



GETTING THE WORK DONE

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Recently, our Teacher Evaluation Series featured a panel of veteran educators who discussed managerial strategies which allowed them to focus on being instructional leaders. The list which follows was gleaned from the panel participants (Matt Dunbar, assistant superintendent in Glastonbury; Christie Gilluly, principal of the John B. Stanton School in Norwich; Miguel Cardona, principal of the Hanover School in Meriden, and Renee St. Hillaire, principal of East Farms School in Farmington). I share some of their thoughts with our CAS membership as you look toward the added demands of both the Common Core and state evaluation system as part of your leadership responsibilities.

- 1. Team with your secretary.** Have her be your “gatekeeper” to shield you from those drop-in visits by both staff and parents. Establish a procedure that short of an emergency, there will be specific times during and after the day when you can meet with people who feel they must see you. Outside of those times, you are focusing on being in classes and about the building.
- 2. “Walk and Talk”.** Staff members love to “grab your ear” and stop you to discuss an issue or keep you in your office to hear their concerns. Have them walk with you as you head for classrooms. First, you are multi-tasking as you head to see instruction and second, the long sessions with you trapped in your office now are shortened as you reach the door of your intended destination.
- 3. Schedule your observations as if you were meeting with the superintendent.** Again, only an emergency would keep you from your appointment with central office. So why should mundane issues keep you from classrooms? Often they do. Put your classroom observations in your calendar and share with staff. That meeting with the superintendent would result in someone on staff handling the “crisis” or waiting for your return. Create the same safety net for this “sacred time” when you are in classrooms.
- 4. Does your schedule reflect your leadership values?** Much like the previous tip, your daily calendar should reflect what you value most and, hopefully, that is observing and improving instructional practices in your school. Reflect on how you spend your time and how you might alter procedures to capture additional time to focus on instruction.
- 5. Share coverage in multiple administrator settings.** Plan as a team to provide each administrator a definite day to observe classes and on that day, the other team members cover the discipline issues or other immediate concerns for the observing member. Rotating among the team could allow each member to have at least one day a week to be in classrooms and

working with teachers. Publicizing the team schedule also alerts staff as to the availability of team members and who is covering on a given day.

- 6. Use technology to provide immediate feedback.** As you observe instruction, particularly if you doing a short visit, bring the laptop or IPAD with you and record your observations while they are happening. A quick email right then and there to the teacher saves you from using valuable time otherwise lost to composing your report back in the office.
- 7. Have technology.....will travel.** Have letters to compose or other tasks which can be done with laptop or IPAD technology? Surprise your staff and students by setting-up shop in a corridor where you are both visible to the school community and able to see what is happening in your school. You are out of your office and in the mainstream of “the action” in your building.
- 8. Schedule a time to answer emails and phone calls.** Modern technology is great, but it has resulted in others assuming that we are standing by our telephones and computers just waiting to return their communications. You can do so only if you are “office bound”. Placing a message on your phone or a having a standard email response message which alerts the other party that you will answer their communication after the school day as you are observing classes helps to control the flow and intrusive nature of such communication. Of course, they are told to contact your secretary should they consider their contact to be of an emergency status.

These are a few of the valuable hints shared by our panelists and ideas which resonated with me as I think about the countless demands on school leaders and how the managerial requirements of our jobs can take over our professional day to the detriment of our attempts to be true instructional leaders.