

SAME FACES, NEW SKILLS

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In August of 1981, Lincoln, Nebraska, public school administrators assembled for their annual preschool meeting, anticipating superintendent John Prasch's inspirational message. In past years, his message had been preceded by the introduction of new administrators, but in 1981 there were no new

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administrators to introduce.

The theme of the superintendent's address was also different from those of years past. Prasch announced that although there were no new faces among us, there were no fewer tasks to accomplish. He then proceeded to explain plans for reorganizing the administrative ranks to achieve district goals.

As I listened to the plans for our new roles and expanded repertoires of skills, I thought how fortunate it was that the

Lincoln schools and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln had contracted with the National Association of Secondary School Principals to establish a project using NASSP Assessment Center processes and materials. Unlike centers established to screen candidates for placement as beginning building administrators, the UNL-LPS Assessment Center identifies staff development needs of current administrators.

In 1980, I had volunteered to be among the first group of 12 administrators evaluated by the Assessment Center. The two-day schedule of activities was exhausting, yet not unlike many days I experienced in my role as assistant principal. In fact, I found myself smiling as I encountered situations in the simulation exercises that paralleled events at school.

Following the assessment, I returned to my school building, not only relieved that I had slightly more control over my time, but also more analytical about all aspects of my work. I considered information needed to make sound decisions and attempted to improve both my judgment and my level of decisiveness in situations demanding action. As I looked at the number and range of duties assigned to me, I used the personal time management techniques I had developed in an attempt to gain time for proactive leadership activities and personal interaction with students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Through reflection and action, I began to feel more in control of my job and less manipulated by tasks that bombarded me.

When I received formal feedback about my performance as appraised by the Assessment Center tasks, I was impressed with the evaluation report's specificity and objectivity. Based on the report, I constructed a self-profile relative to the 12 behavior dimensions assessed and set goals for myself that emphasized areas of strength as well as focused on skills that could be improved. In addition to setting personal goals, participants in the UNL-LPS Assessment Center work with the staff development office of the Lincoln public schools to develop, use, and refine administrative staff development activities related to the skill dimensions assessed.

The staff development office has planned special activities related to Assessment Center skills, but the regular administrator staff development program already addresses most of the skill dimensions evaluated by the Assessment Center (Figure 1).

The two remaining skill dimensions are covered indirectly. Activities that promote an increased Range of Interests have been part of the Administrative Staff Development Program since its inception in 1978. In groups, administrators attend dramatic and musical presentations, attend progressive dinners, and work on projects of their choice in the evening at a junior high industrial arts shop. Administrators also receive copies of articles and announcements of

meetings related to the skill dimensions.

Educational Values is the only dimension for which no direct focus is provided; yet, personal values tend to develop as individuals grow through expanded experiences.

Involvement in the Assessment Center has had considerable impact on the development of administrators in Lincoln and holds promise of even greater impact in the future. I believe my administrative skills have been enhanced

as a result of the assessment and through participation in assessor training. A further benefit is the common base of individual and collective growth that is established for administrators who work with the Assessment Center.

As administrators participate in the assessment process and as staff development activities are planned, implemented, and evaluated, I believe that even with the same faces, there can be new leadership skills in Lincoln. ■

Figure 1. Relationship Between Staff Development Activities and Assessment Center Skill Dimensions.

	1981-1982 Administrative Staff Development Activities	NASSP Assessment Center Skill Dimension
August:	"How To Hold More Effective Meetings"	Leadership Organizational Ability Oral Communication
September:	"Conflict Resolution" "Problem Solving and Decision Making Workshop"	Problem Analysis Sensitivity Stress Tolerance Problem Analysis Judgment Decisiveness
October:	"Communicating in Emergencies"	Oral Communication Judgment Decisiveness
November:	"Communicating Accurately With Staff Members"	Oral Communication Written Communication
December:	"Listening Skills"	Sensitivity
January:	"Assertiveness Training"	Personal Motivation Decisiveness Stress Tolerance
February:	"News Media Relations"	Oral Communication Written Communication Sensitivity
March:	"Staff Recognition"	Sensitivity
April:	"Gathering Accurate Information"	Problem Analysis
May:	"Communicating With Community Groups and Organizations"	Oral Communication Written Communication
June:	"Non-Verbal Communication"	Oral Communication Sensitivity

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