

Principals Want to Know

A tip sheet for principals that focuses on practical issues faced in schools.

Drawn from existing resources, these tips are designed to support instructional leadership practice.

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Principal Performance Appraisal

The Question:

"My performance appraisal is coming up next year and I would like some tips for making it successful. Can you help?" (a principal). [Note: while this tip sheet is written expressly for principals, some advice may also be useful for vice-principals.]

The Answer:

Yes. Here are five Tips for Success:

1. Work collaboratively with your appraiser
2. Choose your performance goals strategically
3. Make effective use of your annual growth plan (AGP)
4. Ensure you have a good data collection system to support indicators of success
5. Be open to learning

1. WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH YOUR APPRAISER

See your appraiser as a critical friend. Work to develop a relationship of mutual trust and respect. Look for opportunities to involve your appraiser in your school improvement activities and understand your role in school improvement.

Before drafting your appraisal plans, review the role of the appraiser and the role of the appraisee in the Principal Performance Appraisal (PPA) Technical Requirements Manual. For the first appraisal meeting, come prepared with both your performance plan and your annual growth plan in draft form and involve your appraiser in reviewing them.

- Collect and present data related to your goals
- Engage in dialogue regularly with your appraiser to discuss and review the methods and activities that you and your staff have implemented in order to achieve your goals
- Be proactive about making sure the appraisal meetings happen when they should and are productive
- Enlist the appraiser's help in supporting your growth plan – what supports can he/she or the district provide?

"Ensuring that performance appraisal serves such largely positive ends depends just as much on you, the appraisee, as on your superintendent, the appraiser... the best advice is to aggressively take the initiative in ensuring that it becomes a valuable resource for your own leadership and for your school's improvement efforts."

Leithwood, 2008

2. CHOOSE YOUR PERFORMANCE GOALS STRATEGICALLY

Setting goals is one of the most important components of an effective appraisal process. Goals should take into account the school improvement plan, the board improvement plan for student achievement and provincial educational priorities. Consult and work with your appraiser to develop goals that are focused on improving student achievement and well-being. Choose goals for which progress can be measured within the evaluation year.

You may choose to share the goals of your performance plan with key staff members and enlist their support in achieving those goals within the context of the school improvement plan.

(See the [PPA Tip Sheet on Setting Goals](#))

"Goals should be written using the SMART model (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely). It is important that the goals be outcome-based, measurable, challenging, and achievable. The time frame for achieving the goals could be more than one year, but there should be an opportunity for interim measurements of attainment of goals that extend beyond the appraisal year."

Principal/Vice-Principal Performance Appraisal
Technical Requirements Manual, 2010

3. MAKE EFFECTIVE USE OF YOUR ANNUAL GROWTH PLAN (AGP)

In an evaluation year, use your AGP to guide your professional learning and to help you attain the goals set out in your performance plan. Use the Ontario Leadership Framework to help you identify areas for personal growth and development.

- Your AGP provides an opportunity to collaborate and engage in meaningful discussion with your supervisor about your personal growth goals and priorities. Use this opportunity to explore supports you may need to achieve identified goals
- Meet with key staff to obtain their support and advice in achieving your goals
- Review and update your AGP regularly so that it reflects your current growth, learning and development needs.

“Information becomes knowledge when it is shaped, organized, and embedded in a context that gives it meaning and connectedness. The implications for leaders are vast.”

Earl and Katz, 2006

4. ENSURE YOU HAVE A GOOD DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM TO SUPPORT INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Look at what has been achieved over the past few years and what data you have to indicate levels of achievement. This is your baseline data. If you don't have enough baseline data, establishing this data will be your first step in figuring out your goals and strategies.

- Examine data from previous years and identify possible gaps
- Determine data collection methods to use and establish indicators of success
- Use a broad spectrum of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection to measure goal attainment.

“Using data is not separate from planning and from routine decisions in schools. Instead, data are a necessary part of an ongoing process of analysis, insight, new learning and changes in practice.”

Earl, 2005, in the Principal/Vice-Principal Performance Appraisal Technical Requirements Manual, 2010

5. BE OPEN TO LEARNING

The appraisal process is a good opportunity to demonstrate and benefit from an “open to learning” approach to discussion. While it can be stressful to face assessment by your appraiser, try to focus on what you can learn from the experience. Some ideas for effective conversation include:

- Concentrate on listening and understanding feedback and seek clarification if necessary
- Be prepared to listen deeply, especially when views differ from your own
- Be aware of your non-verbal responses. Attentiveness indicates that you value what your appraiser has to say
- Provide examples and illustrations of your views
- Be reflective about your practices in terms of the feedback you have received
- Involve appraiser in steps for moving forward to address suggestions from the feedback.

“To engage in open-to-learning conversations, leaders need the skills and values that will make it possible for them to respectfully give and receive the tough messages that are an inevitable part of the process of improving teaching and learning.”

Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009

RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

You can find the *Principal/Vice-Principal Performance Appraisal Technical Requirements Manual* and a number of other supportive resources on the ministry website: [PPA guideline and resources](#).

Also, view the new DVD: *Leadership Matters, Open-to-Learning Conversations*, sent to board offices (directors and board leadership leads) in July 2011.

Three webcasts are available on the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) website:

- Performance Plans
- Courageous Conversations & Maintaining the Momentum: Ongoing Feedback
- The Summative Report & Supporting a Principal/Vice-principal with an Unsatisfactory Rating

These were developed by the OPC and the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO) in cooperation with the ministry.

REFERENCES

Earl, L. & Katz, S. (2006). *Leading schools in a data-rich world*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., and Lloyd, C. (2009). *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why – Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration [BES]*. New Zealand: Ministry of Education

Leithwood, K. (2008). Making Sense of It all: Seven Questions at the Heart of Principals' Leadership. *Principal Connections*, 12(1), 12–15.

