

Supervising Principals for Instructional Leadership: A Teaching and Learning Approach

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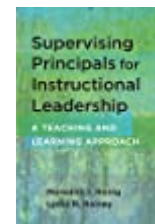
Title: Supervising Principals for Instructional Leadership: A Teaching and Learning Approach

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Principals and their supervisors often spend significant time addressing non-instructional issues, which can limit a principal's ability to be an effective instructional leader. However, when principals are effective instructional leaders, their teachers are more engaged, teacher satisfaction and retention improves, and students are more likely to succeed (Goldring et al., 2018). Instructional leadership, which includes teacher development, critical studies of classroom interactions, analysis of student data (Blase & Blase, 2000), and cultural responsiveness (Khalifa et al., 2016) is central to the academic achievement of students from all backgrounds. Yet, school districts have only recently begun to focus on the support principals receive from their supervisors (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Goff et al., 2015). In alignment with this change in focus, principal supervisors are also shifting their attention from administration, operations, and compliance tasks to instructional leadership development for principals.

Supervising Principals for Instructional Leadership: A Teaching and Learning Approach by Meredith I. Honig and Lydia R. Rainey is a must-read for current principal supervisors, principal coaches, and researchers who desire to transition from the traditional and incomplete focus on operational and compliance-based management of principals. The book is divided into two sections. Chapters One through Five review key elements and evidence related to principal supervision and provide effective practices taken by districts and principal supervisors. The second section of the book is an appendix, which includes tools and guides for improving principal supervision. Taken together, the book provides critical information and a series of practical examples to show readers how applying a teaching and learning approach to supervision can benefit principals, teachers, and ultimately students. The authors draw upon socio-cultural learning theories to present findings of effective district and principal supervisor practices across nine diverse school districts. The combination of theory and in-depth cases from multiple districts sets this book apart from other texts.

The introductory chapter provides the reader with an understanding of principal supervision challenges and the roles principal supervisors can play in supporting principals and improving campus-based instructional leadership. This chapter sets the stage for understanding principal supervision by first highlighting the “managerial imperative” that has historically been prioritized in the work of principals. Then, the chapter provides foundational insights into the role of central office and a teaching and learning framework to principal supervision. Of note, the seven-part framework includes descriptive teaching moves that principal supervisors use to support principal learning and development.

Chapter Two provides examples of effective principal supervisors who drew upon a teaching and learning approach to support principals through one-on-one support. Specifically, the chapter highlights the differences

between traditional approaches to principal supervision versus a teaching and learning approach. The chapter includes examples of how principal supervisors helped principals take control of their learning by drawing upon specific teaching moves to help principals shift from a compliance focus toward a professional growth model. The use of positive and negative cases is helpful in illustrating the teaching and learning approach that is central to the book's purpose. Chapter Three focuses on the teaching and learning approach through a professional learning community model (PLC). The authors highlight the importance of shifting from a traditional, compliance-driven approach to principal meetings to a community of practice that is intentionally organized for instructional leadership development. The chapter describes and emphasizes the importance of focusing on authentic tasks that are relevant to principals' daily work. The positive and negative cases of principal PLCs provide the reader with critical insights into the opportunities and pitfalls for principal supervisors seeking to facilitate meetings that support principals' instructional leadership development.

Chapter Four takes a closer look at positive and negative cases by focusing on why some principal supervisors improved their practices and were able to sustain a teaching and learning approach, while others reverted back to compliance-oriented approaches. This chapter is helpful because it highlights conditions that support and constrain a teaching and learning approach to principal supervision. Chapter 5 provides a set of directions for district administrators, policymakers, and researchers to improve principal leadership and the supervisor role. Recommendations focus on policies and practices districts can take to support principal supervision. A key takeaway from this chapter is a need for districts to move beyond making superficial changes and instead challenges district leaders with making more foundational changes.

The appendix provides a set of tools that districts and principal supervisors can use to improve principal supervision. Exhibit One is principal supervisor standards that can be used to assess supervisor improvements. Exhibit Two is a survey instrument to track principal supervisor growth. Exhibit Three is a professional growth plan aligned to exhibit one standard for principal supervisors. Exhibit Four is a set of chapter-by-chapter reflection and discussion questions that districts or universities might use to train current or aspiring principal supervisors.

Supervising Principals for Instructional Leadership: A Teaching and Learning Approach is an accessible guide for principal supervisors, principal coaches, and researchers who are looking to investigate instructional leadership development. We believe that this book will be an asset for leadership preparation programs for aspiring district leaders, instructional leadership training, and district offices as it provides readers with practical strategies that focus on teaching and learning. Not only do the authors successfully articulate the need for instructional development, they also identify and challenge ineffective assumptions and ideologies that often reside in educational institutions. While the book has many strengths, we believe principal supervisors can extend their impact beyond what is described in the text. Principal supervisors can also help principals consider their own racial identities and provide support as they address racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and other forms of marginalization that often exist within districts, schools, classrooms, and communities. Supplemental readings focused on mentoring and leadership development, particularly for leaders of color, will strengthen the applicability of this book (Hernández et al., 2014; Rodríguez et al., 2016). In sum, we believe that *Supervising Principals for Instructional Leadership: A Teaching and Learning Approach* is an innovative text that can help instructors and district administrators reshape the role and preparation of principal supervisors.

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