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## The heart of instructional leadership: Developing quality teaching

For years, principals have been expected to serve as *instructional leaders*. Most principals I've worked with want to do that job but aren't always sure what it means. The innovation configurations for the NSDC Standards for Staff Development provide some description of this role.

An instructional leader relentlessly **promotes educator's deep understanding of content knowledge and the use of research-based instructional strategies as a high priority in the school.** Teachers' deep, *conceptual* understanding of content is essential in order to assist students to meet rigorous academic standards. Using a variety of instructional strategies has been correlated to improved student learning. The principal promotes these outcomes by **encouraging staff to participate in ongoing, intensive district-based professional learning experiences that build content knowledge and use of research-based instructional strategies.** The district appropriately develops teachers' content knowledge so the school can focus on student learning needs. But the principal must also support district programs by **providing time to develop the use of deep understanding of content knowledge and use of research-based instructional strategies.** This means the principal provides time for teachers to work together and expects them to *use* new strategies with students. This expectation can be accomplished by **emphasizing content knowledge and instructional strategies during classroom observations and**

### QUALITY TEACHING

Staff development that improves the learning of all students deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.

**conversations with faculty.** When the principal changes the focus of school conversations from procedures and memos to new knowledge and strategies, that tells teachers that what they know and do in the classroom is a primary concern in the school.

The principal underscores the importance of quality teaching by **modeling the use and importance of content knowledge and instructional strategies at staff meetings, committee meetings, and schoolwide events.**

The principal supports the development of quality teaching through the **allocation of resources, formal evaluations, and public recognition of teacher efforts.** All of these strategies use the organization's formal and informal systems to accentuate the importance of teachers' use of new knowledge and classroom skills.

Lastly, the principal **persists with the goal of deep content knowledge and use of research-based instructional strategies when challenged either internally or externally to alter that goal.** Schools are bombarded with initiatives and mandates that can pull attention away from critical skills. The instructional leader must maintain an unremitting focus on improving teachers' knowledge and instructional skills because of the impact on student learning.

When principals serve as instructional leaders, they not only set a culture but indicate what is important within that culture. When a principal wants to ensure quality teaching, the focus should remain with deep content knowledge and research-based instructional strategies.