority to determine what will happen at team meetings? However, in a professional learning community, principals and teachers engage in collective inquiry to decide on the work that will most benefit their students. How much time will we devote to this unit? How will we gather evidence of student learning throughout the unit in our classrooms and at its conclusion as a team? They can start by forming teams in which members share responsibility to help all students learn essential content and skills, providing teams with time to collaborate, helping to clarify the work that teams need to do, and ensuring that teams have access to the resources and support they need to accomplish their objectives. Embrace the premise that the fundamental purpose of the school is to ensure that all students learn at high levels and enlist the staff in examining every existing practice, program, and procedure to ensure it aligns with that purpose. Organize staff into meaningful collaborative teams that take collective responsibility for student learning and work interdependently to achieve shared goals for which members hold themselves mutually accountable. Use the evidence of student learning to identify Students who need additional time and support to become proficient. Teachers who struggle to help students become proficient so team members can assist in addressing the problem. Skills or concepts that none of the teachers were able to help students achieve at the intended level so the team can expand its learning beyond its members to become more effective in teaching those skills or concepts. The team can seek help from members of other teams in the building with expertise in that area, specialists from the central office, other teachers of the same content in the district, or networks of teachers throughout the United States that they interact with online. Create a coordinated intervention plan that ensures that students who struggle receive additional time and support for learning in a way that is timely, directive, diagnostic, precise, and most important, systematic. But the most vital support a principal can give these collaborative teams is helping them use evidence of student learning to improve their teaching. This ongoing, collective analysis of learning is far more likely to improve teaching practice than a principal stopping by a classroom a

few times each year to see whether the teacher is making the right moves. The PLC process also promotes shared leadership by empowering teams to make important decisions. At the same time, principals ask their teams to be accountable for results, and they publicly recognize and celebrate incremental progress. Finally, effective principals are willing to confront those who fail to honor the commitments to their team and their obligations to their students. A Culture of Collective Responsibility Both research and our own experience as principals have convinced us that this PLC process is more likely to improve instruction than classroom observations. An algebra teacher has a better chance of becoming more effective when he or she works with other algebra teachers weekly to improve student learning than when he or she is observed by a former social studies teacher four times a year. Further, the PLC process has two powerful levers for changing adult behavior: A highly effective principal will look for ways to align the process to a culture of collective responsibility for learner-focused outcomes. For example, the principal can repurpose the individual teacher goal-setting process to focus on team goals. Rather than establishing goals for individual teachers that focus on teacher activities "I will improve my ability to use differentiated instruction", they help teams establish collective goals that focus on student learning "Last year, 84 percent of our students demonstrated proficiency on the state assessment. This year, we will help at least 90 percent demonstrate proficiency". These results-oriented goals help create the interdependence and mutual accountability vital to effective teams. Principal observations can provide feedback to team members who implement new strategies as part of their action research. For example, a team may decide that members need to focus on checking for student understanding more frequently and effectively to improve achievement in a unit that has traditionally proven difficult for the students. The principal could focus on that aspect of instruction during observations and work with teachers to expand their strategies in that area. Finally, many new evaluation tools have components related to teacher collaboration. An effective principal will use that aspect of evaluation as a catalyst to strengthen the team process. Asking the Right Question If current efforts to supervise teachers into better performance have proven ineffective and they have, the solution is not to double down on a bad strategy and demand more classroom observations, tighter supervision, and more punitive evaluations. The effort to improve schools through tougher supervision and evaluation is doomed to fail because it asks the wrong question. Instead, schools need learning leaders who create a schoolwide focus on learning both for students and the adults who serve them. References Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Professional development strategies that improve instruction. How good education systems can become great in the decade ahead. Organizing schools for improvement: University of Chicago Press. Team up for 21st century teaching and learning: What research and practice reveal about professional learning. Out of the crisis.

2: How Do Principals Really Improve Schools? - Educational Leadership

The book concludes with commentaries by international experts in school improvement and teacher development on the SIP project designs, implementation and outcomes, and on lessons that can be drawn from the projects and their evaluations for school improvement policy, practice and theory in developing and developed countries around the world.

3: Strategies for Improving Instruction, Curriculum and Student Achievement | ISD

teacher development on the SIP project designs, implementation, and outcomes, and on lessons that can be drawn from the projects and their evaluations for school improvement policy, practice, and theory in developing and developed countries around the world.

4: Improving Schools Through Teacher Leadership - Harris, Alma, Muijs, Daniel - Google Books

School districts can improve the effectiveness of their professional development for teachers by following these basic guidelines: Keep it simple. Each year, identify and focus on one or two instructional priorities – effective instructional practices that the district wants teachers to learn, refine, or improve.

5: Indonesia - Early Childhood Education - Tiered Teacher Training

Indonesiaâ€™s "Improving Early Childhood Education Through Tiered Teacher Training Friday, Nov 9, Early childhood education and development (ECED) is crucial to Indonesia's long-term successâ€™"ages are considered the golden years of child growth.

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