7 Essential Factors to Engage Teachers and Students to Outperform Expectations

The end result is that schools need exceptional teachers – teachers who love teaching, who are compelled to find ways to access their students individually and as a group, who go above and beyond because it is just good teaching. Once excellence is an established norm, a framework must be in place to sustain performance and also be nimble enough to respond to the needs of all community members. Schools need exceptional leaders to provide the framework by which faculty may achieve the goal of excellence.

- Prioritize Inspiration
- Frequent Observation
- Targeted Professional Development
- Planning Time
- Access to Materials
- Ongoing Support, Consultation and Coaching
7 Essential Factors to Engage Teachers and Students to Outperform Expectations

1) **Prioritize** exceptional teaching, and a school-wide culture emerges in which administrators, teachers, students, and parents are engaged, hopeful, and confident about learning.

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2) **Inspiration** comes in many forms, often emerging from a casual conversation with a colleague, practical observation during a lesson; other times, a motivational speaker, a recommended book or article, or a particularly poignant institute or conference ignites a brilliant vision.

- While inspiration often evokes a serious intent, the playful, fun nature of shared inquiry and exploration motivates many to stretch beyond what they think is possible.

- Creative allocation of resources, organization, and conscientious follow-through allow schools to accomplish what they hope to do.

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3) **Frequent observation** and regular feedback are tangible measures that afford educational leaders a proactive role in helping teachers reach their potential.

- At high performing schools, “leaders typically observe each teacher eight times a year—three more times than leaders at other schools” and provide verbal or written feedback after almost every observation (TNTP, 2012).

- Faculty benefit from the same individualized accountability as their students.

- When administrators and colleagues observe the day-to-day instruction, everyone is better informed to discuss, critique and examine the ways in which teaching practices can be improved.

- Review of classroom videos adds an additional level of self-reflection and allows educators to play an integral role in their own professional growth. “A teacher can never truly teach unless his is still learning himself” (Tagore, 1913).

- It is essential that the shared vision is clear and poignant – that everyone is on board and feels safe to explore new ideas.
4) **Targeted professional development** reflects a commitment to strengthen instruction at the individual teacher level.

- It reflects an awareness by both the administration and the faculty, of what each teacher needs to be even more effective in their practice unfolds through observation and an ongoing collegial coaching relationship.

- A school culture of teamwork, motivation, expertise and creative thinking engages teachers to be innovative educators (Duckworth, 2012; Wagner, 2012).

5) **Planning time** is essential to implement innovative ideas.

- Administrators must pay attention to the flow of the daily schedule, the yearly calendar, and the timing of extra demands. While flexibility is key to a dynamic team, and there is never ENOUGH time for everything, careful consideration is important in supporting collaboration, in encouraging project-based learning initiatives, and in protecting teachers from a sense of overwhelm.
6) **Access to materials** needed to implement innovative ideas across the curriculum must be provided. While supplies do not necessarily need to be expensive, materials should be “budgeted” into the plan, and available, relative to the financial limitations of an institution, and the consideration of the time it takes a resourceful teacher to create his or her own materials.

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7) **Ongoing support, consultation and coaching** are other signifiers of a school’s commitment to strengthening the instructional culture.

- Weekly meetings with a mentor, be it an administrator, specialist or colleague, is vital to fully exploring the potential of learning theories and instructional practices.

- If coaching is embedded in the culture, then, just as with observation, the formality falls away to reveal an empowering relationship that can be the springboard for passionate, purposeful teaching.

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Adapted from Wagner (2012)
References


