



Improving life and leadership of assistant principals

Assistant Principal Podcast Content Episode Outline

Show title and release date:

Show Description:

"Those sessions do nothing for me" This was a quote from a teacher about some PD and it was shared by an admin seeking feedback on a social media site. More specifically, the teacher was commenting on a mandatory PD session. The situation and large amount of often conflicting advice got me to thinking. Are there a couple of core principles that should drive professional development?

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. This is a content-focused episode in which we take on the issue of professional development. Today's content will stand on its own, but we will take a deeper dive into the topic in an upcoming issue of Quadrant2. Quadrant2 is our free bi-monthly micro-journal. Each issue focuses on one specific topic and provides the nuts and bolts for applying that idea in your school. You can find a link to subscribe to Quadrant2 at my website at frederickbuskey.com/quadrant2.

Celebrations:

As I began thinking about what celebration to share, my first thought was that it has been a grueling six weeks and I've been sick the past 10 days. In terms of achievements, I don't feel like there is a lot to cheer about. But I do control my own attitude and that alone is worth celebrating. If you listened to last week's Five for Friday you heard me talk about my friend Steve and what he said about attitude: Bird quote

So that's what I'm celebrating, the power we have to choose. And that is enough to get me out of my little puddle and celebrate something else – that we are together! It's a privilege to be able to share with you and to have an opportunity to help you live and lead better.

The Big Idea

I'm going to talk about all PD today, and by all I mean about 90% of it. There will always (90% of the time) be exceptions, so please don't get hung up on them. I'm using all because it flows and sounds better than most.

So here are my guiding principles for all PD for teachers:

- All PD should help teachers to overcome specific challenges they are facing
- Teachers should determine the focus of their own PD

- All PD should provide immediate value
- The role of the IC, P, and AP are to help each teacher meet that teacher's PD goals

Before going deeper, let's define teacher professional development: Teacher PD consists of an intentional effort to develop or increase knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions to improve student outcomes. PD comes in five basic forms:

- Internal group led by a school or district employee
- External group led by a consultant or other external agent
- Mentoring and peer networks
- Coaching and support from instructional leaders
- Self-reflection and individual initiative

All of these are valid forms of professional development.

Okay, let's break this down.

- All PD should help teachers to overcome specific challenges they are facing
 - Teaching is incredibly complex, and teachers will always have many things to improve on
 - The three most precious resources in school are: people, time, and attention.
 - When there is so much to learn and so little time and attention, why would we ever waste professional development opportunities? By waste I mean not making them applicable to a teacher's specific situation and need.
- Teachers should determine the focus of their own PD (Dr. P story)
 - We aren't good at determining what's most important
 - Teacher choice leads to teacher commitment
 - Establishes the partnership relationship
 - Success begets success
- All PD should provide immediate value
 - PD that helps a teacher experience immediate improvement in an area that is important to them is golden.
 - Instant wins lead to more wins, and to engaging in more and more meaningful PD
- The role of the IC, P, and AP are to help each teacher meet that teacher's PD goals
 - Essentially, we are partners in teacher growth.
 - When we follow the other principles, we become trusted partners
 - As trusted partners we can provide critical feedback and ask powerful questions that help teachers transform

Summarizing (The big takeaway)

The approach to PD that I have laid out has implications for how we structure our school, especially our instructional leadership team. We can't meet the needs of individual teachers without aligning our work to that end.

This all feeds into the flywheel concept:

- Provide meaningful PD to teachers
- Follow up PD with targeted observations to determine fidelity of implementation
- Use observation data to work with the teachers to plan the next PD steps
- Do this over and over again

This is my passion; this is what I would love to help you do – set up a flywheel in your school. Yes, there are lots of barriers and challenges, but there are also simple things we can do to get started. The flywheel can be built on a small scale, step-by-step, with a minimal initial investment of time and energy.

For example, the first step is to set a specific time for a weekly instructional leadership team meeting. That is all – just set a time to meet every week as an instructional leadership team!

The second step is to adopt a structured agenda that places teacher development at the center of the meeting. If you have been a Quadrant2 subscriber since the beginning then you already have a template from Issue 1 which focused on the instructional leadership team. If you weren't or aren't a subscriber you can request a copy of issue 1 from me by emailing me at frederick@frederickbuskey.com

So, recapping the big idea from today:

- All PD should help teachers to overcome specific challenges they are facing
- Teachers should determine the focus of their own PD
- All PD should provide immediate value
- The role of the IC, P, and AP are to help each teacher meet that teacher's PD goals
- This is doable by incrementally building your flywheel

That wraps up today's content focused episode.

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.

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



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