



Indicator: The district ensures that the change agent (typically the principal) is skilled in motivating staff and the community, communicating clear expectations, and focusing on improved student learning. (25)

Explanation: This indicator includes key competencies for a principal in a rapid improvement situation (restructuring or turnaround, for example). Although the competencies are certainly assets for a principal in any situation, they are critical when rapid change is in order.

Questions: How does your district determine if a leader possesses the competencies listed in this indicator? Is such a determination a routine part of your hiring and leader evaluation processes?

Herman et al. (2008) pointed to a relentless focus on instruction as the key to school turnaround, but asserted that this focus must be prefaced by a strong signal that change was necessary, placement of competent and cooperative personnel in the school, and quick wins to demonstrate that change was possible. The study also noted that the school district plays a big role in communicating the need and promise for change to the community, as does the principal. The successful principal in a rapid improvement situation is adept at communication, including both candid, open air discussions with the school community and informal conversations with key people in the school and outside the school.

Brinson et al. (2008) found the following leader actions get results in a rapid change situation:

Initial Analysis and Problem Solving

- Collect & Analyze Data
- Make Action Plan Based on Data

Driving for Results

- Concentrate on Big, Fast Payoffs in Year One
- Implement Practices Even if Require Deviation
- Require All Staff to Change
- Make Necessary Staff Replacements
- Focus on Successful Tactics; Halt Others
- Do Not Tout Progress as Ultimate Success

Influencing Inside and Outside

- Communicate a Positive Vision
- Help Staff Personally Feel Problems
- Gain Support of Key Influencers
- Silence Critics with Speedy Success

Measuring, Reporting (and Improving)

- Measure and Report Progress Frequently
- Require all Decision Makers to Share Data and Problem Solve

References and Resources

Brinson, D., Kowal, J. Hassel, B. C., Rhim, L. M., & Valsing, E. (2008). *School turnarounds: Actions and results*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute, Center on Innovation & Improvement; and Public Impact.

Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M. (2008). *Turning around chronically low-performing schools: A practice guide* (NCEE #2008-4020). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/Turn-around_pg_04181.pdf