Is There a Happiness Advantage for Schools?

by Bobby Moore, EdD

Teachers and school leaders can cultivate the mindset and behaviors that have been empirically proven to fuel greater success and fulfillment. The old paradigm, "If I am good at my job, my students learn at high levels, and I am highly successful, it will bring me happiness," has now been debunked by more than a decade of groundbreaking research in the fields of positive psychology and neuroscience.

Carol Dweck's work on growth mindset has been popular in education, but most of the research has only been applied in the context of teachers fostering a growth mindset in students. We know from John Hattie's research that when a group of educators develop the mindset that they do indeed have a great impact on student learning; that collective efficacy is achieved. Collective efficacy has an effect size of 1.57, much higher than the .4 effect size, which is said to equate to a year's worth of growth.

Applying the research of positive psychology in our schools is more than telling staff to be happy, focus on the positive aspects of your job, and pretend challenges and obstacles do not exist. To embed these practices, we must relearn some of our behaviors and change some of our mindsets that have had a negative impact on

success and fulfillment. As Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage: Seven Principles of Positive Psychology that Fuel Success and Performance at Work* explains, "Happiness is not the belief that we don't need to change. It is the realization that we can. Happiness and optimism are the precursors to success, not merely the result."

When I first heard Achor's TED talk (http://bit.ly/AchorTT), which has been viewed more than 14 million times, I did not immediately make the connection to how his research could improve schools. I viewed it as an opportunity to work on my own mindsets and behaviors, which hopefully would contribute to my own success and fulfillment. That changed after I saw Shawn's keynote at the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Conference last year in Phoenix, during which he talked about the transformation of Cardinal School District in Iowa. The new superintendent of Cardinal, Joel Pederson, turned around the culture and performance of the district by implementing Achor's core principles from *The Happiness Advantage*. Read the district's story in the September issue of *AASA School Administrator* (http://bit.ly/AASA916).

I was excited about the potential of Achor's research to help create more positive school cultures, but I was still a little skeptical about how. So, I reached out to Dr. Randy Poe, a former Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA) and Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA) superintendent of the year, who had also brought *The Happiness Advantage* to Boone County Schools. Over the years, I have come to respect Randy as a leader committed to pedagogy, research, and practice. His district is one of the highest performing in the state of Kentucky, and I frequently bump into him and his staff at national conferences sharing the district's work.

I asked Randy bluntly, "Why did you choose to implement Shawn Achor's work in Boone County? Was it really needed, or did it turn out to be a distraction to all the other great things you are doing?" He paused for a second to reflect and then said confidently, "Jim Collins (*Good to Great*, 2001) discussed the importance of getting the right people on the bus, Daniel Pink (*Drive*, 2009) shared how to keep those people engaged and motivated, and Shawn Achor's work is important because it not only keeps the wheels on the bus, but keeps them moving in the same direction. Culture matters!" Randy

is so committed to the power of positive psychology in schools that he requires all new leaders to develop a 21-day action plan on how they will develop their own

> "Fortunately, positive emotions are also contagious, which makes them a powerful tool in our quest for high performance..."

mind sets and behaviors (one of Achor's principles). He also clearly communicates to principals that they are responsible for their school's culture (and results). This conversation confirmed for me the importance of working with leaders and teachers and giving them the tools and resources to own their own happiness.

Next, I had the opportunity to join Dr. Lisa Hagel, Superintendent of Michigan's Genesee Intermediate School District, and her staff as they engaged in the Orange Frog Workshop™, a two-day,

experiential workshop developed by the International Thought Leader Network (ITLN) and Achor, which is rooted in the core principles from *The Happiness Advantage.* To serve as a starting point for the workshop, Achor wrote *The Orange Frog,* a parable that illustrates the journey to creating a happier, more productive, more satisfying life and workplace. Witnessing firsthand how the workshop fostered collaboration, trust, and the ownership of important behaviors associated with a healthy school culture, I was excited to share the opportunity with the superintendents and principals that Battelle for Kids works with across the country.

As Achor explains, most people think the science of happiness is useful for the people around them, but the person we have the greatest power to change is ourselves. We have all felt and observed the power of negative emotions in our schools. For the last decade strong accountability systems that seem more prone to name, blame and shame than help schools improve;

portrayal of failing schools across the media, and limited resources have all taken its toll on school culture. This and other negativity can infect a group of people almost instantly. Fortunately, positive emotions are also contagious, which makes them a powerful tool in our quest for high performance in the workplace. And more importantly, the power to spark positive emotions multiplies if you're in a leadership position.

Battelle for Kids is excited to announce an exclusive partnership with ITLN to help bring The Orange Frog Workshop™ to K–12 education. Learn more at bfk.org/OrangeFrog.

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A Primer on Lean Essentials for School Leaders - Part 3
Are You Wondering What To Do About Quality Teaching?

by Shannon Flumerfelt, PhD, and JJ Villarreal, EdD

This article is the third in a three-part series designed to introduce elementary school leaders to a world-class leadership philosophy and methodology known as lean. Lean was defined and then applied via Concept Mapping to T-TESS in the first article. In the second article, lean was applied via Process Mapping and Kaizen to student benchmarking. In this article, lean will be applied to the management of quality teaching via 5S and Leader Standard Work.

For elementary leaders, managing quality teaching is a critical ongoing activity to ensure three outcomes. These outcomes are: 1) that students have equal access to educational opportunity, 2) that faculty are working collaboratively (and not competitively) to develop best instructional practice for your campus, and 3) that funding sources based on quality teaching are not disrupted. Beyond state education legislation that largely defines teaching quality as opposed to quality teaching, based on training, certifications and renewals and T-TESS, the state teacher evaluation system, managing quality teaching in the classroom is a much larger charge for educational leaders. In the classic report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (1996, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future), three points are made for quality teaching. First, teachers must have both theoretical and practical knowledge mastery in content areas and pedagogy. Second, onboarding and professional development of teachers must be planned and developmentally appropriate for faculty growth. And third, there must be instructional leadership in place for teachers to have appropriate teaching cultures and learning environments. In one study, it is interesting to learn that

Texas found that teaching quality variations, or a lack of quality teaching, were fundamentally the root cause of student achievement variations in math and reading (Rivkin, Hanushe & Kain, 2005). So, there is a lot of benefit for principals and educational leaders to figure out how to close the skill gap and competencies of classroom teachers to ensure that shred quality teaching is, in fact, a secured scenario for students (Shields, Esch, Humphrey Young, Gaston & Hunt, 1999).

Certainly, as an elementary leader, you are likely working to hire the right teaching candidates with the best credentials, and to support all teaching candidates and faculty through relevant, long-term induction as well through monitoring, mentoring, training and evaluating. However, it is still possible teaching quality may not be consistent enough on your campus to result in quality teaching. In this case, there may be a need for you to consider your role as an educational leader in an enriched way. In other words, this means you may need to learn new and different strategies that take you away from the no-win dynamic of working harder and harder for teaching quality, to the lean performance management system of working together to identify campus-based points of

improvement for quality teaching. Let's face it, establishing real quality teaching is a great way to build up faculty expertise, and in turn, improve student achievement—a win-win! Therefore, this article poses the challenge, "Are you wondering what to do about quality teaching?"

Beyond policy-driven credentialing, campus-based inductions, and legislative-driven teacher evaluation systems, quality teaching is defined by seven observable behaviors that should occur between teachers and students (Darling-Hammond, 2011, online):
1) Providing active learning
2) Challenging students intellectually
3) Teaching via differentiation strategies
4) Assessing in real-time and adapting to student needs
5) Using scaffolds, supports and connections for student meaning
6) Clarifying of learning standards via student mastery learning, including revisions
7) Enabling student collaboration

This is an impressive list of what quality teaching includes. Any one of these teaching behaviors certainly extends beyond the scope of teaching as driven by the state's ideas alone. As an educational leader, you have an opportunity to move beyond mandated teaching

quality to shared quality teaching. That is, if you want quality teaching (for at least 20% of your campus—the recommended minimal level for student achievement), then you will have to do more than implement required systems and processes. You will have to figure out how to create shared, measurable, and relevant standards of teaching used by at least 80% of faculty. To do this, you may be wondering:

1) How do I develop structures to inform and support strong quality teaching decisions accessible to all of my faculty?
2) How do I ensure my faculty are using shared quality teaching standards?

If these questions reflect some of what you are contemplating as an elementary leader, then you might find it helpful to select some principles and strategies from the Lean Performance Management System. As described in previous articles, lean is a world-class set of leadership practices (Womack, Jones & Roos, 1990) and in recent years much emphasis has been focused on applying lean to education specifically (Womack, 2006; Todd, et. al 2001; Stedinger, 1996; Flumerfelt & Green, 2012; Flumerfelt, Kahlen, Alves, Siriban-Manalang, 2015; Arnold & Flumerfelt, 2012). Superintendents, principals, faculty, school boards and state Departments of Education have been working to learn how to use *Lean Essentials for School Leaders* (see Appendix A), a branded method of lean application for K-12 education specifically. Through *Lean Essentials for School Leaders,* districts from Traverse City, MI, to Johnson City, MD, to Kimberly, WI, and Rockwall, TX, have found lean helps manage processes better through smoother pacing and cleaner work flows to get better results of work as qual-

ity and efficiencies gains (Lean Enterprise Institute, 2007). *Lean Essentials for School Leaders* is supported by long-standing research conducted in all sectors including healthcare, finance, manufacturing, government and non-profits (Burton & Boeder, 2003; Bicheno, 2008; US-EPA, 2007). And now, educational leaders are learning to benefit from lean as well (Flumerfelt, 2012; Alves, Kahlen, Flumerfelt & Siriban-Manalang, 2012).

In total, *Lean Essentials for School Leaders* is a large method (with more than 50 tenets and tools), whereby administrators can select any combination of one or more strategies, depending on the situation, such as culture and climate of the school, the urgency of the problem to school improvement, and the complexity of systems or processes as enablers or inhibitors of results. To give you a sense of how to use *Lean Essentials for School Leaders* to better manage quality teaching, a revised excerpt from the book, *Lean Essentials for School Leaders* (Flumerfelt, 2012) is provided next. The excerpt focuses on the concept of Leader Standard Work and the lean tool, 5S.

The concept of Leader Standard Work draws on the recreation of habits of head, heart and hands through standardizing and sustaining best teaching practice through the lean tool, 5S. Leader standard work is a strategy for improving current practice by focusing on teaching processes first and teaching results second. Often an inverse relationship exists between work process and work product in education. This is because as the processes of teaching become more complex and oblique, the results of teaching seem more tangible and easier to deal with. Therefore, performance

results become the focus of policy, legislation and administrative work. And, teaching processes often get neglected. This situation makes it difficult for everyone on campus, students, faculty and administration, to deal with the two challenges of this article: 1) creating structures to inform and support strong quality teaching decisions accessible to all of faculty and 2) ensuring all faculty are using shared quality teaching standards. The concept of Leader Standard Work and the lean, 5S, provide guidance in addressing these challenges.

Leader Standard Work is defined as leader facilitated and modeled improved work processes that enable shared best practice to be understood, individually internalized and then permanently held throughout the campus. The 5S tool is the method to arrive at Leader Standard Work. 5S consists of five steps:

1) Sorting-identifying steps, elements or activities critical or required to a process **and** moving aside those that are not critical or required;
2) Setting-prioritizing and categorizing those process steps, elements or activities critical or required so they are more easily understood;
3) Shining-improving the steps, elements or activities critical or required to an operation or process through pilots and feedback loops;
4) Standardizing-developing culture, climate and accountability through training, mentoring, collaborating, and/or evaluating, by using the improvements in the steps, elements, or activities so they are accepted and expected in systems and processes; and
5) Sustaining-creating rewards, recognition, incentives, monitoring

and maintenance work, such as through instructional rounds, administrative or peer observation, kaizen sessions, teaching evaluation for maintaining the improvement in the steps, elements or activities in the changed teaching practices.

The following example illustrates how Leader Standard Work and the 5S tool could be used to meet the two quality teaching challenges.

Let's say you are working with a campus-faculty team, such as a School Improvement Team or a PLC, examining classroom student achievement data in reading. The reading scores of a particular group of children from a particular teacher's classroom are very low. While there may be an individual teacher performance problem occurring, as an instructional leader, you will direct your faculty team to focus on the process of reading instruction through the 5S tool. As the administrator, you have employee policy and the T-TESS evaluation system to use to deal with individual teacher incompetence. But, this situation is a great opportunity to collectively examine how reading instruction is delivered on campus. Reading instruction is a complex process and you want to be sure everything possible has been done to maximize shared standards of teaching reading and faculty knowledge of teaching reading. This means your campus has a chance to first examine the process of reading to look for best practice such as, active learning, intellectual rigor, strategy variation, timely feedback and adaption, scaffolding, student mastery and student collaboration, as described earlier. Since it is known quality teaching is such an impactful strategy for student achievement, why not focus on this instructional process as a campus and work to standardize quality teaching of reading?

The use of Leader Standard Work and 5S is one selected tool from the lean performance management system method to address this concern. As noted in earlier articles, there are many lean tools and tenets to pick from. This example, in fact, will use 5S and Leader Standard Work along with Value Stream Maps and Kaizen. This is how Lean Essentials for School Leaders works, with many options for varying situations. The advantage of using lean is that it will enable the creation and use of quality teaching on the campus, and this is likely a significant root cause solution to improving student achievement in reading.

So, under question is how can 5S and Leader Standard Work be used? First, there are two lean principles that must always be used. These principles are non-negotiable and were discussed in previous articles in this series (see Figure 1 below).

These lean principles are important to the 5S tool. They mean as an instructional leader, you will choose to not blame others, the teachers, the parents, the students, etc., as a first step. Instead, you will facilitate a school improvement process whereby you will work with your faculty team to develop an understanding of best practice in reading instruction,

resulting in quality teaching. So, we are ready now to walk through this process. Also, these lean principles mean this improvement work is done collectively, recognizing the solutions for quality teaching of reading rest in your own campus faculty. In the example provided next, you will see that you will need a Lean Faculty Team, several smaller Scoping Teams, and several faculty Pilot Leads. So, it is evident through a series of team efforts, this 5S process will unfold.

Remember 5S and Leader Standard Work is a focus on process improvement. So, it is a good idea to map out the process with a timeline, so everyone understands what is going to happen. The first step in 5S, Sorting, is like housecleaning in that you want to keep shared quality teaching and get rid of ineffective teaching practices. The second step in 5S, Setting, involves prioritizing those shared quality teaching practices. The third step in 5S, Shining, requires a series of pilots or mini-pilots to test for variable conditions and improve the teaching practice steadily. The fourth step in 5S, Standardizing, entails making sure faculty is trained or mentored properly so knowledge gaps are closed on quality teaching for reading. The fifth step
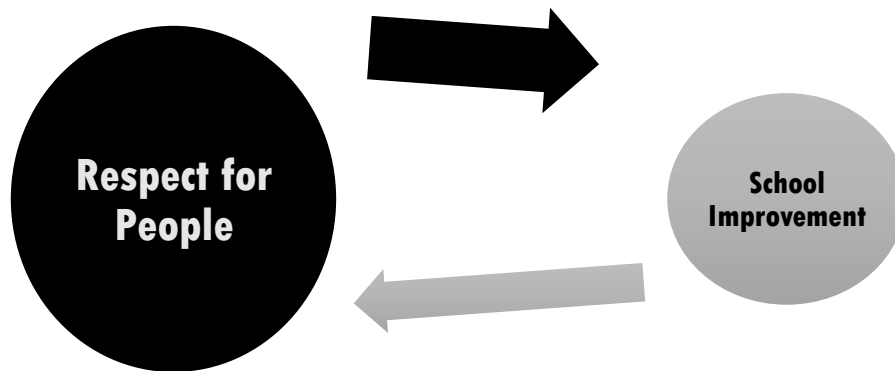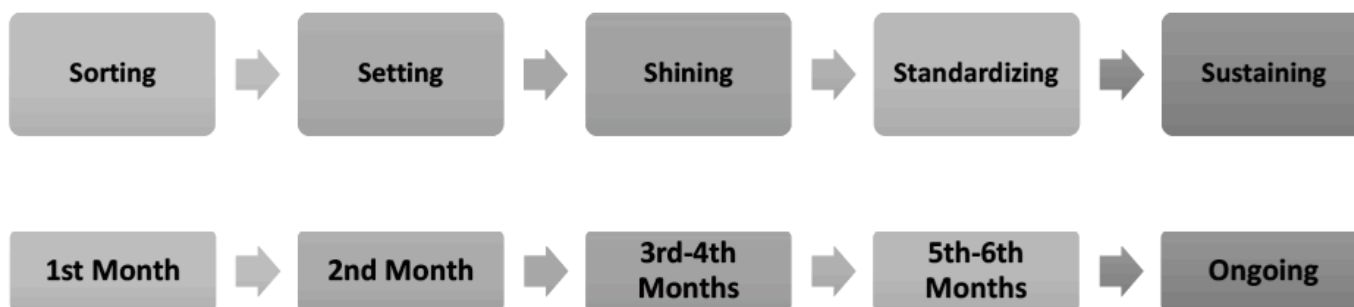
Figure 1. Lean Principles

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Figure 2. Process Map of 5S

Sorting	→	Setting	→	Shining	→	Standardizing	→	Sustaining
1st Month	→	2nd Month	→	3rd-4th Months	→	5th-6th Months	→	Ongoing

in 5S, Sustaining, is where Leader Standard Work is done to ensure shared quality teaching practices remain in place. Based on the process map (Figure 2 above), you can see it will take six months or more of team effort to get to the last step of Leader Standard Work.

To begin with Sorting, you and your Lean Faculty Team will solicit all quality teaching practices for reading faculty have or believe will work. It will likely take a few rounds of Catchball to create this list, meaning you might want to have visual board or conduct a survey with feedback loops and revisions until you get the list completed, with all inputs represented. For instance, faculty may initially indicate they believe in these six quality teaching for reading strategies: a. correct use of a good curriculum; b. appropriate reading assessment, benchmarking and intervention; c. appropriate instructional technology; d. authentic, research-based faculty reading pedagogy; e. formative testing; and f. faculty teamwork and parental involvement. Using Catchball, as faculty to add to the list. So, they may add, g. differentiation of instruction. After a few days, another strategy may be added, h. interpersonal, social and emotional learning connections and scaffolds. And finally when the inputs are all gathered, this list of eight strate-

gies is vetted, perhaps discussed at a faculty meeting and voted on. Now Sorting is partially complete. Next, use the same approach and ask the counter question, "If we use these eight strategies as shared quality teaching of reading on campus, what strategies will we abandon?" Items such as, student reading contests, might be taken away because it is not best practice for strategy g., interpersonal, social and emotional learning connections and scaffolds. Other items such as, teacher-held curricula might be removed because it is not best practice for strategy a., correct use of a good curriculum. Or items such as, some teachers not using smart boards, might be abandoned because it is not best practice for strategy c., appropriate instructional technology. This counter question is vetted until the next round of decision making occurs, such as a faculty meeting where strategies to be discarded are discussed and voted on. The Lean Faculty Team will then look over the findings and make a final recommendation on the Sorting List—what is in and what is out. This means any practice that is on the "out" list is being set aside for now (and not totally discarded, something that is called "Red Tagging"). This will help to make sure a great practice is not discarded inadvertently and it also helps whoever might use this practice to not be too upset. And the practices on

the "in" list are kept. So, after about one month of team work, Sorting for shared best practice in quality teaching of reading is now complete.

For the strategies that will remain on the "in" list as a result of Sorting, let's say there are five, the next step in 5S, Setting, is started. In Setting, each strategy needs to be carefully examined and prioritized. For the five "in" practices, five small Scoping Teams could be used to examine each of these strategies. Current State Value Stream Maps (described in previous articles), for instance, would be a good selection of a lean tool to figure out what happens in each of these six processes as they occur presently. Current State Value Stream Mapping would be followed by Kaizen (identification of where problems in the processes exist, also described in previous articles). Based on the number and depth of Kaizens presented for each of the five strategies by each Scoping Team, the campus could further sort these strategies into a few categories, such as, "Needs Immediate Improvement," "Needs Improvement" or "Does Not Need Improvement." A survey or facilitated discussions with voting on the Setting of the five strategies into categories with Catchball could be used. In any case, you can see how the focus on Respect for People and School Improvement Processes is taking place as the leadership choice

to look at quality teaching as a series of processes is intact.

For the next 5S step, Shining, using the categories created from Setting, the five smaller Scoping Teams could develop Future State Value Stream Maps (described in previous articles). These Future State Value Stream Maps will provide direction on what exactly needs to change in current shared reading practices on campus. For instance, you might figure out that the RtI program is not being utilized well and needs to be improved. Or that parent involvement is waning and a new process for interfacing with parents needs to be tried. Once the Future State Value Stream Maps are done, your Faculty Lean Team should discuss which pilots will go in Shining. The Lean Team could outline which pilots will be conducted, when, where and how they will be conducted, what data will be collected and how it will be analyzed and reviewed. Your faculty Pilot Leads can be assigned to these pilots and they would try out the Future State Value Stream Maps. For example, one or two faculty Pilot Leads could conduct the RtI pilots, while three faculty Pilot Leads could conduct Parental Involvement pilots. The faculty Pilot Leads would work on the pilots for a designated time, such as for a month, and collect data and report findings back to the appropriate Scoping Team. Using the continuous improvement cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Adjust (PDCA), the Scoping Teams and faculty Pilot Leads would ensure that any small tweaks or large changes are made in the pilot process until it works well. Over the course of a few months, several pilots could be conducted using PDCA until your campus Lean Team has confidence the five solutions represent shared best practice for quality teaching of reading.

And finally, once Shining is completed, your campus is ready to start with the fourth 5S step, Standardization. This means you want to make sure employees and all other resources, including policy, are aligned to these tested best practices. Under review in this step should be requirements for faculty training, faculty mentoring, policy and systems revising, resource allocating of instructional technology reviewing, etc., so all barriers to deployment are removed. This step will take a designated period of time and is a great place to engage faculty and in-house resources. Again, your Lean Team could help with identifying what needs to be done in this Shining step.

Once faculty have been treated with respect through a solid Standardization rollout, the last step in 5S, Sustaining, occurs. As the instructional leader, you will now use Leader Standard Work to ensure through careful observation and inquiry, engaged listening, monitoring, meaningful data analyses and regular reviews of quality teaching and students' achievement, the five solutions are maintained. In other words, in this step of Leader Standard Work, you should develop the confidence and knowledge that shared quality teaching is occurring on your campus. You will be looking for evidence that: 1) all faculty are now informed and supported so shared quality teaching decisions for reading instruction are occurring and 2) your faculty are using shared quality teaching standards and the five processes for reading.

The use of the lean performance management system has the potential to inform and improve teaching quality. The work has to be approached as a transformative educational leader would, working

for the higher standard of quality teaching. It is hoped this series of three articles has given you some ideas for how you can work both better and smarter as a school leader. There is no limit to the ways lean tools and tenets can be applied using Respect for People and School Improvement as founding principles. At any rate, enjoy the journey! *Lean Essentials for School Leaders* is a process!

Note: *If you are interested in learning more about Lean Essential for School Leaders, stay tuned for information about TEPSA's Lean Leadership Institute coming soon.*

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Don't Crash and Burn—Fly Through the Year

by Liz Ortiz

"The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot." Michael Altshuler knew what he was talking about. As a principal, there were three time management strategies I used to keep myself and my school on track, on target, and on a successful flight plan.

The first successful strategy was creating and using a year-long calendar. This came about out of necessity when I took over a school mid-year. There was nothing that showed me what was coming up or where we were going. The site based committee and I would sit together in April and build the calendar for the next school year. They had input on the scheduling of events. The calendar included: district dates like 9 weeks, holidays, staff development days, state testing dates, district testing dates, faculty/staff birthdays, campus events like Family Fitness Night, school dances, and fine arts performances. In August, every staff member received a copy of the school calendar printed on a bright color. I used a program called Calendar Creator but Outlook would work too. This calendar served as our roadmap for the year. Everything started with the calendar. My administrative team started our weekly meetings by looking at the calendar, discussing upcoming events, planning backward, setting dates, making assignments such as when parent letters should go home, when to start announcing, when to post on the marquee, and adding agenda items to team leader meeting and department chair meeting. Looking at the calendar and planning, helped us troubleshoot any issues and work out all details. This also helped with our administrative goal—one voice from the office.

Another successful strategy was the implementation of Todd Whitaker's Friday Focus. In Whitaker's book, *Motivating and Inspiring Teachers*, he calls the Friday Focus, "A Staff Memo That Works!" The Friday Focus gives teachers a week at a glance. On the front side there was a day by day section with detailed information, meeting times, and a section for quotes. On the back side of the Friday Focus was an upcoming events section and a featured folks section where I could celebrate teachers and the great things they were doing. For example, "Go check out Ms. Reynolds art display; she has included student writing along with the artwork." Another section titled, Keeping the Vision, was a place to share brief teaching tips, implementation tips, and/or reminders of campus initiatives. Each Friday, teachers would receive a copy of the Friday Focus printed on a color that was not used for anything else in the building. It was also sent out electronically. As a principal, I implemented the Friday Focus for 13 years and never missed a Friday. The Friday Focus was easy to implement. I created a format, selected a paper color, collected quotes, and met my deadline each week.

The third successful strategy I used was a listing strategy from *Eat That Frog: 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time* by Brian Tracy. I would make my "to do" list, circle the one thing I might procrastinate, and do that item first. Brian Tracy's listing is designed to help "increase your productivity and output by 25 percent or more—about two hours a day—from the first day you begin working consistently from a list."

This "Eat That Frog" listing strategy truly made me feel more motivated, more productive, more focused, and in turn decreased my stress level.

One of the best ways to help and support your teachers is to be organized, not spring things on them, and not change the schedule without them knowing way in advance. This can create undue stress and create a morale problem.

Time is a precious commodity in schools. Using these three strategies helped us not waste time and energy or experience that last minute panic to get things done. I always say, "If you calendar it, it gets done."

Don't crash and burn under the stress of disorganization and lack of planning. Add the year-long calendar, the Friday Focus, and the "Eat That Frog" listing strategies to your flight plan, and you can fly through the school year and focus on what matters—your teachers and students.

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Self-Reflection: Old Concept, New Use

by Darla Tackett

The term self-reflection has been around for a long time and is used in many aspects of life. Education is one of those aspects where teachers self-evaluate themselves on their teaching strategies and/or lessons. This process is typically fairly simple with teachers just asking themselves a few key questions about the lesson or day. A few examples of questions they could ask include:

- What worked?
- What did not work?
- What would I do differently if I taught this lesson again?
- What did my students learn?

While this is a great practice and a useful skillset to possess, engaging more teachers in this practice should be a goal for schools. With the development of the new teacher evaluation system, T-TESS, self-reflection is a key component for teachers to set measurable goals and to refine teaching strategies for overall student growth and achievement.

Connecting self-reflection to effective teaching is a process that takes time and dedication (Cox). Research substantiates the role of reflection in teachers' professional growth (Danielson, 2009). So what is reflective practice? It is an ongoing process of looking and observing, recording one's own teaching practices and taking action to make positive changes in the classroom for young children (Katz, 2012). It has been shown to foster continuous professional development for teachers and results in positive benefits for children (Katz, 2012). Because there is such a wealth of research that concludes teacher selfreflection is very beneficial, then as teachers and administrators we should find ways to encourage and aide teachers in this process. For some people self-evaluation is not an easy task. The willingness to admit to one's weakness is key to becoming a reflective teacher and ultimately, an effective teacher (Sansbury, 2011).

When teachers reflect, they will be able to meet the needs of each child. Their lessons can be built upon the children's strengths and differentiation can take place on a new level. Reflection will look different for each person. Teachers will need to figure out what method of reflection works best for them. Being able to provide a general framework or examples of self-reflection questions will help guide teachers to be successful at this process. The art of their teaching will improve when they apply what they learned through their reflections. So how does this old concept of self-reflection fit into the new teacher evaluation system for Texas?

The new evaluation system is more than just a checklist of sorts. It is a more complete tool that leads to a greater depth and understanding of one's teaching that could have more influence on student achievement. The new system has different areas or portions that call for self-reflection. For starters, learning the rubric for both teachers and evaluators will be important. Learning the rubric and really understanding the meaning of each level and each descriptor will be critical. The teacher can do their first broad or general self-evaluation based on the rubric. They can reflect on the basic strategies they use often in the classroom. These general strategies or procedures can be looked at more closely so the teacher will know how to move from the right to the left on the rubric.

Another facet of T-TESS where self-reflection is important is the goal setting and professional development portion. Teachers will need to look and evaluate their reflections as well as look at other available data in order to set goals for themselves. These goals need to be specific in nature, realistic, measurable and lead to improved teaching and increased student achievement. Teachers may also choose professional development activities or workshops to attend that will assist them with achieving the goals they set for themselves.

The next area in the evaluation tool is the measurement of student growth. One way to measure student growth is by creating student learning objectives, or SLOs. These learning objectives

will also be measurable ones. The teacher will once again be using their reflections and data to create the SLOs. The student learning objectives will be created and evaluated throughout the year. During this ongoing process, the teacher will reflect, adapt, change and possibly set new SLOs based on what they have done or need to do to ensure student growth is occurring. Student progress and growth is the focus and can only be attained by teachers reflecting and working toward the objectives.

The final area where self-reflection takes place with T-TESS is the post evaluation conference. Essentially, the entire conference is a process of reflection. The evaluator spends time reflecting on the lesson, gathering data and evidence, and then uses this information to prepare for the post conference. During the post conference, the evaluator uses guided questions that will allow the teacher to reflect on the lesson. The teacher will reflect on what worked well and what did not. Together, they will focus on many areas within the

> ## "The willingness to admit to one's weakness is key to becoming a reflective teacher and ultimately, an effective teacher."

lesson and classroom procedures by reflecting on specific things by the evidence provided by the evaluator. Through these leading or coaching questions, the teacher and evaluator can determine an area the teacher did well in and an area of refinement for the teacher. This post-conference should provide the teacher with useful reflection, guidance, and support to encourage and assist them at evolving into better and more effective teachers.

Self-reflection, as research proves, is a useful tool that all teachers and evaluators need to become better trained in and more proficient

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with. Reflection has the capacity to create better teaching. The teacher evaluation system is a tool that will foster and provide numerous opportunities for teacher self-reflection. It will help teachers set reachable goals, as well as, set measurable objectives for student learning. Together the process of self-reflection and T-TESS, will provide a meaningful framework that will lead to better teacher performance. With better teacher performance, student learning and achievement will definitely increase and lead to overall higher academic performance. The higher academic performance will lead to better prepared and successful students, which should be our goal in education.

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