

School Leadership video resources notes



Establishing school-community partnerships

Synopsis

A school leader talks about what he did to improve student attendance by identifying the issues involved and taking steps to address them. He realises that parents need to be convinced that their children benefit from studying at the school in order for them to enrol and attend. He also talks about how a school can only retain parents' goodwill by continuing to provide sound learning opportunities for their children. He appreciates the importance of communication in establishing positive school-community relationships and in bringing about change in his school.

Further discussion/activity ideas

This school leader enlisted the support of key people to make changes that had a direct impact on school enrolment and attendance. School leaders could consider the following points in discussion:

- Who are the people that you need to have on your side to make improvements in your school?
- How effective and regular is your communication with them?
- Can you think of ways to include them more in decisions and solutions for your school?

Knowing your school

Synopsis

A school leader walks around her school to observe and monitor the teaching and learning that is taking place. The teachers and students continue as if she was not there, as they are used to her visits. She is alert to individual student difficulties and makes notes on the lesson that she can share with the teacher afterwards. In this way she can gather evidence of the quality of classroom teaching and learning, giving praise for effective practice and attending to any shortfalls.

Further discussion/activity ideas

It is easy to get caught up in the administration and management of a school but by walking around the school on a regular basis, you will learn a great deal about its actual workings. School leaders could make notes on these questions for a group discussion:

- How often you walk round your school and listen in on lessons?
- How often do you talk to your students about their experience in school?
- What other ways might you collect evidence so that you have a rounded knowledge of how well your school is performing?

Understanding students' backgrounds

Synopsis

A school leader in a rural school talks about how important it is to be sympathetic to the students' home situations. She tries to establish an understanding of each student's background. Although she cannot change the demands on her students to help with harvesting, she can work with them and their parents to minimise the impact of these responsibilities on their learning. As a result, she has managed to improve attendance.

Further discussion/activity ideas

This video may have made school leaders wonder about how much they know about the backgrounds of their students. Ask them how they could find out more about their students' home circumstances; then how this knowledge could be used to better plan learning experiences. This school leader tackled absenteeism by knowing more about her students. What issues might individual school leaders tackle if they had more information about their students?

Reading and writing

Synopsis

A school leader explains how she identified a specific problem in her school. There was inconsistency in the teaching of reading and writing. She therefore led a whole-school initiative on literacy so that students' misunderstandings and gaps in reading and writing were specifically addressed. She explains how she works with her teachers to identify the problem and take action with them in a coordinated manner.

Further discussion/activity ideas

Explore the following questions with the school leaders you are working with:

- What steps could you take in your school to improve student skills in reading and writing?
- How could you introduce your teachers to the TESS-India Language and Literacy OERs?
- How could you support them to try out activities from these units?
- Could they support one other in incorporating ideas from these units in their lesson planning?

Involving parents

Synopsis

A school leader is struggling with the challenge of involving parents. She describes some of the problems in communicating, but explains how, once a dialogue is established, it becomes easier to resolve factors that adversely affect a student's learning.

Further discussion/activity ideas

Keeping in contact with parents can be difficult. However, it is important to do this because it is a key factor in supporting students' learning. This school leader had difficulty getting parents to come to school – do any of school leaders you are working with have parents who do not visit school? How could they encourage these parents to support their child's learning? Perhaps they could organise a display of students' work or a performance.

Inclusion

Synopsis

A school leader describes how her school ensures the full involvement of a student with a physical disability. She talks about government policy that informs inclusion, and then goes on to talk about this specific student and how he is integrated into the school, rather than being disadvantaged or excluded.

Further discussion/activity ideas

The school leader has a key role to play in ensuring that all students are included in the activities and opportunities available at their school. Physical disability is one condition that might exclude students from learning or from the facilities or resources available at school, but there are many other factors, such as social status, gender or visual impairment that might lead to less favourable treatment. School leaders might undertake a 'shadowing' exercise where they follow one student for a day to find out more about that student's experiences in school. They might also undertake an analysis of student achievement data at their school to find out if any particular groups of pupils are not making good learning gains each year.

The learning environment

Synopsis

A school leader regularly monitors learning by observing lessons and talking to her staff and students. She notes how her active interest in the students' learning motivates them. While walking around the school, she also notices issues relating to cleanliness and punctuality. Her active monitoring of these important factors helps her to improve standards and create a positive environment for learning.

Further discussion/activity ideas

Part of the school leader's role is to ensure that the conditions in the school support learning. These might concern factors like cleanliness or the availability of washing facilities, or they could also be about the actual teaching that takes place, the provision of textbooks or the behaviour of some students. School leaders might plan a series of activities to evaluate and then improve the learning environment in their school.

Leading teachers

Synopsis

This school leader describes her approach to leading her teachers and improving the learning experiences of her students. In a school like this, where there are low levels of commitment from the teachers, the emphasis is on order, discipline and setting the teachers' targets. Ensuring that teachers are in the classroom and that classrooms are stimulating environments are two elements that she specifically mentions.

Further discussion/activity ideas

When this school leader talks about leading her teachers, her prime focus is on how she organises them, but she also talks about how she fosters a collaborative spirit in the school and how she protects the time they spend with their students. Discuss with school leaders how they can develop a collaborative spirit in their school. How might they need to change their own behaviour?

Leading teaching and learning

Synopsis

A school leader talks about how she enables the teachers in her school to use participatory approaches with their students. She has a clear idea of how her teachers can improve their skills so that their students become active learners. As a leader, she takes care to model participatory approaches herself.

Further discussion/activity ideas

The TESS-India subject OERs emphasise a participatory approach in the classroom. School leaders could discuss and plan how they will introduce their teachers to these OERs. What support will they need? Which units will they choose to work with?