

Principal Navigator

caesa

The magazine of the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators
serving Ohio's elementary, middle level, and central office administrators

Vol. 3, No. 3, March 2008

Principals as Change Agents: Professional Development for Administrators



*****5-DIGIT 43068
MR TYRONE OLVERSON
WAGGONER RD. JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
360 WAGGONER RD
REYNOLDSBURG OH 43068-9707

Periodical
Postage
Paid
Columbus, OH



“Breakfast with a Purpose” for School Administrators

by Tyrone L. Olverson, Zoraba Q. Ross, Randall G. Sampson



Tyrone L. Olverson



Zoraba Q. Ross



Randall G. Sampson

Imagine being a part of a group of scholar practitioners who provide one another with insight, descriptive feedback, and mentoring in regards to one another's ongoing development as administrators. Many K-12 administrators have not had the opportunity to team together in such a cohort, which is built upon collegial dialogue and professional growth. However, this type of environment does exist in a cohort, which we refer to as the “Breakfast with a Purpose.” By sharing the insights and purpose of our professional cohort, we have established a strong collaborative network committed to the success of the students we serve.

Our cohort, which is a group of K-12 African American administrators, serves as a model for collaborating around a singular focus: improving student's academic achievement. Our group of administrators, from suburban and urban school districts across Ohio, has established a leadership network that promotes the cross-fertilization of innovative leadership concepts and best-practice instructional leadership strategies. We assess the various methods of

collaborating with our local community stakeholders (families, universities, and businesses) and our teachers. The open discussions about our successes and pitfalls spur a collaborative learning culture based on trust and respect. As a result, we embrace that we can serve as change agents for superior student learning outcomes, and we recognize the importance of maximizing our full leadership potential. As we guide one

another through our experiences in professional development training, research, and best practices, we believe that the continuous development of our administrative leadership skills benefits from this “team”-based learning endeavor.

We have been meeting regularly since November 2006 at various restaurants and once at Westerville South High School. This meeting was led by high school teachers who volunteered their time to demonstrate to our administrators the need and importance of common assessments in raising student achievement. For some of the administrators, this was their first time hearing and witnessing classroom teachers perform as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) for the benefit of student achievement. The work presented by the teachers validated the importance of the work many adminis-

“None of us is as smart as all of us.”

—Phil Condit

trators in this group are currently doing. Many administrators in this group have received national accolades, but the most gratifying accomplishment is to see teachers articulate and take action to the vision of providing ALL students with access to a high quality education.

The administrative group has provided multiple outreach opportunities and staff development trainings to members within the organization. Most of the opportunities and trainings answer the following questions posed in *The Thoughtful Classroom* by Dr. Harvey Silver (Silver, 2006).

1. What skills do students need to develop in order to achieve at high levels?
2. What instructional strategies enable the greatest gains in student performance?
3. How can we address the diversity of our students in a way that is manageable and provides an equal opportunity for all students to achieve?
4. How can we design units of instruction that motivate learners with different learning styles yet still address the skills and core content knowledge students need to succeed?
5. How do schools become professional learning communities that support teachers through the improvement process?

Other trainings were based on Professional Learning Community principles that focus on three "Big Ideas" of teaching versus learning, collaboration, and using data to drive decisions (Dufour and Eaker, 1998). As other administrators hear more about this unique grassroots approach to the professional development of K-12 administrators, several

"The answers to our most pressing problems will be solved by those working collaboratively to solve them."

—Dennis Sparks

of our colleagues within our collaborative group have taken on the calling of providing mentorship to principals across Ohio, Texas, Georgia, South Carolina, Michigan, West Virginia, Kansas, Florida, Kentucky, and Tennessee. One of the challenges that we encounter, like most school administrators, is the limitation of time to meet with colleagues.

To address this challenge, we have established a personalized database for electronic-communication purposes (e-mail and Web conference). We are in the

process of establishing a host internet link with a centralized calendar of events, resources, and training; this will serve as our triage unit when administrators need access to resources. At our meetings, we use these morning conversations to discuss pressing concerns and/or seek advice. The group members have built up a level of trust to where being brutally honest is the norm. These honest conversations have allowed members to hear unbiased pros and cons regarding difficult situations we face as administrators, which further assists our efforts in building consensus with staff and students.

It is our hope that coming together will stimulate the redevelopment and transformation of our colleagues (young and seasoned). We encourage higher levels of advocacy for students, action-driven goals, and mentorship within the continuous professional development of all administrators. Our experiences lead us to believe that authentic collaboration stimulates the intellectual capital of administrators and promotes the well-being of our staff and students. It is this spirit of collaboration, we believe, that will help fuel our efforts to maintain and enhance our CRAFT (Collaborate, Reflect, Adapt, Focus and Thoughtful) to better serve our professional learning communities within our perspective schools (Olverson, Ross & Sampson, 2008). For those who do not have a collegial administrative group such as this, we welcome you aboard as we SAIL onward. 🇺🇸

References

- Dufour, R., and Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. National Educational Services, Bloomington, IN.
- Olverson, Tyrone L., Ross, Zoraba Q., Sampson, Randall G. (2008). *Effective Instructional Leadership: How to CRAFT Meaningful Evaluations for Administrators and Educators*. Principal Navigator. Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators. Vol.3, No.2, January 2008.
- Silver, H. (2006). *The Thoughtful Classroom: Making Students as Important as Standards*. Reynoldsburg, OH.

Tyrone Olverson, M.Ed., is the principal at Waggoner Road Junior High School in the Reynoldsburg City School District.

Zoraba Ross, M.A., is the assistant principal and athletic director at Central Crossing High School in the SouthWestern City School District.

Randall Sampson, Ph.D., is the technical assistance coach with EdWorks, LLC (subsidiary of Knowledge Works Foundation).