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Administrator's Electronic Checklist A Teacher Accountability System for Building Transformation

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Academic Leadership Journal

Introduction

Accountability is a well-known topic in the minds of principals, teachers, and other school-based administrators since the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2002) was written. The main tenet of NCLB is continuous improvement in achievement or Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all students. Progress is determined by students' demonstration of proficiency of grade level content standards. Keeping track of student data helps school leaders make informed instructional decisions. Schmoker (1999) believes that the way to have continuous improvement in student performance is to collaboratively collect and analyze data on a regular basis. This data drives decision making and helps identify areas of needed improvement.

Data-driven decision making is a major role of principals and school-based administrators. These decision makers use data to improve not only student performance, but also to identify teacher competency, needs for professional development, allocation of resources, and communication of data results (3D, 2010). The format used to collect and report data is varied, but technology seems to be the most widely used means of collection by school districts. There are web-based systems, as well as district developed formats for monitoring student achievement. An effective system of data collection is a simple, easy to use format that provides results in a timely manner. Standards-aligned observations can provide evidence of student and teacher outcomes across the content areas. Technology standards for students can be observed and evaluated, as well.

Teacher observations by principals or other school personnel are important for helping teachers understand their strengths and weaknesses and improve teaching practices. Educational technology standards can be observed along with the content standards. Teacher self-improvement happens when teachers' strengths occur in school context (Borich, 2011). Using hand-held devices during the teacher observation by the principal can provide immediate feedback to the teacher in the school setting, as well as be a convenient tool for the evaluator. Also, having the teacher evaluation instrument aligned with the standards lets the principal know that the teacher is meeting the required content. The use of an everyday, uncomplicated device in a simple format supplies invaluable information for the teacher and the principal to enhance student success in learning the content. Time is important to principals who must evaluate and conference with teachers every week, so this electronic means of monitoring is efficient, as well as, informative. The data collected on the hand-held device provides immediate feedback between the evaluator and the teacher or stored for later retrieval and analysis to make informed instructional decisions. The collaboration between the teacher and the principal about the data will help the school achieve success in student learning and improved teaching practices.

Data collection and analysis is not the only part of the decision making process. The next step would be to use the information to plan and implement effective staff development, provide support and resources for improvement, and choose programs that will result in better outcomes for student achievement. Once the plans for improvement have been established, teachers and students may be instructed how to use technology to enhance content learning, thus improving technology skills. The

evaluator's use of technology models technology use in real-life, hence emphasizing technology best practice. Thus, use of the hand-held evaluation system will help student achievement and teacher practice immeasurably.

The Need for Principal Standards-aligned Walkthrough's

Evaluating teachers is a significant challenge for the school principal (Hopkins 2006). This is a skill that principals should take pride in doing simply because evaluations are meant to improve the quality of instruction. Assisting teachers in learning the latest research on best teaching practices and developing new skills is a task most principals accept with diligence. Effective evaluations of teachers by principals will shape learning and increase student achievement.

Teachers need specific evaluative feedback to grow, learn and become experts in his/her subject area. As an administrator, it is not always easy to spend the time pre-conferencing with teachers about the intended lesson; observing in the class for a reasonable amount of time; and giving constructive meaningful feedback in a post conference.

The "Principal's Electronic Walkthrough Checklist" (see Figure 1) is the solution to time management constraints, observation standards being aligned with content strands and the reams of copies of evaluation forms that have to be duplicated and given to the teacher and filed in a confidential setting by the principal. The observation items are linked to standards, therefore; using this checklist will assist principals in collecting data and analyzing it in an easy to read format that will display the areas of strengths and areas of growth. Often times, principals take notes with a predetermined goal in mind (Hopkins 2009). The linkage of standards and strands will eliminate the subjectivity of note taking. Using the immediate data from the checklist (see Figure 2), principals can plan professional development activities, engage teachers in conversations about their performance and student learning, and directly relate the observed lesson to the objectives and competencies. By providing immediate feedback, this will allot a reasonable amount of time for teachers to review comments, suggestions and ideas made by the principal in preparation for a post conference. Because of the accessibility of the checklist administrators can save, edit, revise and update as needed when completing ongoing observations. In a systematic manner this electronic checklist will increase the principal and teacher's knowledge in technology which is imperative to have in this contemporary technological society.

While observing in a classroom, if a principal makes a suggestion, he/she can add a hyperlink to a website for additional resources. The "Principal's Electronic Walkthrough Checklist" can aid in building cohesiveness and technological competence among staff; consequently, being an effective evaluator gives the teachers a sense of respect for the knowledge his/her principal exhibits. The checklist should be embraced and creatively used by administrators in our flat world (Fryer 2005) to develop technical rapport with the teachers. An evaluation is not important unless it is passed down to the teachers aligned directly to the curriculum and learning objectives. The "Principal's Electronic Walkthrough Checklist"

1. is user friendly

2. saves times and paper

3. provides ongoing data in content areas
4. aligns lesson with standards
5. removes insignificant information/subjectivity and
6. analyzes and organizes the data in a format that is user friendly.

Since teachers are the ultimate deliverers of instruction in their classes with regard to learning, it is critically more important for principals to help teachers stay abreast of information that is relevant to their current instructional assignments (Harris 2005). The "Principal Electronic Walkthrough Checklist" is a systemic and technological approach to addressing administrator needs.

Creating the Online Database with Googldocs Excel

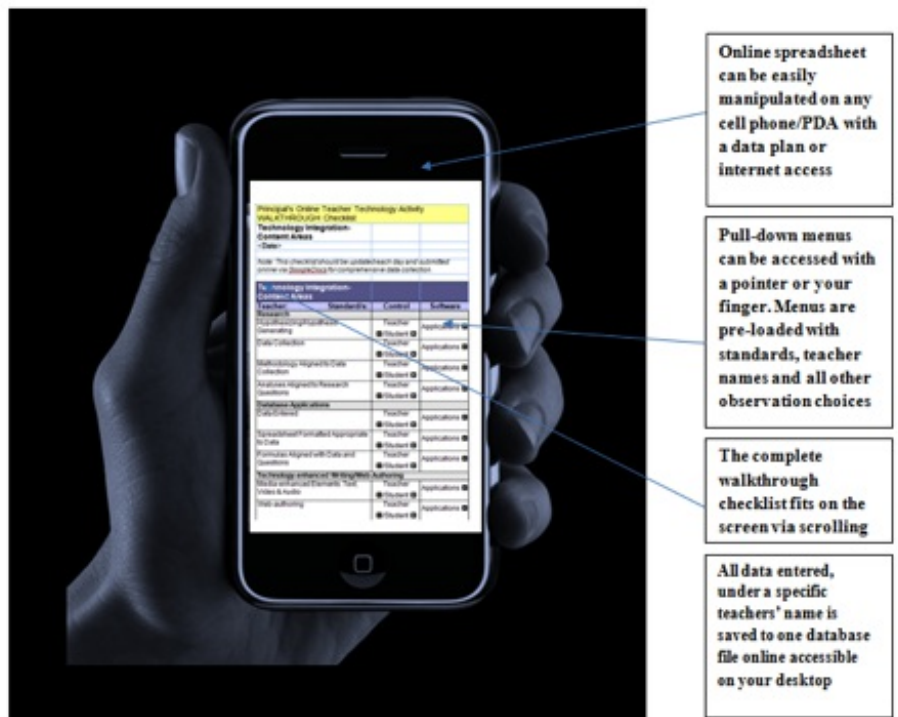
To set you PDA (cell phone, mobile calendar, Ipod, etc.) to open up your checklist you first need to author an excel file in googledocs that will serve as the online database with read-write-record and re-record capabilities (see Figure 3). This is a cost-free, reliable and stable function offered by google. Essentially, you are creating a normal Excel file with your standards you regularly use to assess teacher performance. Our example is merely to illustrate how this might look as an Excel file. Figure 3 includes a screen shot of the GoogleDoc environment and includes step-by-step instructions for creating and "sharing" the online document. The purpose of using this online file versus a file attached to a hard drive on a computer is that you can walk around to classrooms and use your cell phone to click "standards met" as you travel. This effectively enables you to bring your office with you, to compile data as you are moving from classroom to classroom. You can create one file that documents whole-school teaching performance along your identified standards, or create an online spreadsheet file for each teacher/classroom.

References

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Data driven decision making. Consortium for School Networking (C osn): Advancing K-12 Technology Leadership. Retrieved April 12, 2010, from

Figure 1. Principal's Electronic WALKTHROUGH Checklist.



Note: Images above have been adapted and/or modified from multiple sources as a collage. However, the database is the actual file under discussion in the current article and would appear as such in that artwork depending on the databases of the cell phone screen.

<http://3d2know.cosn.org/FAQ.html>

Harris, J. (2005). Is it Worth It? i.e.

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Fryer, W. (2005). The Digital Face of 21st Century Curriculum. i.e.

Schmoker, M. (1999). Results: The key to continuous school improvement (2nd). Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

VN:R_U [1.9.11_1134]

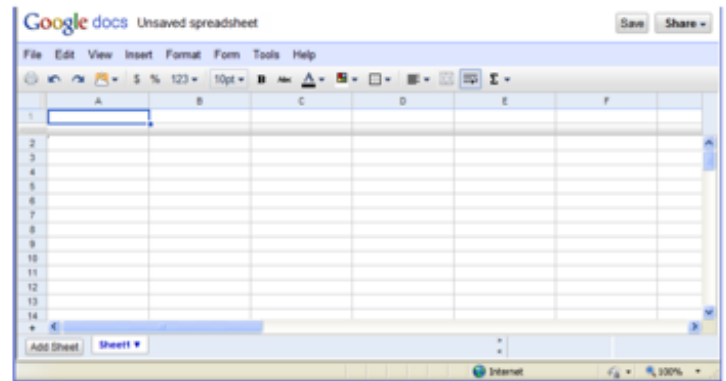
Figure 2. Principal's Online Teacher Technology Activity WALKTHROUGH Checklist.

Principal's Online Teacher Technology Activity WALKTHROUGH Checklist					
Technology Integration-Content Areas					
<Date>					
Note: This checklist should be updated each day and submitted online via GoogleDocs for comprehensive data collection.					
Teacher:	Standards:	Control	Software	Status	Authoring & Outcomes
Research					
Hypothesizing/Hypothesis Generating		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Data Collection		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	In progress	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Methodology Aligned to Data Collection		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Analyses Aligned to Research Questions		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Database Applications					
Data Entered		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Spreadsheet Formatted Appropriate to Data		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Formulas Aligned with Data and Questions		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Technology-enhanced Writing/Web-Authoring					
Media-enhanced Elements Text/Video & Audio		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Web-authoring		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
English/Language Arts					
Original Student Writing and Authoring		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Media-enhanced Elements Text/Video & Audio		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing

Oral Presentations		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Assessment Tools (Rubrics, Etc.) Standards Aligned		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Science					
Hypothesizing/Hypothesis Generating		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Data Collection		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Methodology Aligned to Data Collection		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Analyses Aligned to Research Questions		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Social Studies					
Media-enhanced Elements Text/Video & Audio		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Oral Presentations		Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing

Assessment Tools (Rubrics, Etc.) Standards Aligned	Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Math				
Data Collector	Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing
Analyses Aligned to Research Questions	Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Applications <input type="checkbox"/>	Not started	Status of web-authoring and/or technology enhanced writing

Figure 3. GoogleDocs Online Spreadsheet.



In <http://www.google.com>:

1. Create a name and password for a Google Gmail account
2. Select Google Documents from the "Other" button
3. Select "Excel File"
4. Author your checklist with your desired standards
5. See Figure 2: you may want to use "Met" and "Not Met" etc. You also may wish to include a sliding scale if that fits your assessment plan
6. Click "Share" and select "All" to make this an online read-write document
7. Save
8. Using your PDA browser, go to GoogleDocs, enter your name and password-you will see your Excel document
9. Begin "clicking" and capturing data during a classroom walkthrough
10. Save
11. You have now successfully recorded data
12. Repeat steps 8-11 to record additional data