

Maximizing Teacher Time: The Collaborative Leadership Role of the Principal

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Introduction

Today's principals experience increased pressures in their ever-evolving roles as school administrators. When considering national data such as the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher (2013) or in state-administered surveys such as the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions (NCTWC) survey the issue of "time" is noted as a chief concern by teachers (NCTWC, 2014). In looking at the survey data from teachers, the role of the school leader must be closely examined, particularly in light of the fact that the principal is uniquely positioned to foster and support the learning community (Sterrett, 2013; Sterrett, 2016).

The annual MetLife survey (2013) reveals that principals and teachers alike reported little to no increase in time for collaboration and professional learning, specifically as follows:

- More than six in 10 teachers say that time to collaborate with other teachers (65%) and professional development opportunities (63%) have either decreased or stayed the same during the past 12 months;
- A majority of principals also report that time for teachers to collaborate (61%) and professional development opportunities have either decreased or stayed the same (p. 19).

In North Carolina, the 2014 NCTWC data indicate that 93,178 educators responded to the survey out of 105,136 educators (88.63%) (NCTWC, 2014), responding to statements in the following eight categories: time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, instructional practices and support, as well as an "overall" reflective question.

This paper looks closely at the category of "time" as defined by the NCTWC. The "time" category has seven statements to which teachers respond to each year as noted in Table 1. Based on the statewide survey responses, the category of "time" emerged as an area of concern, relative to the other NCTWC categories as indicated in Table 2.

Table 1 *Statewide NCTWC Responses Regarding Time Constructs*

Statement	Percent Agree	
	2014	2012
Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.	60.2	61.5
Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.	73.1	71.6
Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.	67.2	69.6
The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.	62.8	59.3
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.	57.2	54.6
Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.	66	69.9
Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.	71.2	69.7

Note. Adapted from <http://www.ncteachingconditions.org/results/report/156/62124.org/results>

In examining the larger survey, the seven “time” constructs would have an average category “agreement” score of 65.4% for the year 2014 as noted in Table 2. The statements vary by category (ranging from two statements in the “overall” category to twenty statements in the “school leadership” category which is organized by two sub-categories). However, it is clear that the issue of “time” has the lowest agreement, when considered with the larger NCTWC survey, than the other respective categories.

Table 2 *Researcher-Compiled Averages Within Each NCTWC Category for 2014 Data*

Category	n	Percent Agree
Time	7	65.4
Facilities and Resources	9	83.0
Community Support and Involvement	8	84.4
Managing Student Conduct	7	81.3
Teacher Leadership	8	82.0
School Leadership	20	84.0
Professional Development	13	78.7
Instructional Practices and Support	11	77.3
Overall	2	83.1

Note. Adapted from averages from data compiled from

<http://www.ncteachingconditions.org/results/report/156/62124>

^an = number of statements per category

The teacher perspective is of utmost importance. Yet, the role of principal is pivotal in this work, as principals are indeed situated to help maximize time for their teachers, particularly in their respective professional learning communities (PLC) and in the interest of shared, collaborative leadership (Sterrett, 2016). As Matthews and Crow (2010) caution, “As principal in a PLC, you will want to facilitate all faculty in using time, not only a few of the hard workers” (p. 259). The purpose of this study was to describe how principals lead teachers in regards to time management.

Review of Related Literature

Principals have limited resources at their disposal, including time. Matthews and Crow (2010) note that time has two important functions in learning communities: 1) the length of time for reform to work, and 2) the necessary management of time by those involved (p. 259). The

authors add that teachers can burn out and become discouraged if they feel their efforts are in vain. Thus the role of principal is vital in helping teachers use time to teach and collaborate with colleagues.

Leithwood and McAdie (2007) state that in examining the influence of principal behavior on teacher working conditions, principal leadership serves as a catalyst that impacts school culture and schoolwide structures. Leithwood (2006) continues that “a critical role for school and district administrators is to screen out external demands for change unrelated to the school’s improvement priorities” (p. 86), thus acting as a filter and helping prevent teacher frustration. Szczesiul and Huizenga (2014) emphasize that principals must support both individual teachers as well as the collective team on which that teacher serves. Principals play a pivotal role in equipping teachers with the support they need to reach students. For example, Owings and Kaplan (2012) state that “although most school time is spent working directly with students, educators need time to pursue skill development and conduct collaborative planning and learning” to meet the diverse needs within their classrooms (p. 366).

Teacher Perceptions

Teachers may feel as if their time is not their own. As Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2010) note, “The routine of the teaching day is imposed by administrative fiat, school board policies, and state guidelines” (p. 24). They add that “Regardless of grade level, teachers do not schedule their own time or determine the number or type of students” (ibid). Teachers simply are not in the position to make needed adjustments to the basic structures of their school days; thus, leadership is critical.

Researchers have emphasized that organizational culture may be impacted by the working conditions of teachers. In a study of a representative sample of over 25,000 teachers in Massachusetts, Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2012) noted that “teachers who teach in favorable

work environments report that they are more satisfied and less likely to plan to transfer or leave the profession than their peers in schools with less favorable conditions” (p. 26). Interestingly, the authors also point out that “researchers repeatedly find that principals are central to school improvement and to teachers’ satisfaction. However, we have yet to explain adequately what role an effective principal plays” (p, 33). The role of the principal should thus be further explored in the context of teacher perceptions.

Ladd (2011) states that “teacher working conditions matter” (p. 253) as her study of North Carolina teachers yielded a conclusion that is “clear and unambiguous: Variation across schools in working conditions as perceived by teachers is highly predictive of individual teachers’ intentions to leave their current schools” (pp. 253-255). She adds that “among the working conditions factors, the dominant factor, by far, is the quality of school leadership” (p. 256). The role of principal is thus pivotal in helping create and maintain the learning and working environment.

TELL in North Carolina and Beyond

States and localities have utilized teacher survey data in recent years. For example, the New Teacher Center (NTC) has, through the Teaching Conditions Initiative, structured a Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) survey that has been utilized by over 25 states and districts including over 19,000 schools and 769,000 educators (New Teacher Center, 2012). Participating states have included Tennessee, Maryland, Kentucky, Colorado, Delaware, Ohio, Alabama, Vermont, West Virginia, Kansas and North Carolina (ibid). The TELL survey generally consists of a “core” set of questions that have been externally validated and specific entities can then incorporate “customized” questions as well. The survey is anonymous and administered during a five week window. Participants are given a confidential access code and

can complete the survey online from any location; response rates can then be tabulated in real time (ibid).

The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions (NCTWC) survey portion regarding “Time” is the focus of this particular research study. The 2014 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2014) Research Brief observes that “In 1999, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission, with the support of the North Carolina State Board of Education, developed working conditions standards for schools in an effort to address issues driving teaching turnover” (p. 1) and those standards have been addressed every other year since 2002. In 2005, the NCTWC was established by law as a biennial survey in the state (Maddock, n.d.). In 2014, over 93,000 educators (89%) responded, and it was noted that “North Carolina educators report the lowest average rate of agreement across all areas on the Time construct for both the 2014 and 2012 surveys, with an average rate of agreement of 65 percent recorded in both iterations” (2014 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2014, p. 3).

In Colorado, the 2013 TELL Colorado Survey data, which included “more than 33,000 educators in Colorado, yielding a response rate of 55%” (TELL Colorado, 2013, p. 1), found higher rates of agreement amongst principals for “almost all survey items compared to teachers” (p. 2). The items of greatest difference between principals and teachers was the item “Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do” (a “Time” statement) in which 90% of principals agreed as compared to 49% of teachers (p. 2). Interestingly, the Colorado survey also found that “teachers intending to stay at their current school report higher rates of agreement on every questions of the survey compared to their colleagues planning to leave the school” (TELL Colorado, 2013, p. 10).

Meanwhile, in Maryland, more than 50,000 educators in the state responded (58%) (2013 Maryland Survey, 2013, p. 2), and it was observed that “across all areas measured,

educators agreed the least that teachers have sufficient time to teach, plan, and collaborate” (p.

5). In fact, in a number of the “time” items, there was noted decrease as follows:

- Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students (59.5% agreement in 2013, down 4% from the 2011 survey);
- Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students (56.0%, down 3.9%); and
- Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do (52.7, down 1.1%) (p. 5).

The concern over time is shared by educators in Massachusetts, as “on the 2012 TELL Massachusetts Survey, educators were most likely to report challenges in finding sufficient time to teach, plan and collaborate” (TELL Mass Survey, 2013, p. 2) a trend not unique to that state. Over 42,000 educators (52.4%) participated in the survey (p. 3). When asked the question “Which one aspect of your teaching conditions is most important to you in your willingness to keep teaching at your school?” Massachusetts teachers chose “time” (14.6%) as third most important, behind “school leadership” (23.5%) and “instructional practices and support” (21.2%) (p. 11). It is clear that “time” is a theme of concern amongst teachers in numerous states and schools.

Methodology

Survey research design was used to understand the “characteristic, attitude, or behavior” (Creswell, 2014, p. 157) of this sample of principals who lead schools with relatively high levels of “time” agreement on the NCTWC survey. The research questions were (1) What are the principals’ perceptions regarding the time constructs on the NCTWC survey? (2) What

strategies or tips do principals offer regarding each time construct on the NCTWC survey? We describe the sampling method, instrument, procedures, and data analyses.

Sampling and Participants

We identified the sample for this study using 2014 NCTWC aggregated data available for over 2,500 principals in North Carolina. As an exploratory survey, we utilized purposeful sampling to survey principals that had over 80% agreement in all “time” constructs; we surveyed 68 principals who met these criteria. Twenty-four principals, 35%, completed the survey.

Procedures

This study was approved, in the spring of 2015, by the Institutional Review Board at the university where the researchers are employed. During a one-month interval the researchers emailed the 68 principals identified from the sampling method. SelectSurvey © a web-based program, hosted at the researchers’ university, was used to design and administer the survey related to the “time” constructs on the survey. Weekly email reminders were sent to increase participation rates. The survey data were stored within the electronic survey program, which was secure and accessible by the researchers.

Instrument

The survey contained 19 questions. First, five demographic questions were asked, followed by seven Likert-scale “time” constructs—mirroring the NCTWC survey. We modified the NCTWC time statements by adding “In my school” to correspond with our principal

audience. The Likert scale allowed respondents to indicate level of agreement (Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree).

Each of the “time” questions was followed by an open-ended question that prompted the principal to specify “strategies or tips” for that particular topic about time. The NCTWC survey was validated statistically through factor analyses that confirmed the 8 constructs, including time. Internal consistency reliability was also examined for each construct. Cronbach’s alpha for the construct “time” is .86 (Research Brief, n.d.). The survey was designed to take less than 10 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

The Likert-scale items were analyzed using descriptive statistics provided by the survey software. Upon review, one of the researchers collapsed agreement categories, as seen in the results. The open-ended responses were downloaded and read several times by each researcher. The two researchers first analyzed the open-ended [qualitative responses] separately in order to “identify and refine important concepts” (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 304) that emerged and then compared analyses, finding areas of agreement, among emergent themes, from each of the seven “time” items on “strategies or tips.” This coding allowed the researchers to organize the material into segments of text and then assign a word or phrase to “develop a general sense of it” (Creswell, 2014, p. 241).

Results

We begin with a description of the sample. Then the descriptive analyses from the principal survey are presented. This is followed by the qualitative analyses from the open-ended responses.

Characteristics of Sampled Principals and their Schools

In this study, most (44%, n=12) of principals had 1-3 years of experience at their current school, followed by 26%, (n=7) of principals with 7-9 years of experience. Most of the principals were at elementary schools (26%, n=6) or high schools (22%, n=5). In terms of school size, the principals were predominately (92%) at schools with 599 or less students. Almost 40% of principals were employed at schools that had between 40-59% free and reduced lunch. Another 35% of the principals worked at schools wherein 80-100% of the students received free or reduced lunch. In total, 83% of the participating principals worked in schools where the Free/Reduced rate was 40% or higher. Sixty-five percent (n=15) of the principals did not have an assistant principal and 22% (n=5) of the principals had 1 assistant principal.

Descriptive Analyses

The survey had seven "time" Likert-scale questions. The lowest point of agreement was 77% sample principal agreement with the "minimize routine paperwork" item and the two highest two items, "class sizes are reasonable" (with 91% agreement from the sample principals) and "teachers are protected from duties" (also 91% sample agreement). See Table 3.

Table 3 *Aggregated Study Sample Principal Responses*

Statement	Percentage		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
In my school, class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.	5	5	91
In my school, teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.	14	0	86
In my school, teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions	5	9	86
In my school, the non-instructional time provided for teachers is sufficient.	5	9	86
In my school, efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.	14	9	77
In my school, teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.	9	9	82
In my school, teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.	9	0	91

Adapted from <http://www.ncteachingconditions.org/results>

^aDisagree includes data from "disagree" and "strongly disagree"; Neutral defined as "neither agree nor disagree"; Agree includes data from "agree" and "strongly agree"

Qualitative Analyses

The findings are organized by the open-ended time sub-questions on “strategies or tips.” Agreed upon emergent themes are presented and followed by representative quotations from the principals.

Meeting the Needs of All Students

For “strategies or tips to help teachers have time available to meet the needs of all students,” principals emphasized structuring common planning time; providing individual attention to students through efforts such as tutoring or relationship-building; and being deliberate about class sizes. For example, one respondent noted “we try to utilize common planning times at grade level to allow for intervention or assessment purposes.” Another respondent advised, “Set up a time in your class where you can help students individually. Set some time up during independent practice or make office (sic) hours where teachers can make themselves available for students and parents.” Yet another noted the importance of shared leadership in maintaining class sizes, saying, “We hold an end of year leadership meeting, where I put the teachers in charge of helping to make decisions that affect (sic) the makeup of our school. We *vote* to determine if the class sizes are manageable as is, or if there is too high of a class size- do we have a ‘position’ in school that needs to be released in order to manage the classes.... We have *never* eliminated due to class size. The teachers have been able to weigh the information to help guide decisions...”

Collaboration with Colleagues

The school community clearly benefits from the principal’s ongoing support. For “strategies or tips to help teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues,” principals emphasized scheduling time to plan together and emphasizing PLC times. One principal noted the realities and challenges that teachers face, saying, “One day every 2 weeks, during that planning time, we have grade level meetings and planning sessions. We also have 40 minutes before school and 30 minutes after school. Having the before and after school time as well as

the 5 days of specials planning helps. But, I feel if we had more time to learn from each other, and really apply the information to the work session, we would be more successful.... I try not to do big things afterschool. I have about ½ my teachers that have a 2nd job that they need to get to.” Another emphasized that “planning time for collaboration should be driven by the needs of the school each year. In this current year, planning times were departmentalized to focus on vertical alignment of instruction and sharing of instructional strategies. Next year, planning will be cross-curricular, as teachers in English and social studies will co-teach and align instruction with the same groups of teachers.”

Minimal Interruptions

For “strategies and tips to help teachers to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions,” the deliberate use of intercom announcements and phone calls were identified as well as being deliberate in protecting scheduled instructional time. One principal said succinctly “no announcements during class time” and another “intercom is not used except during morning announcements.” Another observed that “using available technology to disseminate information, adapting to a college environment where there are no bells or announcements, forces managerial items to be planned out prior to it becoming a situation to interrupt classes.” One respondent noted “Teachers post teaching schedules so that students do not interrupt instruction” and another “We also hang schedules on the doors about *uninterrupted* time. *No one* is allowed to go into a classroom that has a sign hanging.”

Non-instructional Time

For “strategies and tips to help teachers have non-instructional time” the theme of guarding teacher time for planning and meetings emerged as did thoughtful creation of the schedule. One principal respondent noted “provide every teacher a 90-minute planning period. Severely limit the times a teacher is asked to give up a planning period.” Another observed a potential trade-off, saying “schedule some time for teachers to have non-instructional time. In order for this to happen, we may have to extend the day a small amount.” One respondent stated, “Efficient master schedule- thoughtful sequencing of classes” while another stated that “Planning time is 40 minutes, 5 days a week. *Plus 40* before school and 30 after. They *do not* all have a duty-free lunch every day but this was a vote on our leadership team.”

Minimize Paperwork

For “strategies or tips to help minimize the amount of routine paperwork required of teachers” the theme of emphasizing electronic/ paperless technology emerged as did focusing on collaboration. One noted “you cannot ‘go green’ if you are mandated to keep copies of everything” and another said “using electronic resources to track data eliminates the repetitive nature of paperwork required.” One offered “the use of technology plays a big part. We also use SchoolNet for tests, quizzes and benchmark assessments.” Another suggested that “Google forms to minimize paperwork or time that it takes to complete paperwork.” Regarding collaboration, one respondent said “We work in grade level meetings to complete paperwork together” and another added “Keep it to a minimum whenever possible. We do everything we can as a group in common planning.”

Needs of All Students

For “strategies or tips to help teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students” two themes emerged, the yearly calendar structure and then also the day-to-day master schedule. One principal lamented “There is never enough time. I would like our school or district to go to year round. In a high poverty area, we lose so much over the summer that takes so much time at the beginning of the year to catch up with” and another offered “In particularly challenging courses, consider making semester classes year-long. Schedule special needs students in curriculum support classes to give them extra time to learn material.” Another said, “We operate on a block schedule and teachers usually have only one prep.” Still another advocated for block planning as well saying “Make sure the scheduling gives teachers at least 90 minutes (I think block scheduling allows teachers to have the daily instructional time needed for effective teaching).” One respondent noted “instructional hours of a school needs to be set by the administrator. Teaching should use every moment for instruction.”

Duties that Interfere

For “strategies or tips to help protect teachers from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students” the themes principal “leading by covering” duties and rotating the duties elsewhere was clear. One principal stated “I do as much as I can and we rotate duties,” another said “the administration does the duties” and still another offered “This is a conscious choice of the administration, I choose to take on most duties to shield teachers from anything that would interfere with their time for instruction or planning.” Another offered “In a school, there are certain amount of duties that must be completed. The administrator should be sure these duties are spread equally among staff.”

Discussion

In examining both the quantitative and open-ended response section of the study, three themes emerged regarding the perspective of the principals who participated in the study. These themes include practical leadership, action-oriented sensitivity, and an emphasis on collaboration.

Helping with practical needs strengthens the learning community

The voices of the principals indicate that they are willing to serve as they lead in practical matters that involve time. As noted in the quantitative analysis, the sample principals indicated high levels of agreement with the item “from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students” (91% agreement as indicated in Table 3). As one principal noted in the open-ended portion, “Be fair in assigning duties. Consider class load, teaching schedule, and classroom location when assigning duties.”

Approaching a managerial aspect such as duties with a teacher-centric perspective is important to consider. Another principal, in the open response portion related to the “non-instructional time” item chimed in “duties and responsibilities are largely handled by myself, freeing teachers (sic) to work with students and one another. I would rather they focus on student learning than be pulled for a managerial duty.” By serving in the role of the routine duties area, the principal can enable greater collaboration between teachers and greater teacher-student interaction as well. In a study of Miami-Dade County principals, Horng, Klasik, & Loeb (2010) found that principals spent just over 10 percent of their day on instructionally-related tasks such as classroom walkthroughs. Dealing with administrative aspects (managing

schedules, supervising students) accounted for about 30 percent and another 20 percent was for organizational management aspects (such as managing staff and budgets) (p. 518). It is clear that the role of the principal involves managing the practical issues of keeping a school operational.

Action-oriented sensitivity is important

The role of the principal is not a desk job. Principals must work deliberately to ensure that teachers are able to do their jobs effectively. From supporting a “focus on educating students with minimal interruptions” (86% principal agreement as noted in Table 3) to being attentive to “ensure that class sizes are reasonable” (91% agreement), the role of the principal is key in acting accordingly to ensure that these priorities are sustained. One principal noted in the open-response section of the “minimal interruptions” item that “Administration must not allow for interruptions to take place. We take notes, numbers and save all information to teachers to be distributed after 11:00.” This action-oriented sensitivity is highlighted also by the principal who responded to the “minimize routine paperwork” item by noting “We know that teachers have enough to do.” Effective principals still value the perspective of the teacher, and act to ensure their interests are protected.

It is important that principals empathize with teachers. Anticipating distractions and disruptions and seeking to minimize barriers to learning involves being proactive. Matthews and Crow (2010) emphasize that “Because of unpredictable schedules, it is imperative for school leaders to keep their eyes on the school’s shared vision and what is necessary to maintain a PLC” (p. 250). Thus, attention to the details (such as posting times where instruction should not be interrupted) can support the overall vision of the school (for example, greater student

learning). By being sensitive to the needs of the learning environment and taking action accordingly, the principal is a key player in this work.

An emphasis on collaboration strengthens the school community

Though it is clear that teachers desire to collaborate, it is a challenge (MetLife, 2013). Principals play a unique and pivotal role in maximizing collaboration within the school (Sterrett, 2015; Sterrett, 2016). The principal respondents indicated high levels of agreement with the statements “teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues” (86% as evidenced in Table 3) and “non-instructional time provided for teachers is sufficient” (also 86%). These data are supported by the open-response portion statements such as the principal who emphasized “alleviation of teacher lunch duties once a week. This allows all teachers in our school to collaborate.”

Another noted the strategic planning needed in suggesting, “When possible, give department members the same planning periods.” Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, and Geijssel (2011) noted that shared collaborative experiences and exchanging knowledge and ideas are “at the core of professional learning communities” (p. 506) as teachers are then able to work together to solve problems and focus on teaching and learning.

Future Research

In considering the limitations (e.g., mono-method bias, descriptive, exploratory) and findings from this study, the researchers offer the following recommendations to study the construct of “time” and school leadership in the future. In the open-ended portion of this survey,

principals shared brief statements about strategies and tips; spending a day observing the principals in their daily routines and interactions would likely yield even greater insights regarding their important role. Findings could be shared with practicing principals and aspiring principals alike. Statewide teacher response data from the NC TWC helped shape this study. It is likewise recommended that we continue to listen to teacher voices through further study. Interviewing teachers from schools that indicate high levels of agreement related to “time” could perhaps yield insights related to teacher perceptions of leadership. Yin (2012) posits that open-ended interviews (or “nonstructured interviews”) “can offer richer and more extensive material than data from surveys or even the open-ended portions of survey instruments” (p. 12). Thus listening to both principals and their teachers at the actual school sites could yield valuable data. Findings could be shared with aspiring and current principals to further inform their work.

We suggest using interquartile range to determine a cutoff score for the seven “time” constructs on the NCTWC survey to select principals in the upper range, top 25%, in terms of how they use time within their schools. Further studies can examine the relationship between educator perceptions (either principal or teacher) in relationship to school size, demographics, principal experience or principal leadership style. This study can be replicated in other states. A multi-state or national study could increase the generalizability of the results.

Implications for Principal Preparation Programs

We recommend that principal preparation programs continually monitor the use of teacher working conditions or similar state data. These data can be used to ensure relevance to preparing school leaders and to teach data-driven decision making from an additional platform. Incorporating studies such as this, coupled with principal and teacher insights, guest

speakers, or field-based work, into required courses in a manner that is aligned with standards and program/ course standards may yield powerful results.

The role of principal has become increasingly complex over the past couple decades. Principals previously served as a supervisory role with few expectations for instructional leadership. Whereas principals in the 21st century have myriad responsibilities such as fostering a safe climate, leading learning, maximizing operational efficiency, and integrating new innovations, all while meeting accountability standards. This transition in principal expectations creates both a challenging and stimulating leadership opportunity for those occupying this position. As the mandates and accountability items required by the state and federal programs have increased on schools, there has been an impact on teachers as well. One area that emerged in data from the study above is the current perception related to teachers' time, and the important, supportive role of the building leader in fostering a strong learning community.

Perspective from the Field

Principals have a vital role in valuing teachers' time. Although state-wide surveys described are utilized in a dozen states, the findings resonate with me as a principal of a suburban elementary school in southeastern Texas. Across the United States, principals typically have site-based control in establishing the master schedule for the classes on campus. In an era of increasing accountability, principals must ensure that the resource of time focuses on learning rather than non-instructional tasks. When principals strive to create structures that maximize instructional time, it conveys the importance of student learning to teachers. These structures must be incorporated into the daily schedule and school calendar.

In addition to valuing instructional time, teachers desire a time for collaboration with their colleagues to both solve problems and focus on teaching and learning. DuFour and Fullan

(2013) suggest that building a collaborative culture develops teams where educators are empowered to assume the responsibility for the learning of all students. When campuses create structures for collaborative planning and learning, teamwork is nurtured. Establishing these times for collaboration creates a culture where collective capacity is built. In contrast, if the school schedule does not have deliberate times set aside to honor collaborative dialogue then it is not seen as important in the organizational culture. It is imperative that during this structured collaboration, teachers need time to share their practices, plan for learning, learn from each other as well as discuss interventions to help students be successful in learning. The role of principal is critically important in fostering these collaborative opportunities.

Even the most effective instructional leader will fail if managerial aspects of the principalship are not executed with a commitment to minimizing instructional interruptions. Campus leadership must establish and communicate procedures that honor instructional time. This is a finding that emerged in the data as well, as described by one principal in the study above, that attention to key details “can support the overall vision of the school.” Articulating specific guidelines about intercom usage, phone calls and deliveries to both staff and parents establish practices that honor the classroom instruction.

Teachers feel additional support from the principal when there is a focused effort to limit non-instructional duties. In the survey data, principals indicated over 90% agreement with the statement “teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.” Creating an equitable duty schedule in a collaborative way develops ownership on the campus. Team leaders can be given a list of their duty times and locations where staff members can sign up for the duty they feel their skills would be best suited. Shared ownership is fostered with practices such as a weekly bulletin with calendars, reminders of events via email, social media posts and text reminders. As school leaders, the responsibility for establishing and communicating these expectations rests with our organizational leadership.

These managerial practices are important but there must also be a commitment to learning throughout the organization, and in supporting the school community.

Conclusion

This study showed that exemplars exist; there are indeed schools where teachers perceive their time is valued. In the realm of education, resources are limited, particularly in terms of human resources and time allotments. Principals play an important role in valuing teachers' time, and it is imperative that we consider their contribution to shaping the learning climate for staff and students alike. Insights gained could serve to strengthen professional development and school improvement efforts. This study suggests that further research on the role of the principal regarding teacher time holds potential for both practice and preparation.

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