



Improving life and leadership of assistant principals

Assistant Principal Podcast Content Episode Outline

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Show Description:

Every teacher should have a procedure for beginning class. Most opening class procedures share some common elements:

- What to do with materials
- How or when to sit down
- Getting started on bell work or an activator

I've been teaching procedures for about twenty years, but this summer I made one small tweak in my format that promises to pay big dividends.

Show Intro

Hello colleagues and welcome to the Assistant Principal Podcast. I'm your host Frederick Buskey. The goal of this podcast is to help improve the life and leadership of assistant principals.

Today's episode focuses on the importance of identifying clear goals for our procedures, but before we go any further, I want to remind you about our free micro-journal, Quadrant2. Issues of Quadrant2 come out once every 3-4 weeks. The five-page issues take a deeper look at topics that we address on the podcast. For example, last week we released Issue 2 which focused on how to implement the four patterns of observation in your school. Each issue includes nuts and bolts of implementation, discussion questions for your team, and even a section on how to apply the techniques if you are working in isolation. You can find a subscription link on my website at <https://www.frederickbuskey.com/quadrant2.html> As a bonus, if you subscribe this week you'll be able to download the first two issues of Quadrant2 so you won't have missed any opportunities to learn and grow.

Celebrations:

My recent trip to Kenya. My biggest takeaway is how similar we all are. Our struggles are the same – raising families, pursuing our dreams, and contributing to our communities. We may look and sound different, and our families, dreams, and communities may take different forms, but we all want the same thing. In a time of divisiveness, in the world and here at home, it is worth remembering that people are people, and therefore deserving of respect. We need to treat each other based on our commonalities, not on how our political and social “leaders” tell us we should treat people from different parties, or states, or countries.

The Big Idea

- We know the reasons why each procedure we teach is important, but by being more thoughtful – and explicit – about the goals we want to achieve, we can make small but powerful tweaks to our procedures.

The Why

- My passion for procedures:
 - OSU experience
 - Teaching experience
 - Coordinating entry-year teacher programs
 - How poor procedural classroom prevent leaders from growing teachers
- Good procedures decrease discipline referrals. Even a one referral decrease in a week yields an average of five minutes per day that you can invest in growing teachers. That's enough time to make a difference with a new, struggling, or even veteran teacher.

The what (MVP version)

For years I have taught that a good procedure has five components:

1. Title or name (may be an acronym)
2. Steps (1-5)
3. Key words for each step
4. Acronym for the steps
5. Graphic (necessity varies with age)

In prepping for a workshop with a middle school teaching staff in August, I realized that I should be better about emphasizing the why – the goals of a procedure.

I began by looking at a sample routine for entering class. The procedure had four parts – Sit, Arrange your stuff, write based on a prompt, and stand when finished. I called it SAWS:

- Sit
- Arrange
- Write
- Stand

The goals of a beginning class procedure are obvious: it saves time. If we can get started in 60 seconds instead of 180 seconds, we can save 300+ minutes over the course of a school year. That's over a week of class time!

But as I began writing down this goal, others naturally appeared. Before I go further, I'm going to give you ten seconds of silence to think about the goals of a good beginning class routine. Besides saving time, what else should the procedure achieve?

Here's what I came up with:

- Connect with teacher
- Maximize learning time
- Minimize distractions and misbehaviors
- Empower students to be responsible for their own learning
- Focus students on learning
- Begin anticipatory set (optional)

What I was most excited about was that first goal – connecting with the teacher. Sure, the teacher can check in with the students, but what if a part of the procedure directed the students to check in with the teacher? What if every class began with every student making some kind of contact with the teacher? How cool would that be? How humanizing could it be?

Most teachers have one or more students that need that connection, and for whom the teacher should know the student's emotional state. Making a small tweak to an opening class procedure creates an opportunity for that.

And so, I added a step to my sample procedure. The first thing students do is to say hello to the teacher. What hello looks like will vary with the teacher and the students, but here are some options:

- Actually say hello
- Give a fist bump
- Or a thumb's up
- Or share one thing that happened in the past 24 hours
- Or flash a number of fingers to indicate their emotional strength, for example one for terrible, need to talk, up to five for excellent.

Maybe I'm being silly here, maybe most teachers already do this – but if they do, I haven't seen it. So I'm going to hold onto this as being a good idea.

Here's what I'd like you to take away from this episode:

1. Think about the multiple goals and opportunities that exist within each procedure.
2. Begin observing procedures at work in classrooms and challenge yourself to find opportunities to achieve more with any given procedure.
3. Engage your teachers in informal discussions. Tell them you've been doing some PD on procedures that has made you think about their goals. Review a procedure with the teacher and work together to identify explicit goals.

Challenges



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As always, the challenge in following up on this idea is priority management. Without being intentional and prioritizing teacher development, you'll get too busy to follow up. Try taking time during the first hour of the day to check in on some teachers' beginning class procedures and have a brief conversation after the kids have left the building but before the teachers have. Make it a priority, for a few minutes over the course of a few days.

Show Outro

That wraps up today's content focused episode. We'll be back next week with Josh Stamper talking about the concrete steps he took as an AP implementing restorative practices in a Texas middle school. If you are interested in restorative practices, you might want to go back and listen to episode 20 with Dr. Gabby Grant discussing the challenges and prerequisites to implementing restorative practices. It was a great episode – one that made it onto our greatest hits list from our first 50 episodes.

If you enjoyed today's show, please subscribe and rate this podcast.

You can ask questions, make requests and give us feedback at frederick@frederickbuskey.com.

If you'd like more content tailored towards the needs of assistant principals, you can head over to my website at frederickbuskey.com. And remember to subscribe to our free micro-journal, Quadrant2. If you subscribe now you'll receive access to last week's issue on implementing the four patterns of observation. I'll also include my sample entering class routine for your enjoyment!

That wraps up today's show! I'm Frederick Buskey and I hope you'll join me next time for the Assistant Principal Podcast. Cheers!