

Becoming Instructional Leaders:

Lessons Learned from Instructional Leadership Work Samples

Connie L. Fulmer

University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center

Abstract: This study reports on lessons learned from pre-service principals as they completed the Instructional Leadership Work Sample project and became instructional leaders. Data were collected from 150 participants over a four-semester time period. Teacher partners for the study were recruited from a variety of subject areas and from three organizational levels.

Much has been written on instructional leadership over the past twenty years (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Cooper, 1989; Greenfield, 1987; Hallinger, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Heck, Larson, & Marcoulides, 1990; Sergiovanni, 2001). Initially, the construct caused consternation among practitioners and academics alike. In fact, one could argue that the field (professors of educational leadership and school administrators) initially rejected the idea of instructional leadership and thought of it more as the latest entry in a long list of designer-types of leadership—transformational leadership (Burns, 1978), credible leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 1993), quality leadership (Deming, 1997), creative leadership (Eisner, 1993), and situational leadership (Blanchard, Zigarmi,

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& Zigarmi, 1985)—or as an idea or activity that they did not have time for or that they thought to be clearly in the jurisdictional zone of teachers.

Examples of this ambivalent thinking are portrayed in research conducted by Harchar and Hyle (1996, p. 21), who reported that some administrators believe there is no such thing as instructional leadership, while other administrators embrace the concept and argue that the role of instructional leadership must be in place. Teachers in this same study provide evidence for the construct of instructional leadership in its absence. One elementary teacher said that her principal was not an instructional leader because he did not have experience at the elementary level. She claimed he was a good manager of people, but could not understand the conversations that were occurring at the school level.

Even scholars could not agree about the construct. While Harchar and Hyle (1996) reported that key elements of instructional leadership include establishing vision, developing trust, fostering collaboration, and demanding respect for all the school community, King (2002) argued that

there is no litmus test for the presence of instructional leadership, nor is there a definitive list of its characteristics or behaviors. In places where instructional leadership truly exists, it becomes an integral, almost invisible, part of how a school community works, lives, and learns together. (p. 63)

More recently, in the current wave of accountability and standards, instructional leadership is front and center in the preparation and professional development of principals (Leithwood, 2001; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002; Sirotnik, 2002; Southern Regional Educational Board, 1998). State and national standards have been enacted and implemented in an attempt to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap (e.g., CSAP and NCLB). Since this legislation, responsibilities for principals have burgeoned to the extent that some fear the job can no longer be done by one person, or perhaps only by a fictional super-principal type (Copland, 2001). Lambert (2002) agreed and reported that “it has been a mistake to look to the principal alone for instructional leadership, when instructional leadership is everyone’s work” (p. 40). Neuman and Simmons (2001, p. 9) proposed that in order for learning to become the focus and primary value for every member, leadership is the job of the entire education community, and must be *distributed*—one of the latest in the list of designer-leadership types.

Even though literature about the origin, emergence, demise, and rebirth of instructional leadership abounds, little empirical research has been conducted on how pre-service principals learn about, acquire, and

implement instructional leadership strategies and interventions that help teachers improve student achievement. The purpose of this study was to determine how pre-service principals, learning the role of instructional leader, were able to impact the thinking and instructional behaviors of teachers as they completed work required for the Instructional Leadership Work Sample (ILWS) project, modeled after the Teachers Work Sample (McConney, Schalock, & Schalock, 1997, 1998; Schalock, 1998a, 1998b). The most useful research on instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 1999a, 1999b, 2000) surveyed 800 teachers and asked them how their principals, or supervisors, influenced their thinking or instructional behaviors. Two themes regarding influence emerged from their work: (a) talking with teachers to promote reflection on teaching and (b) promoting professional growth. The ILWS project was designed to have pre-service principals focus their influence strategies, or interactions with teacher, on these two themes.

Research Design

This qualitative study focused on the reflections of pre-service principals found in work products of the ILWS (one of twelve performance-based projects in the ALPS Principal-Administrator Licensure Program). Data were collected from multiple sources. Initially 150 participants (25 pre-service principals and 125 teacher partners—5 for each pre-service principal—were surveyed (see Figure 1). Teacher partners were recruited by pre-service principals from a variety of content areas (reading, science, mathematics, secondary business education, biology, etc.) and different school levels (elementary, middle, and secondary). Pre-service principals and teacher partners completed pre-project surveys before being exposed to literature, in-class assignments, and activities. These data were used to determine a baseline of thinking about the effectiveness of past and present supervisors and the strategies they used to influence teaching. Additional data were collected from (a) progress reports, (b) a curriculum-intervention report (Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Wiggins & McTighe, 1988), and (c) reflections on Cogan's (1987) 8-step clinical-supervision process (see Table 2). Data were collected over four semesters and entered into NVivo for thematic analyses and coded using the process of constant-comparative analysis (Straus & Corbin, 1998) to determine emergent themes from these student reflections.

Lessons Learned from Student Reflections

The following themes emerged during the data analysis process: (a) pre-service principals' reactions to teacher-partner survey data, (b)

Table 1
Instructional Leadership Themes and Related Strategies

Talking with Teachers to Promote Reflection

Strategies

- Making suggestions
- Giving feedback
- Modeling
- Using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions
- Giving praise

Promoting Professional Growth

Strategies

- Emphasizing the study of teaching and learning
- Supporting collaboration
- Developing coaching relationship among educators
- Encouraging and supporting redesign of programs
- Applying the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development.
- Implementing action research to inform instructional decision making

Source: Blase J., & Blase, J. (1999). Principals' instructional leadership and teacher development: Teachers' perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(3), 349-378.

responses to the questions and two just hurried through it. The responses were interesting with positive, neutral and negative experiences with supervisors. But, most of the experiences seem to be negative. [SC1.4]

One even commented that “my survey was difficult to get through. I had a hard time thinking of a strategy that was positive. I wonder why the evaluation process can't be more positive” [SC1.37]. Another put it this way: “All in all, the surveys summed up my own feelings about supervision...stagnation, frustration, and very minimal focus on the administrator(s) as instructional leader(s)” [SC1.33]. This same student added that the only positive comment she ever received was “that I always looked nice and was dressed well” [SC1.35].

One pre-service principal mentioned that teachers themselves might be responsible for this negativity.

The negative responses from teachers were disheartening. I wonder, in reading them, if the principal is really that poor or if there is something about the teacher or the climate in the building that contributes to this feeling of worthlessness of the evaluation process. I can think of examples, even when thinking of my least effective administrators, of ways they helped me change my teaching practices. [SC2.13]

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Another pre-service principal noted commonalities in many of the negative responses and turned the review into a positive learning experience for herself:

The teachers who did not give positive feedback made reference to the theme of the importance of relationships— the lack thereof. Examples of being overwhelmed, receiving no encouragement, lacking a mentoring relationship, feeling frustrated with lack of purpose for observation, or the counting the number of “ahs” in an observation period, all point to a dysfunctional supervisory relationship. So, as an administrator, I must establish personal and real relationships with the staff I work with. I must give them respect and freedom to do what is best for students. I, in turn, need to share with them instructional resources available for their own professional betterment (and ultimately my own). I know I am only as good as my least productive teacher. As the leader in my school, I must not only motivate the students, but the teachers as well. [SC2.8]

The ah-hah factor. As pre-service principals responded to their analyses of data, they shared those ah-hah moments when they gained a deeper understanding of what teachers really think about the supervision process. One reported “*I think that most teachers feel the ‘observation’ process as they know it, or have known it, is something that is at most a snapshot of what they are engaged with at school*”[SC1.28]. Another pre-service principal wanted more from the data than the data revealed. “*I would like to know specifically what was effective, not effective, or did not make a difference*”[SC2.5].

One recognized, almost immediately, that her teacher partners had different skills levels and needed different types of interventions.

The teachers who have two years are very unsure of their talents. This is frustrating for me because I can see their talent, but I can’t get them to see it. I carried this frustration with me until I read their surveys. One teacher had very bad experiences with her former supervisor. No wonder she is negative about this process. [SC1.6]

Another recognized that to be an effective supervisor, “*I need to collect a body of knowledge through the readings and to use this knowledge to bring effective strategies to aid teachers, and through my observations, to improve student learning and achievement, and to impact teaching behaviors*”[SC1.30]. Another wisely noted, after reviewing survey responses, that

... those who did not seem to understand the goals of the supervisor or the importance of the strategies being suggested gives me insight on the importance of a leader to state goals clearly, to model instructional strategies, and to help teachers to impact student learning with what they do in their classrooms. [SC2.2]

A focus on the positive. Several pre-service principals, viewing the same response data, choose to focus on positive responses.

As for the surveys, I see that the number one thing an administrator has done to help a teacher is positive reinforcement. Giving a teacher room to grow and learn is a vital part of being an effective supervisor. Being a facilitator, and not a dictator, will allow teachers to effectively teach in their classrooms. [SC2.24]

Another reported the following:

I believe the common theme that I saw in the responses to the first question, was relationship. If the principal had established some type of trust, professional respect, teacher validation or sense of team, the teacher felt connected to the administrator and/or school. [SC2.7]

A penchant for action. Many pre-service principals responded to the analysis of survey data with a stated or intended future action. Whether reacting to positive or negative data, the response was toward action. One student decided to collect data from his staff, once he landed that first leadership position.

A common theme in the responses was the appreciation teachers had for being acknowledged for the positive things they do. I need to collect teacher perception data when I am a supervisor, because I believe that the responses to these questions will have the same impact on me as reading the literature will have on in helping me to become a better instructional supervisor. [SC2.21]

Another was so intrigued with the survey data and her positive relationship with her teacher partners that she wrote the following:

They view me as a colleague and a friend wishing to observe and make suggestions regarding teaching and learning. After reading the responses to each survey, I have had several discussions at length regarding the most beneficial outcome of supervision as a positive experience. I believe I have been received by my teacher-partners as a colleague in support of improving classroom instruction, as evidenced by their positive feedback during these conversations, and their willingness to work with me on this project. This continued dialogue with teacher partners was a great rapport building strategy. [SC1.5]

Other pre-service principals felt “re-directed” after reading survey data. One shared how this helped her decide how she would act once in the role.

Reading the responses to these questions actually made me feel a bit more comfortable about my role as instructional leader. I think what I worried about the most was that I would not be ‘tough enough’ for the job. But as I

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read the positive responses of teachers to the first question, I did not see 'tough' listed anywhere! I saw compassion, visibility in the building, help with classroom management, trust, inclusion of teachers in decision making, staff development, encouragement, positive feedback, high expectations, honesty, sharing of current research and literature, and team building. These are strategies that I will use in my own instructional leadership practice. [SC2.12]

Another pre-service principal shared these perceptions:

I think the answers were, and will continue to be, very helpful to me. They give real insight to what I can do to be the best that I can be. The person who mentioned that change is a process will remind us to take change slowly and not try to change a building overnight. The importance of observational feedback was stressed several times. High expectations and a positive environment were key characteristics. I will keep these surveys in my portfolio to remind me of what teachers are seeing and what they want to see in a quality instructional leader. I will do my best to become that type of supervisor. [SC2.17]

Gaining Entry

Principal candidates were both anxious and excited about enlisting the support of teacher partners to complete their work on the Instructional Leadership Work Sample project. Their reflections ranged from feelings of perceived incompetence to excitement about working on authentic projects with teaching colleagues. Perceptions of incompetence were expressed as *"I don't know what I am doing...my teachers are ready and I am not. I keep thinking I will get it, but I haven't so far"* [SC1.8]. One expressed fear of taking up a teacher's valuable time:

I have much trepidation in taking up their time. Everyone is very busy. I find myself thinking about a supervision project that will be worthwhile and beneficial to the five teacher partners and yet get it designed so as to take as little time as possible from them. [SC1.3]

Another student recognized this issue, but put it this way: *"I think my concern, that I would waste their time, is purely self-inflicted on my part, as these teachers are very positive about participating"* [SC1.25]!

Other entry issues were that pre-service principals had trouble getting their teacher partners to fill out the surveys.

My hope was to have the surveys done within a week. This has not happened. I have actually had a few teachers just leave the material in their mailboxes, stating that the survey was safer there than in their rooms. The kind requests and gentle reminders have not done the trick. I am now going to have to put a deadline on the surveys. [SC1.20]

Another shared that *". . . this process has been a big eye opener for me. I*

now see what it is like for an administrator to try to get a group of teachers to do things in a timely manner” [SC1.19].

Many pre-service principals expressed perceptions that teacher partners were willing and excited to work on this instructional leadership work sample project.

The evidence I have that I was accepted is the teacher partners' willingness to complete the pre survey just before 1st quarter report cards were due, parent teacher conferences were being scheduled, and before we went on our fall break. [SC1.2]

Another talked about the authentic nature of the project: “My teacher partners all appear to be excited. I think an opportunity to be involved with a real educational experience and to collaborate and discuss new ideas is refreshing, and they are looking forward to it” [SC1.32]. But even the most optimistic pre-service principal had a nagging fear that teacher partner participation would be at a cost to teacher partners.

I am glad to have the ball rolling on this particular project and am thinking that it may be one of the most rewarding of all the projects in this program. I am working with a talented and dedicated group of teachers. They are extremely involved and busy. I will make every attempt to make this worthwhile for their time. [SC1.18]

Impact on Teachers' Thinking or Behaviors

The Instructional Leadership Work Sample Project takes place over four semesters. By the end of the program, principal candidates need to produce a body of evidence that demonstrates which, if any, instructional interventions had an impact on the thinking or instructional behaviors of teachers. The responses below describe student perceptions of the perceived impact of their work on teacher partners. Student reflections are organized into the following themes: (a) support from administrators, (b) ease of selecting interventions, (c) valued interventions, (d) differentiation in staying power of interventions, and the (e) impact of interventions at this point.

Support from administrators. One of our principal candidates explained her project to her principal. It involved having teachers learn how to use running record assessments with their students.

I did speak to my principal and he agreed to provide coverage for a full day while teachers administered this assessment! We have a student intern working in our building, and she will work in each grade 1 classroom, while the teacher pulls individual children for assessment. This should allow teachers to relax, about the time commitment, as well as let them know that this is a procedure, an instructional intervention, that is valued by my principal. [SC2.10]

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Unfortunately, another had quite the opposite experience.

Everyone is ready and willing to help. They are all excited about this program, and I believe are very respectful of what I am trying to accomplish. The only resistance I have felt is with the elementary principal. She is not very collaborative. I believe she is very uncomfortable with the knowledge and skills I am acquiring. I will be respectful of her feelings and try to deal with her only when it is necessary. [SC1.39]

Ease of selecting interventions. Early in the project, pre-service principals were concerned about finding an appropriate intervention. Many talked about how surprised they were that teachers were eager for new ideas about their work. One student talked about how easy it was to select an appropriate intervention.

Once we focused on what she wanted to accomplish it was very easy to put a schedule together. She just needed some guidance and reassurance. I remember when a teacher did that with me when I was a new teacher. [SC1.7]

Valued interventions. Some pre-service principal talked about how grateful teacher partners were after interacting with pre-service principals. Typically, teachers are worried about their performance during evaluations. This process was different. External judgment wasn't the tool—new ideas were. *“One teacher commented on how excited she was to finally have this information because she felt she never received it in college. It was good to be talking about teaching and improving student learning”*[SC1.10].

Differentiation in staying power of interventions. Yet another pre-service principal was able to reflect on the impact of a former administrator, who had since moved from the district, and how the staying power of some of those prior interventions were determined by the skill and experience levels of the teachers who remained behind.

There is a vast difference between my three partners who have been with the district for an extended time and the two teachers who are new to the district in the last three to four years. The 'seasoned' teachers were here with the former Assistant Superintendent who put our region on the map with the development of Performance Based Learning. He left us and moved to another district and our new Assistant Superintendent has not focused on the ongoing use, training, and implementation of this wonderful research. It is amazing how quickly it has disappeared from our newer classrooms. During my work with my teaching partners, I hope our collaboration will bring the group closer together in the way they look at instruction. I can see that differences exist at this point. [SC2.11]

Impact at this point in time. Many pre-service principal comments provided perceptions of their impact at this point in time, as novice

instructional leaders. Perhaps not at the evidentiary level, but the following comments suggest that pre-service principals perceived that their interventions were having, or would have, a positive impact on the thinking or instructional behaviors of teachers.

Overall, I am excited to be doing this. It doesn't feel like just another thing to do. This is something that should be happening in this school anyway. If we are going to increase writing scores, we need consistency across the board. These interventions promise to get us there. [SC1.36]

One principal candidate talked about using her 'instructional conversation' assignment to find out if teachers were actually implementing the interventions in their teacher practices. This strategy was sure to provide this particular pre-service principal with data for her body of evidence.

This strategy is one of the best ways to acquire understanding in students. These strategies are what I am attempting to cultivate in my teachers partners. The questions I asked them on the 'instructional conversation' were designed to help me understand if the interventions are being implemented. I see some initial attempts. However, we are not there yet. [SC2.19]

Another felt his impact was felt immediately and spread to the entire district.

I discussed what we were doing with the superintendent and he asked if we would present the one-minute assessments to the entire faculty. I hope to continue with this type of program. We are very isolated in our small community and this is a great method of involving everyone in professional development. [SC2.23]

Similarly, another reflected about the power of collaboration in her intervention and commented that

. . . the concept of collaboration seeks to tap the potential that group interaction offers for learning and development. As a team, our efforts have been overwhelmingly positive. The students see how the teachers are working together and we use our teamwork as a model in our instruction during cooperative group assignments. [SC3.2]

Yet another talked about the impact the intervention was having, not only on the teachers, but also on him.

While Wiggins and McTighe (1998) suggested this would happen to teachers, I must report that I am also becoming aware, empathetic, and have found myself consciously questioning my own understandings. When I find myself questioning what I thought I understood, a whole new experience occurs and my beliefs have either been changed (promoting more questioning) or my beliefs become truths. [SC3.1]

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Other projects in the program were impacted by the work undertaken by pre-service principals for the ILWS project.

I have also involved all of my teacher partners in my School Culture Project, a cultural study activity from Deal and Peterson (1999). This was very effective. My principal was impressed with the information we received from the survey. We are now trying to develop an improvement plan to address some of the issues discovered from the survey. I am very excited about where we are headed. It is nice to have so much cooperation from others. [SC1.26]

Another opened her project to the entire staff.

I have spent time organizing what I would do for this project. I came up with a collaborative teachers meeting to be held once a week. I opened this group to anyone in our school who wanted to participate. So far I have 8 teachers in the group. We have a mission statement (DuFour & Eaker, 1988) and an essential question for each meeting. This keeps it from turning into a grip or gossip session. During our first meeting we focused on the mission statement and developed an agenda. I asked the teachers for their input as to what they would like to learn. [SC2.22]

Power of 8-Step Clinical-Supervision Process

Pre-service principals were asked to use Cogan's (1973) 8-step clinical-supervision process to learn how to work with teachers and provide interventions (see Table 2) and to write up a personal narrative about the experience. Traditionally, many supervision processes use the shortened version (pre-observation, observation, post-observation), or the 3-step process (Acheson & Gall, 2003). While these principal candidates were beginners in working with teachers, the power of the 8-step process came through loud and clear. Perhaps this is the strongest evidence that these pre-service principals are becoming instructional leaders.

I really like the 8-step process. However, I don't know if many principals realize how important establishing the teacher-supervisor relationship is. From my own experience, the principal has informed me I will be observed, and, most of the time, the expectation of the observation is conveyed (Cogan's third phase). Most of the time, however, I believe this first phase is skipped entirely. A principal needs to establish a relationship first. This would probably alleviate many of the fears teachers have about 'being evaluated'. I have never experienced phase 2, mutual planning, with any principal, even in my first few years when I could have used the help. [SC1.11]

Another expressed a preference for the last phase of the 8-step process, renewed planning.

I have always enjoyed the last phase, because this is where teacher learning takes place. Granted, this process is not always carried out, but the principals who have truly cared about my growth as a teacher have been very

Table 2
Reflection Format for the Cycle of Clinical Supervision Phases Report

Phase 1: Establishing the teacher-supervisor relationship.

1. What strategies did you use to establish this teacher-supervisor relationship?
2. What evidence do you have that you were accepted by your teacher partners as a colleague in support of improving classroom instruction?

Phase 2: Planning with the teacher.

1. What did planning with teacher partners look like?
2. What evidence do you have about how well this part of the cycle went for the teacher?

Phase 3: Planning the strategy of observation.

1. What strategies (objectives, processes, physical and technical arrangements, and the collection of data) did you use to help the teacher collect data from the teaching learning experience?
2. What evidence do you have?

Phase 4: Observing instruction.

1. What were the logistics of the observation?
2. What evidence of student learning did you collect?

Phase 5: Analyzing the teaching-learning processes.

1. What strategy did you use to analyze the data?
2. What evidence do you have that students benefited from this teaching-learning cycle?

Phase 6: Planning the strategy of the conference.

1. Based on the data analysis, what is your goal for the conference?
2. How will you deal with weaknesses that teachers exhibit in the instructional process?

Phase 7: The Conference.

1. Did you follow your conference plan?
2. How useful do you think the teacher perceived the conference to be in providing insight as to the impact of the teacher's instructional behavior on student achievement?
3. What evidence do you have that the teacher was receptive your instructional leadership strategies?

Phase 8: Renewed Planning.

1. What next steps were decided at the conference?
 2. What evidence do you have that the cycle was useful to the teacher partner?
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helpful. It is my hope to do the same for others. I have always wanted to be a teacher of teachers, so I look forward to using all of these phases in my work with teachers. [SC1.12]

One other candidate, already working as an assistant principal, wrote the following:

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I used this process last year when conducting teacher evaluations. It has proven to be quite effective in my school. It really creates buy-in for the teachers as well as gives me an idea of the teacher's own ideas of their strengths and weaknesses. [SC1.22]

Another shared these comments:

I like the 8-step process. I get to know the needs of these people a little better, and see that the application of this process is unique to each person, even though the clinical supervision cycle is the same for everyone. This is important as the strategies, strengths, and needs of the individual teacher vary greatly. [SC1.29]

Some comments provided evidence that these pre-service principals had not been able to discriminate between evaluation processes [Evaluation Cycle Project] and supervision processes [Instructional Leadership Work Sample] focused on the improvement of instruction. Although presented as two different tools, or projects, this comment illustrated, that while she understands the power of the clinical supervision cycle, she could not see how it would help her evaluate teachers—which in fact was never the goal of the Instructional Leadership Work Sample.

My initial reaction to the 8-step process and the Wiggins & McTighe (1988) content was excitement. What a wonderful way to supervise teachers and students. This would be a positive way and a helpful way to work with one another. However, I wonder about the time it will take to do this with every teacher. Would you do every evaluation like this? Would you do each evaluation like this if you had to do three a year for the teacher? I think it would be great—I just wonder about the time. [SC1.38]

It appears that the instructional team and scholars and researchers have more work to do in this area.

Other positive statements by pre-service principals about the process follow: “This is not an observation but rather a process of learning together” [SC2.26]. “Instead of a process where a teacher is simply judged on performance, it is a collaborative process” [SC1.16].

This method of supervision is a process rather than an event in the cycle of a teacher's tenure at an institution. If this process could be used on-going in a rather informal way the teachers would be allowed to grow over time rather than perform for an evaluator a few times a year. [SC1.23]

One principal candidate recognized the similarity of the 8-step process and the very intervention she was using with her teacher partners.

In a sense, the use of running records with students parallels the clinical supervision process with teachers. We are being reflective about the student's reading techniques and teaching them to be reflective also. I am glad that I chose this as my project with my teacher partners. [SC2.32]

Other pre-service principals seem to grasp the power the 8-step process in the larger sense.

As a final note, I am beginning to understand why this process is no longer considered evaluation but instead, instructional leadership. The role of the principal is not to simply check the progress of a teacher and offer advice, but it is an ongoing, circular process of collaborating with teachers in all phases to design, plan, incorporate, analyze, and refine. The role of the principal is expanded, rightfully so, to ensure student learning is the objective and school improvement is the goal. [SC1.14]

Another example of the power of the cycle is expressed in the following comment. This principal candidate has seen progress but recognizes that more must be done to implement the intervention.

Overall, I find that the group is so busy with learning the administration of the assessment, that they have not applied the results to drive instruction. I will have the teachers look through miscues together and talk about what they mean and what strategies we can give the children to help them solve reading problems on their own. This should help. [SC2.27]

Others recognized the fact the process is ongoing and while instant change would be great ... it rarely happens.

After all, we can't expect change to happen overnight (Fullan, 2001); it is a gradual process. I must be patient and yet not lose the sense of urgency to accomplish something that I feel is important. I think this will be very difficult for me as a principal. Finding the fine line between pushing and giving change time to sink in is a difficult call. [SC2.28]

Learning the Instructional Leadership Role

One of the instructional goals of the Instructional Leadership Work Sample is that pre-service principals learn what it takes to be an instructional leader. The following comments show their thinking as they prepare to take on this responsibility.

In my head I am seeing a principal's role as being the master teacher of the staff. I was surprised about how knowledgeable teachers expect principals to be. The teachers assume that principals will automatically have discipline (only mentioned by a few), but focus on how the principal has or has not helped them with their teaching. I am beginning to realize how important it is to read educational literature and to stay current on instructional practices. [SC2.9]

Two pre-service principals put it this way. "Thus far, the overall experience of supervision has been very valuable. It has increased my awareness as a teacher, but more importantly, the role that I have as the instructional leader in my school" [SC3.3]. "Being an instructional

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supervisor is more than just evaluating curriculum and instructional strategies. It is being available for the teachers when there is something to celebrate and when there is a need” [SC2.6].

Another wrote:

All of the frameworks that I have read about helped me get a better handle on my role as an instructional leader. While observing and learning more about the role that I will play as a principal, I have found a competency observation form that develops my performance as a ‘coach’. Currently, as my clinical practice becomes more involved, I have been given the opportunity to fill in for the assistant principal for several days. Each time, that I have been in the role as supervisor, I have become aware of the liability a school district holds when employing ‘marginal’ teachers (Lawrence, Vachon, Leake, & Leake, 2001). [SC2.3]

Another wrote, *“It truly is only a matter of time before this teacher will be involved in a serious supervision incidence. The documentation needs to be done in order to prevent a law suit to the school district” [SC2.4].*

Others reflected about additional responsibilities for the instructional leader. *“I think that, as an administrator, it is up to me to find a way to curb negativity in teachers” [SC2.14]. “My goal is that my teacher partners see the ‘administrator’ as an avenue for instructional support and as a resource in acquiring or providing the latest expertise in instruction” [SC3.5]. “I now know that I must establish and maintain these relationships. I have learned the value of giving teachers encouragement, support, and guidance as they grow into instructional masters” [SC3.4].*

Price Paid when Preparing to Lead

These final perspectives provide compelling evidence of the price paid by pre-service principals who enrolled in leadership programs while holding full time jobs. When we introduce these pre-service principals to the program, we tell them that program expectations are high, that the job of a principal is particularly tough, that strong leadership is crucial for the success of the school, and that we will do everything in our power to help them be successful. But, in the end, it is up to the student to hold it together in the face of the economic and personal costs of the program, to invest the time required for successful program completion, to balance the rest of their life with work responsibilities, and to come out the other end of the program as a competent, well prepared, enthusiastic, future principal. The perspectives below speak for themselves and the price these pre-service principals pay when they prepare for leadership roles.

I am really discouraged and tired right now, and at times I feel so overwhelmed. I’ve been working 60 to 80 hour weeks. The core leadership team in my district is falling apart. I am trying to hold together what I can.

I have so much to do that the quality of my work is suffering. But, I also know that being in this program is an excellent learning opportunity for me. So, I will keep going. [SC1.1]

Currently, the only concerns I have are about scheduling the formal evaluations and completing them in a timely manner. I am also having difficulty keeping up with all the work for this program and being effective in my position here at the school at the same time. I am dealing with a sexual harassment lawsuit here at school and a divorce at home. I am a person that can be quite [focused] about timelines and blowing this one causes me a bit of distress. I will continue to keep plugging at what needs to be done and do my best on each project. So, in a nutshell, I am hanging on, getting it done, and moving on to the next mini-crisis. Hanging on by the skin of my teeth reverberates through me at the moment. And on I go. [SC1.24]

I am hoping for a very positive experience. I tried so hard to be positive on my pre-project survey, but I just didn't know how to. A veteran teacher, with whom I do not always agree, had a wonderful chat with me in her room one day (she is not a teacher partner). She said that she honestly feels sorry for me. She has seen good administrators. She has seen a positive school climate and a thriving educational environment. She said that she knows that I have not...and for that she is sad. She said I truly do not know what a positive educational environment nor leader looks like. And she is right. I have not felt that I am part of something magnificent since I started my career six years ago in this school district. I have loved my students, my job, and my colleagues, but there has been something missing from this district. And I don't even know enough to know what it is. But, I am learning...I want to make sure that the magic is present in the school that I eventually lead. [SC1.34]

Major Findings

The reflections from pre-service principals on becoming instructional leaders collected during the ILWS project are presented in this paper. Six major themes that emerged from these data were used to organize this article: (a) pre-service principals' perceptions of teacher-partner survey data, (b) gaining entry to instructional-leadership partnerships, (c) pre-service principals' impact on teacher partners' thinking and instructional behavior, (d) perceived power of the 8-step clinical supervision process, (e) learning the instructional leadership role, and (f) the price paid when preparing to lead (see Table 3). The reflections reported here are representative of student responses about lessons learned and detail the level of impact that pre-service principals completing the ILWS project had on the thinking and instructional behaviors of their teacher partners.

Major findings from this work include:

1. A pervasive and negative perception of current and past

Table 3
Emergent Themes from Student Reflections

1. Student principal reaction to survey data
 - a. focus on the negative
 - b. the ah-hah factor
 - c. focus on the positive
 - d. penchant for action
 2. Gaining entry
 3. Impact on teachers' thinking or instructional behaviors
 - a. support from administrators
 - b. ease of selecting interventions
 - c. valued interventions
 - d. differentiation in staying power of interventions
 - e. impact at this point in time
 4. Power of the 8-step clinical-supervision process
 5. Learning the instructional leadership role
 6. Price paid when preparing to lead
-

supervision/evaluation processes exists in many schools and districts in this study. Research should be conducted to find the source of this negativity so it can be reduced, mediated, or eliminated and more developmental practices put into place.

2. While being positive helps to neutralize the negative culture of evaluation, it is not enough to change the culture. Teachers need to experience authentic practices aimed at improving student learning, rather than judgmental activities focused on teaching behaviors.

3. The instructional leadership role is crucial for lasting and productive change in schools. Pre-service principals felt the expectations from their teacher partners to assist them in improving their instruction. They also felt the need to acquire deep knowledge about instruction and learning to support teachers.

4. Pre-service principals found tools, research, strategies, and instructional interventions that would impact the thinking and behaviors of teachers to improve student achievement. They selected these activities from appropriate literature and used them with specific teacher partners to make a difference in student learning activities.

5. The ILWS project is a productive tool to help pre-service

principals develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for the role of instructional leadership in schools. The structure of the project provided scaffolding, in the form of conceptual frameworks and reflective questions, for future principals to learn about instructional leadership with teachers in the context of improving teaching and learning.

6. The use of survey data (teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the current and past supervision/evaluation processes) is a valuable strategy to help pre-service principals become instructional leaders. These data helped future principals see the negative responses to traditional evaluation processes and methods. Real time data from real teachers provided support for learning instructional-leadership behaviors.

7. The price pre-service principals pay when they attend preparation programs is high. Performance-based learning is more complex than sit-and-get learning. When future principals participate in leadership preparation programs at the same time they are in teaching positions, the work load is extremely heavy. Future leaders should be placed in paid non-teaching positions while they are in training.

Summary

The findings of this study support the use the ILWS to help pre-service principals learn the role of instructional leadership and the skills to impact the thinking and instructional behaviors of teachers. However, in order to advance the impact instructional leadership can have on the instructional behaviors of teachers toward the end of actually improving student achievement, the field—scholars and practitioners alike—must address the ambivalence that unfortunately exists in both the literature and in practice. Current processes of evaluation do little either to improve instruction or to eliminate bad teachers from the profession. Far too much time and effort has been invested in these ineffective processes. Other more productive strategies receive far too little attention. Many of these well-intended activities (supervision, evaluation, and professional development) are at cross-purposes. If scholars and practitioners do not take the time to work through the ambivalence and refocus the appropriate practices on intended goals, they will remain unrealized.

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