Definition of Instructional Supervision

Instructional supervision is the work of ensuring the implementation of the educational mission of a school by overseeing, equipping, and empowering teachers to provide meaningful learning experiences for students. This important work requires facilitating collaborative strategic planning that involves all stakeholders, including parents, board members, teachers, administrative staff and support staff. During this strategic planning, S.M.A.R.T. goals (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, timely) should be developed. Then, professional support and training that aligns with the clearly identified S.M.A.R.T. goals should be implemented. An instructional supervisor should conduct frequent observations of classroom instruction and provide feedback about instructional practices and its impact on students. A strong instructional supervisor will not only look for teacher evidence of best practice but also for student evidence of best practice. For example, an instructional supervisor might note that the teacher is implementing the best practice of organizing students into small groups for collaborative work, but if those students are conversing about an off-task topic, the groups are ineffective.

Effective instructional supervision also necessitates prioritization of research and study into new discoveries surrounding best practice, and fostering growth mindset in educators, students, and families. As an instructional supervisor learns of research-based best practices, it is crucial that he or she shares that information with teachers in a form that can be quickly digested and applied in the classroom in a practical way. A successful instructional supervisor will foster a culture of openness and growth so that everyone believes they can always learn more and grow more, and then feel comfortable living out that belief.

The principal or leader of the building should serve as instructional leader and supervisor. However, other administrative and leadership team members can also serve this role, including but not limited to such position titles as instructional guide, dean of academics, lead teacher, or instructional coach. It is important to have an instructional supervisor because we need to invest in educators like we do other professionals. Teachers benefit from an outside perspective on their practice and glean ideas for better instruction from the feedback of an instructional supervisor. In the end, instructional supervision is about student growth. Teachers and students alike need an instructional supervisor who can dig deeply into data about student results and help teachers translate that data into strengths and weaknesses for ongoing improvement of instruction that positively impacts all students.