

The Teacher Tracking Document February, 2022

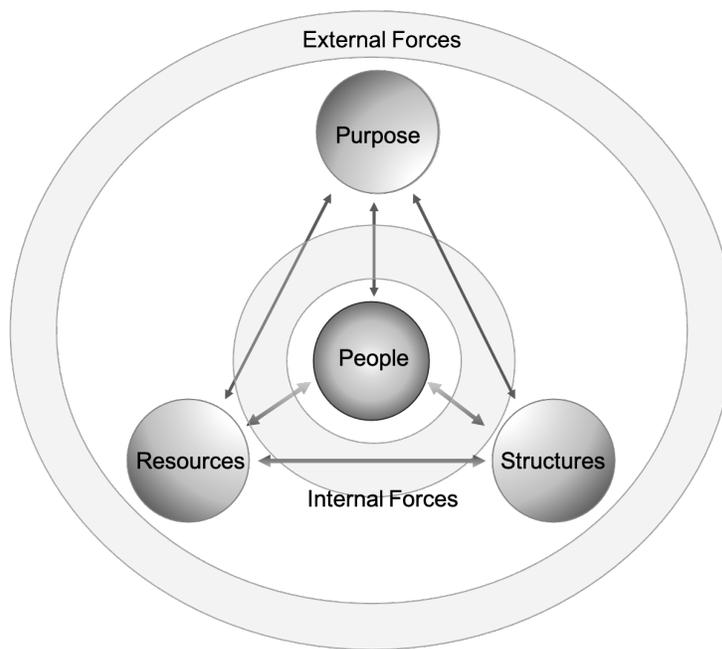
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Why does it always feel like improving teacher quality is an uphill battle?

One big reason is that our schools are not **structured** to facilitate consistent teacher growth. Focusing on helping teachers to grow requires us to focus on the structures that can support growth first. In this episode we look at an important structure, the teacher tracking document. The teacher tracking document helps us to develop and document a coherent and consistent approach to helping individual and groups of teachers grow.

Back in episode one I talked about the six dimensions of organizations. If we think about a three-sided pyramid representing an organization, the pinnacle is the organizational purpose. The three points along the pyramid's base are people, structures, and resources. In the perfect organization, which doesn't exist, the people, structures, and resources are perfectly aligned with the organization's purpose.

In the simplest terms, the work of leadership is improving alignment between the purpose, the people, the structures and the resources.



The purpose of schools is to help young people develop agency over their lives and to become responsible democratic citizens. Or something like that.

The roles of the principal and assistant principal are integral structures. School administrators have two primary functions that are core to the purpose of the school:

1. Keep everyone safe
2. Create better outcomes for kids

However, we don't teach kids and the #1 Influence on student achievement is the classroom teacher. So, the formula is simple:

Better teachers = better student learning.

Logically then, once we make sure that everyone is safe, our next priority is to focus on teacher development. If better teachers = better student learning then, outside of safety, the most important things we do are the things that help our teacher to continually grow.

The challenge is that there are all kinds of things that gets in the way because we mistake urgency for purpose in our day-to-day behaviors, so the important purposeful work of teacher development gets displaced by urgent tasks.

The Eisenhower Matrix is a helpful tool for differentiating between urgent and important.

What tends to happen is that school leaders focus on the two left quadrants – the urgent work, instead of the two upper quadrants – the important work.

Teacher development is quadrant 2 work. Working in quadrant 2 requires three changes:

- Mindset. We need to move from prioritizing the urgent to prioritizing the important.
- Processes. There are many urgent but less-important things that can be systematized and streamlined so that they require less time.
- Structures. If we build structures into our work that support quadrant two activity, then we are more likely to engage in quadrant 2 activity. This brief is about one of those structures.

1: Urgent and Important ----- <i>Must do</i>	2: Not urgent but important ----- <i>Should do</i>
3: Urgent but not important ----- <i>Choose to do</i>	4: Not urgent, not important ----- <i>Should not do</i>

The Teacher Tracking Document

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Teacher	9-Box rating	Key Teaching Areas				Support (what part of the cube?)					Observations		
		Area	Rating*	Strengths	Needs	Focus Area	Goal	A-B	Who	Support	Who	When	Data
		CR management											
		Student Relationships											
		Curriculum											
		Pedagogy											

- The first time we use the teacher tracking document we need to add some basic information.
- Start with just **one** teacher.
- This version of the form is not the only or even the “right” way to do it. Feel free to make changes as you see fit.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Teacher	9-Box rating	Key Teaching Areas			
		Area	Rating*	Strengths	Needs
		CR management			
		Student Relationships			
		Curriculum			
		Pedagogy			

- The first six columns compose a baseline for the teacher. The information in these columns may change over time, but not week-to-week.
- Column 1 contains the teacher’s name, column 2 their 9-box rating, and columns 3-6 capture their strengths and weaknesses in some key areas.
- Column 1, the teachers name, is simple enough.
- Column 2 is the teachers **9-box** rating. 9-box is a handy tool for getting your team onto the same page regarding a teacher’s potential versus their performance. 9-box can help guide the type of professional development and the coaching styles that will work best for each teacher. You can read more about 9-Box on my June 16, 2021 blog post [here](#). If you don’t do 9-box you could substitute your state teacher evaluation rating or some other metric. The importance of column 2 is that it provides guidance on overall performance level of a teacher, and the type of support that is likely to be most helpful for them.
- The next block of columns, 3-6, relate to key teaching areas. This is an optional section of the tracking chart, but many schools have specific points of emphasis, and these columns allow us to be mindful of how each teacher is doing in those areas.
 - In my example, column 3 has rows for classroom management, student relationships, curriculum, and pedagogy.
 - For each of these areas, there is a rating in column 4. You could use your state evaluation instrument here or something else.
 - Column 5 is the strengths for each area, and

- column six is the weaknesses. I like having this block because it helps as a reference point when we are talking about multiple facets of teacher performance and it can help us think more strategically about the most important PD topics for each teacher.
- You can change the topics in the rows to suit your specific school needs. For example, maybe you are emphasizing literacy across all subject areas, so you want that to be one of your areas.
- If this seems daunting, then skip it for now. Again, don't feel tied to the format I have. The critical thing is that you begin tracking teacher performance and documenting your work and commitment related to helping your teachers grow.

7	8	9	10	11
Support (what part of the cube?)				
Focus Area	Goal	A-B	Who	Support

- Columns 7-11 are for planning the specifics of professional development.
 - Column 7 is for the focus area. For example, classroom procedures. We could be more specific – say, the entering class procedure. More specific is better, but it may take some time to get into the habit of thinking in terms of small incremental changes for the focus area.
 - Column 8 is the goal. The goal should address the impact that the focus will have. For example, implementing an entering class routine should increase available instructional time and decrease student off-task behavior.
 - Column 9 is the A-B step that the next professional development cycle needs to focus on. The concept of A-B is that incremental changes are more likely to lead to success than big changes. An A-B step should be able to be completed in one week or less. “Implement five classroom routines” is not an A-B step. Observing students entering Ms. Smith’s and Mr. Garrot’s classes once each is an A-B step.
 - Column 10 is for who is responsible for the A-B step. It is common to have more than one person responsible. My teacher is responsible for

doing the observations, but maybe I am responsible for letting Ms. Smith and Mr. Garrot know what’s going on, or for covering the first 10 minutes of the teacher’s class.

- Column 11 is the type of support being given. This relates to another framework called *the cube of development*, but for now you can just indicate whether this is an individual or small group form of support. If I am only working with one teacher on the entering class routine, then it is individual coaching. If I am working with three of our first- and second-year teachers, then it could be coaching or group PD.

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- Columns 12-14 constitute the final part of the document, the observations section. This is an essential element because it is where we hold each other accountable for conducting meaningful classroom observations. This mutual accountability is one way that we focus ourselves on the work of quadrant 2. The data we gather from our observations is also what helps us to identify the next A-B step.

- Column 12 is who will be doing the observation. If more than one of us will be observing, and that is good practice, then we will include multiple names.
- Column 13 is when. Observations should be scheduled for a specific time and we should know when our colleagues are doing observations so that we can cover those things that will invariably “come up” when someone is scheduled to be in a classroom.
- Column 14 is where we summarize the data we gather from an observation.

12	13	14
Observations		
Who	When	Data

An Example: Ms. Franks

Let's use Ms. Franks as an example. Ms. Franks is a third-year teacher. Her growth as a teacher has been understandably disrupted by the pandemic. Ms. Franks did well pivoting to online instruction her first year and worked hard to build relationships with students. She went beyond expectations in being available to students and in encouraging them to contact her.

Ms. Franks did well in her second year when students were on an A-B schedule and class sizes were small. She struggled this fall, along with many other teachers, with the return to full size classrooms and the period of adjustment that saw a large increase in discipline issues. During this time Ms. Franks had referral numbers similar to other teachers, but observations showed high numbers of students off task and Ms. Franks was asking students to be quiet multiple times during each instructional segment.

It has become clear that Ms. Franks has not established classroom procedures. Though she has good relationships with students, and they are rarely disrespectful, there are often multiple students talking at once, even when Ms. Franks is trying to speak. There are also students frequently moving around the room with no clear purpose and student discussion during group tasks has a high rate of off-task content.

In your conversations with Ms. Franks, she admits that the students are loud but says that is due to the pandemic and expects it will get better soon. She says that she has classroom routines, but that students don't always follow them. She insists that she taught the routines at the beginning of the year.

Ms. Franks is committed to group work and wants high levels of student engagement. She is frustrated that students frequently aren't able to demonstrate meaningful outcomes from group work and she wants to improve that area.

In her efforts to keep students engaged, Ms. Franks uses lots of activities, some of which she purchases on Teachers Pay Teachers. As designed, most of the activities in her room are engaging, but they often are misaligned to either that standard or the depth of knowledge.

You have heard from another teacher that Ms. Franks is discouraged and questioning whether she is cut out for teaching.

Now, in the ideal school, every teacher is in the tracking document and receives appropriate PD based on the data. But we know that most schools exist in a real, not ideal world. We also know that administrators, especially assistant principals, may be hard pressed to consistently support even one teacher or one group of teachers. So, if you haven't gone far on the journey of teacher support, then choose just one teacher to work with.



If you are only coaching one teacher, then you better choose the right teacher! I did a whole episode of [The Assistant Principal Podcast](#) on how to select the right teacher to work with. Look for episode 8 if you haven't listened already. Assuming you aren't going to pause and dial up that episode, here are three reasons why I think Ms. Franks is a good person to coach:

1. She is willing and wants to get better.
2. There is big bang for the buck – she could be much better if we can take care of some little things, AND my life might be easier as referral rates should decrease.
3. She needs help in some areas that I know well enough to be helpful with.

So let's look at how we're going to get Ms. Franks into our tracking document. I first add her name, her 9-box rating, and the ratings, strengths, and weaknesses in four areas: classroom management, where I scored her as 1/4, Student relationships (4/4), curriculum (2/4) and pedagogy (2/4).

The ratings should be based on evidence. Those could be formal or informal

observations, discussions with Ms. Franks or other instructional leaders, or anecdotal data such as hearing students say how much they like Ms. Franks.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Teacher	9-Box rating	Key Teaching Areas			
		Area	Rating*	Strengths	Needs
Ms. Franks	Mid potential mid performing	CR management	1	Patient	Clear structures, how to reinforce routines
		Student Relationships	4	Knows backgrounds, relates well, asks questions, uses names	Recognizing full potential of each student
		Curriculum	2	Knows standards, follows curriculum map most of the time	Activities don't align to standards/depth of knowledge
		Pedagogy	2	Strong student engagement strategies	Improve procedures and prompts for group work.

Columns 7-11 are where we document our specific coaching plan and teacher support.

In column 7, I am going to put the focus area. Narrower is better

Let’s imagine that Ms. Franks wants to use better prompts for group work, so we put “Use prompts that lead to answers that align to the curricular focus.”

Column 8 is our goal. It is helpful to think about impact here – what do we want to happen as a result of our work? Ms. Franks wants students to come up with meaningful answers as a result of group work.

Column 9 is our A-B step. This is where it gets complicated. I have gotten tripped up many times. My inclination for Ms. Frank’s goal would be to hand her some guidelines on writing good prompts and ask her to try them out, but that probably would not work. Part of the issue is that her group procedures are weak, so even with good prompts she may not get the results she wants. If I simply ask her to try some prompts and they fail, then what?

If Ms. Franks doesn’t really understand how to create good prompts, then – if group work fails – she won’t know whether it is the prompt or something else. So maybe the A-B step is that she reads something on prompts, and that she takes five prompts she has previously used, and thinks about how to change them.

In column 10, we record who is responsible for the A-B step. In this case Ms. Franks is responsible for reading, pulling five old prompts, and reflecting. I am responsible for following up with the IC to make sure there is a good reading available.

In column 11, I put the type of support being given, in this case coaching. If I was working with three of our new teachers on the same thing, this might be small-group PD instead and that would change the nature of the conversations and tasks.

In my example, the “observation” is actually a review of her updated prompts. I reviewed Ms. Franks on March 3rd and noted that the prompts were aligned to the standards and that the

7	8	9	10	11
Support (what part of the cube?)				
Focus Area	Goal	A-B	Who	Support
Use prompts that lead to answers that align to the curricular focus.	Students develop meaningful answers from group work	Read article on prompts Pull 5 old prompts Reflect Talk to IC about article	Franks FB	Coaching

type of task was appropriate to the standard. In another week, when we start using new prompts, then I will want to observe what happens in groups with the new prompts and I will schedule times to observe. I have included that in the example, noting that I observed on March 10th and that answers were related to the standards, but that off-task discussion was still high and that a single student did most of the talking.

As Ms. Franks and I work through the process, the teacher tracking sheet will get updated with new A-B steps.

In wrapping up, let's reiterate some key points:

- Ideally, we use this document as part of an instructional leadership team meeting, but you can use it on your own.
- There is nothing magical about what I have included and excluded in the chart. Change it to fit your needs.
- If you are just beginning, use it on just ONE teacher. You can listen to episode 8 of the Assistant principal Podcast to help you decide which teacher.
- As a general rule of thumb, let the teacher choose the focus area.
- Break down the desired outcome into incremental, A-B steps.
- Plan and document your observations.

There is a video and of course there is the podcast episode that this handout supports and you can find those on [The Assistant Principal Podcast](#) website. Look for Episode 14.

If you'd like to give me feedback or ask a question, you can email me here: frederick@frederickbuskey.com

If you want to learn more about how I work with assistant principals, you can visit my APEX page [here](#).

If you are interested in learning more about my frameworks and strategic approach to leadership, consider subscribing to my free daily leadership email. A daily prompt to help you lead more intentionally, in 300 words or less, delivered to you each morning at 6 am. Could there be a better way to begin your day? You can learn more [here](#).