

# Hanlon's Razor

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*What works is work!*

## **Principal Reminder New School Year**

Increased student achievement is a result of what happens in the classroom.

Principals should fully implement the Teacher Expectancies, Components of an Effective Lesson and the Backward Assessment Model so the focus of academic instruction is based upon what teachers teach, how they teach it, student performance, and changes in instructional strategies based upon student performance.

Site administrators should explicitly discuss the Teacher Expectancies with their teachers in August and discuss what they mean, what they expect to observe when visiting classrooms, and how teachers will be evaluated. After classroom visits, teachers should receive feedback on these components.

The Teacher Expectancies are embedded in the Components of an Effective Lesson. The Components provide a structure to ensure a balanced curriculum is provided as well as keeping students and teachers on task for the entire instructional period.

The Backward Assessment Model (BAM) is another structure that supports student achievement. It has been our recommendation that the Professional Development Day Agenda in the BAM would be used on professional development days provided by the state. Educational research clearly states that professional development should be regularly scheduled, on site, ongoing, in the discipline teachers teach, in content and pedagogy, with teachers as active participants. That's exactly why RPDP recommends the adoption of the Backward Assessment Model.

Our belief is that if you are looking at test data and you have not fully implemented the Teacher Expectancies, Components of an Effective Lesson, and BAM, then you will not be able to develop an effective plan to increase student achievement.

Site and regional administrators must be more explicit in their expectations. For instance, if principals wanted classroom teachers to place a greater emphasis on reading, the principal should explain exactly what they want and how that expectation will be reflected in their performance evaluation. Rather than just saying that they expect teachers to include reading in their daily instruction, principals should explain what they expect to observe. That is, a reading assignment be given, new vocabulary words explicitly introduced, a preview of the reading assignment, the reading connected to other reading or past knowledge and experiences, and the student understanding of the reading checked for understanding and corrected.

The RPDP urges schools to adopt policies that help students organize their learning. Teachers should connect their instruction to note taking, homework, test preparation, and tests. Have you

*Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity*

discussed what a student notebook should look like? Have you discussed what a typical homework assignment should contain?

The research strongly suggests that when classroom teachers and principals clearly communicate expectations with each other, those expectations are more apt to be met.

Classroom teachers cannot read a principal's mind. Principals must meet with their teachers at the beginning of every year and clearly discuss expectations. After classroom observations, principals must give classroom teachers timely feedback with specific suggestions, recommendations, or directions to improve instruction that will result in increased student achievement.

Regional superintendents should be copied on post observation conferences as they are completed for a couple of reasons, 1. They will know if site administrators are observing teachers early enough in the school year to address instructional issues, and 2. The regional superintendent can determine if the suggestions, recommendations or directions follow regional expectations.

The superintendent has identified increasing the passing rate on the high school proficiency exams, increasing the graduation rate, and ensuring students are receiving a rigorous academic preparation that will serve them well in the future as district goals.

To accomplish these, he has provided practice HSPE exams so teachers can determine their students' strengths and deficiencies. These practice exams should be administered and graded. Students with deficiencies should be identified and a plan to address those deficiencies and students should be created and implemented to ensure meeting the needs of the students and the superintendent's goals. On the RPDP website, math teachers can also find Long Term Memory reviews (LTMRs) that were developed based upon performance of students that can be downloaded and used as a daily review.

Additionally, end of semester exams in pre-algebra, algebra, geometry, and algebra II have been developed to ensure the curriculum is being covered with the rigor required in those courses. Since parallel constructed practice tests were also developed, teachers might consider giving the practice end-of-year test now so they can determine need and show growth at the end of the year. Practice questions were also created for each specification. Teachers might use these questions to help prepare their students.

With respect to HSPE science preparation, teachers might want to visit the RPDP website, [www.rpdp.net](http://www.rpdp.net), link to TIPS (Targeted Instruction for Proficiency in Science). That website also has content, strategies, and resources in literacy, math, and science. Teachers can also DIAL (Direct Instructional Assistance Line) our toll free number, 1.866.920.RPDP (1.866.920.7737) to receive assistance on content, strategies and resources.

What happens in a classroom depends on the agreements made by the principal and teacher. Principals cannot expect from their teachers what they are unwilling to inspect. The same is true of the regional superintendents and their relationships with site administrators.