

Supervision

ROBERT J. KRAJEWSKI

Understanding the Why's of Instructional Supervision

Why is it that so many teachers do not receive the instructional improvement support and services they feel they need? Why don't schools have an abundance of improvement programs? These are complex questions that lead to others with deeper implications for supervision. Are there enough instructional improvement personnel? Do they have the necessary preparation and skills to carry out their instructional improvement role? Do they understand what their role entails? And do their job requirements give them sufficient time to devote to that role? Perhaps in our zest to excel in instructional improvement, we have been too quick to respond to the *bou's* and have ignored the *why's*.

Understanding instructional supervision is not easy, and implementing an instructional supervision program remains a persistent challenge. Most supervisors develop assumptions, principles, hypotheses, and conceptual frameworks on which to base their theories and build their supervision ideas. They express concern that instructional supervision is too often thought of as a process that focuses on specific skills, advantages, time constraints, or motivation techniques. Without the reasons behind the processes, it is nearly impossible for supervisors to communicate effectively with teachers. Both supervisors and teachers must be aware of the why's, and any instructional supervision model must integrate the why's with the how's.

From the instructional supervision literature and from practice, I chose six key elements that *together* provide a firm foundation for building a viable instructional improvement program.

1. *Instructional supervision requires a perceiving, behaving attitude.* The most important task instructional supervisors face is relating to the affective. Crucial to success is forming and maintaining a positive attitude and enthusiasm toward instructional improvement. Just as a prerequisite for

effective teaching is a teacher's acceptance of self, so too must the instructional supervisor know, accept, and respect self as a prerequisite to working effectively with teachers and guiding their instructional improvement efforts.

Wilhelms (1973) believes that the only teachers who can really do the job are those who somehow feel good about themselves, the people they work with, and the world they work in. The same holds true for supervisors. Effective instructional supervision requires that supervisors be in touch not only with themselves but with colleagues as well. Knowing and accepting self-limitations allows supervisors to better accept colleagues, work with them as they are, and encourage them to accept themselves and to accept students. Most important, such behavior facilitates a perceiving, behaving attitude and enhances supervisors' encouraging a like attitude in teachers.

2. *Instructional supervision requires a becoming attitude.* Supervisors who try to do their best for instructional improvement and who model improvement in their own professional behavior will hold similar expectations of the teachers with whom they work. The concluding sentences of ASCD's *Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming* (Combs, 1962) note that the person who has values, a positive view of self, is creative, open to experience, responsible and trustworthy, well informed, and aware that he or she is in the process of becoming, is the person most able to survive and deal with the future. Our actions speak louder than words. Confidence in self encourages confidence in others; others become what we expect and help them to be.

3. *Instructional supervision requires nurturing of mutual trust and rapport.* Rapport—a harmonious relationship, especially one of mutual trust—is vital. Trust is the foundation of instructional supervision; its development must be continually promoted and nourished. While perceiving, behaving, becoming attitudes are necessary prerequisites, rapport nurturance is

the binding element for instructional supervision.

4. *Instructional supervision requires sufficient preparation.* Through preparation programs, prospective supervisors must acquire a thorough knowledge base of instructional skills and theory as well as an ability to apply that theory in the practical world of teaching. Too often, however, supervision credential programs lack this important feature or address it only minimally. Without necessary skills in planning, observing, and analyzing teaching, conferencing and counseling with teachers, and planning and implementing improvement programs with teachers, instructional supervisors cannot fulfill their role expectations. And without sufficient preparation, supervisors cannot acquire these necessary skills.

5. *Instructional supervision requires role delineation.* A supervisor helps teachers and supervisors understand and accept their respective roles. In supervision, role delineation is concomitant with collegiality, for while the supervisor is responsible for developing and implementing instructional improvement programs, the teacher is the critical link to student learning. Preparing teachers for instructional improvement means getting all teachers involved in instructional program decisions, promoting idea sharing and a sense of program ownership. It also means assuming leadership by setting realistic growth goals and availing yourself as a facilitator to accomplish the goals.

6. *Instructional supervision requires productive tension.* Behavior change produces tension for both teacher and supervisor. Supervisor tension—due in part to incongruity between job expectations and lack of sufficient preparation—is perhaps even greater than that of the teacher whose instructional behavior is analyzed for improvement. Teacher tension—wheth-

Robert J. Krajewski is Professor and Head, Department of Educational Administration and Counseling, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls.

er from neophytes wishing to succeed or experienced teachers wishing to maintain/enhance teaching skills—is variable. Throughout the instructional improvement program, the supervisor's responsibility is to keep the tension productive—a sometimes awesome responsibility.

Every supervisor preparation program should address both the concept and the process of instructional supervision, as should supervisor inservice

programs. Too often meager program attempts either confuse or promote false confidence with minimum process skills. Were the why's to be better incorporated into the preparation program, supervisors would be better equipped to design and implement instructional improvement programs. Similarly, were the why's to be better incorporated into instructional improvement programs, teachers would be better prepared to accept and help

implement their professional growth and to effect greater student learning.

References

Combs, Arthur W., ed. *Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming: A New Focus for Education*. 1962 Yearbook of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Washington, D.C.: ASCD, 1962, p. 253.

Wilhelms, Fred T. *Supervision in a New Key*. Washington, D.C.: ASCD, 1973, pp. 36-37.

Curriculum Abstracts

JAMES A. BEANE, SAMUEL J. ALESSI, JR., AND CONRAD F. TOEPFER, JR.

Going Directly to the Source

Teachers are constantly faced with the challenge of bringing the curriculum to life. Prompted by Eliot Wiggenton's "Foxfire" project, local oral history has become a popular means of doing this in many schools. The social studies curriculum at Northside High School in Roanoke County, Virginia, uses philology to expand from a local to national perspective. Philology, or collection of autographs, has a long history as a hobby, but properly planned it can also provide valuable insights into the lives and times of famous persons.

In one case, students studying World War II contacted a number of persons who had been high-ranking or well-known military figures at that time. Each was asked to relate information, such as recollecting key decisions that were made. Some of the responses included insights not available to historians or the media. In another project students contacted show business people about their insights into various roles they played in films or television series studied in class.

The use of philology in the classroom encourages students to write and to use research in framing questions. The technique also serves as a motivational device since it prompts students to create their own subject matter for study.

From Fred R. Eichelman, "Teaching With Philology," *Social Education* 48 (1984): 458-460.

Learning Through Telephone Technology

While current attention to educational technology is mostly focused on computers, other devices are finding a useful place in the curriculum. One of the more interesting is the teleconference, a relatively simple means for putting groups of learners in direct contact with well-known authorities in various fields of study.

Gulf Junior High School in New Port Richey, Florida, has, for three years, conducted a lecture series program by means of teleconferencing. It serves as a stimulating supplement to various courses. While the teleconference involves merely a telephone hookup with an amplifier, which allows the guest speaker to be heard by a group, careful planning is necessary to ensure that the teleconference is integrated into the curriculum. For example, if the guest speaker is an author, students read a particular work, study the author's background, and prepare questions to ask.

Students at Gulf Junior High have held teleconferences with Julia Child on cooking, the Aerobic Institute on physical fitness, Nobel Laureate Glenn Seaborg on the periodic chart, and other individuals and agencies. Those involved feel that the teleconference is a stimulating learning activity, which has the added benefit of enhancing listening and questioning skills.

From Bob Hatcher, "Teleconferencing: Going to the Source," *NASSP Bulletin* 68 (1984): 110-112.

Acting Out History

Teachers at the M. J. Fletcher School in Jamestown, New York, have devised an innovative program for bringing history to life. In an effort to personalize a unit involving biographies of historical figures, children are encouraged to recreate the people they study. The unit begins with selection of historical celebrities followed by preparation of written and oral biographical sketches. The students then collect props and don clothing typical of the period being studied and pose as the historical figures. In ten-minute sessions other students, teachers, administrators, and parents are invited to walk through the "museum" to view the frozen figures. The event has become a success, annually attracting over 900 visitors. More important, students are given a chance to engage in concrete activity aimed at personalizing history.

From J. Paul Lombardo, "Bring History Alive With A Wax Museum," *Early Years* 15 (1984): 40-41.

James A. Beane is Professor, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, New York. Samuel J. Alessi, Jr., is Acting Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Buffalo City Schools, Buffalo, New York, and Conrad F. Toepfer, Jr., is Associate Professor, State University of New York, Buffalo.

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