

Leadership in Education Podcast

Instructional leadership practices for school principals

Dr Sipiwe Mthiyane, Senior Lecturer at the Wits School of Education discusses issues of instructional leadership with Adriaan and Louis Groenewald of the Leadership Platform and Barbara Dale-Jones, CEO of BRIDGE (2016-04-25).



Barbara Dale-Jones and Dr Sipiwe Mthiyane

Instructional leadership = the leadership and management of teaching and learning in the school.

Context of the discussion:

- This discussion reflects research generated from top performing township schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
- It recognises the difficulty of leading and managing schools against a background of ‘multiple deprivation’ and the damaging effects of historical and current injustice.

“When we talk of effective instructional leadership we are talking of the type of principal who jealously guards teaching and learning at the school.” Dr Sipiwe Mthiyane

Instructional leadership practices	How do principals implement these practices to ensure their schools provide effective teaching and learning?
‘Walk the talk’	They are visible and involved; they model the behaviour they expect of teachers and learners; they teach examination subjects, including teaching extra classes.
Don’t compromise on teaching time	They guard against anything encroaching on teaching time; they show courage and are willing to take unpopular decisions in the best interests of the learners.
‘Grow their own timber’	They develop their own teachers by providing them with induction, training and mentoring – i.e. they do not rely on the DBE for this.
Maximise teaching and learning	They make sure all teachers and learners are in class, on time, and that teaching and learning is taking place; they extend teaching time, e.g. starting the day / term early.
Establish order and discipline	They set and maintain firm routines; the school day and school environment is ordered, disciplined and predictable; discipline is non-negotiable.
Constantly monitor teaching and learning	They work through the HoDs who are empowered to play their role; teachers and learners understand that there are high expectations and strive to meet them.
Accept accountability	They understand and accept that they are accountable for what happens in their schools; their attitude is ‘the buck stops with me’.

Some ideas to think about ...

- In my school, what challenges and conflicts do we experience in putting teaching and learning first? How do we deal with them? How successful are we and what more can we do?
- Which of the practices described here are already in place at my school? How can I strengthen them? How can I implement any that are missing?
- How can I increase my influence as the instructional leader of the school?



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For more information, contact Thantshi Masitara at Thantshi@BRIDGE.ORG.ZA