Put all the pieces together with these tactics from the nation’s top principals.

States and districts across the nation are moving to new teacher evaluation systems, and principals are tasked with making all the pieces—from observations and conferences to goal-setting and feedback—fit. The solution? Masterful time management, says Wendy Kelly Jordan, principal of Mineral Springs School in Ellerbe, North Carolina, and a 2013 National Distinguished Principal.

“[Principals] are completely in control of how they spend their time each day,” says Jordan. She suggests school leaders take advantage of that fact, and strategically schedule the components of the teacher evaluation process.

Learn how Jordan and other National Distinguished Principals are using tools, delegating tasks, and integrating evaluations with professional development to realize the big picture: boosting teaching and learning.
I have begun using Evernote on my iPad, which has been an excellent way for me to conduct walkthroughs, document critical findings, and email “walkthrough notes” to the visited teachers.

—Michele Dens, Yorba Linda High School, Yorba Linda, California

In our state, we are using the Charlotte Danielson framework. Before the pre-conferences, I provide a schedule of meeting dates and a pre-conference worksheet with guiding questions related to the domains of the Danielson framework.

—Naomi Matsuzaki, Kahaluu ‘u Elementary, Kaneohe, Hawaii

We use Netchemia/Talent Ed to enter goals, self-reflections, mini-observations, etc. For data collection and evidence, I use an iPad and a walkthrough tool aligned with our school goals. This program saves time by organizing each staff member by tasks and due dates, which helps to focus the work.

—Erika Gaynes, East Bay Elementary, Portland, Oregon

I created a tracking tool that lists every teacher with pre-established observation dates. Observations focus on either instruction classroom or on planning and professional learning. Limiting the focus ensures adequate time to examine practice and provide quality feedback.

—Mary Kleekamp, Jaggy Elementary, Eureka, Missouri

We use our data management system to input all components of teacher evaluations. Our data management system is Web-based, so I take my iPad with me when visiting classrooms. I can complete the formal walkthrough or observation by computer while visiting the classroom. By the time I leave the classroom, I can publish and email the feedback to the teacher. This gives the teacher immediate feedback.

—Cristi Parsons, Hallsville North Elementary, Hallsville, Texas

Weekly walkthrough summary data is shared with teachers weekly. Our teacher leadership uses the data to schedule professional development.

—Naomi Matsuzaki

I meet with each teacher three times each year. At the mid-year and end-of-year meetings, teachers are required to bring quantifiable data that demonstrates student growth in regards to their professional goals. We also keep close track of grade-level benchmark testing results for reading, math, science, and social studies.

—Joe McMahon, Bailey Elementary School, East Helena, Montana

If I notice schoolwide gaps during observations, I revisit the topic during the year with targeted professional development supports for the whole staff.

—Erika Gaynes

The new system for teacher evaluation provides a time for the administrator and teacher to identify and address areas of concern and then determine what professional development is required to make improvements.

—Sara Stinson, Union Elementary, Buchanan, West Virginia

During the post-observation dialogue, I always invite the teacher to share the progress they are making toward their professional goals and ask what additional professional development opportunities that relate to their goals. In addition, any time teachers wish to learn more on a topic, I work to ensure the funding/resources necessary for them to take part in the learning experience.

—Mary Kleekamp

The majority of our professional development decisions come from student data, not teacher evaluation. There are times that teachers are in need of assistance, and I formulate a professional growth plan that incorporates specific areas of professional development to meet the needs for their learning.

—Cristi Parsons

Doing three or four observations in one day helps me to see a variety of lessons across the grade levels. This dedicated “day” ensures that I am out in the building enjoying learning with students and teachers. I devote time with teachers during their planning block that immediately follows the classroom observation. This approach provides immediate feedback and ensures a timely process.

—Mary Kleekamp

I spend more time with the new teachers and those who are sharpening their skills. I also start my day at 6 a.m., so my secretary and I have more than enough time to be ready for the day. I can spend most of my school hours in the classrooms and in meeting with teachers.

—Naomi Matsuzaki

I save my paperwork for the early and late hours of the day, when the students and the majority of the staff are gone.

—Joe McMahon

Creating a calendar and setting a professional goal to be in classrooms a targeted number of times holds me accountable to complete observations.

—Erika Gaynes

I target several weeks each quarter to complete observations and walkthroughs. On the days when meetings are light, I make it a point to complete as many observations as possible before I am needed for any number of things that come up during the day.

—Pamela Niles, Chichester Central School, Chichester, New Hampshire

I find that if I schedule several observations/walkthroughs on the same day, I am better able to stick to my pre-established schedule. It is important that when those meetings pop up in my calendar, that I stick to them and follow through.

—Mary Kleekamp

Forms of teacher evaluation provide a time for the administrator and teacher to identify and address areas of concern and then determine what professional development is required to make improvements.

—Sara Stinson
**Tactics to Delegate Tasks**

A retired teacher helps me with the documentaion for the evaluations. I also have an efficient office staff and excellent secretary. —Naomi Matsuzaki

I delegate management tasks to my assistant principal and secretary. They handle tasks like fire and tornado drills, maintenance, custodial walkthroughs, and discipline. —Cheryl Montag

I employ administrative assistants as well as office paraprofessionals who can not only help the public and the students, but also handle some of the mundane tasks administrators face. —Joe McMahon

We have a number of teams in our school. Two of our teachers were trained in the new teacher evaluation system. I used this leadership team to train the remainder of the staff. —Sara Nishibus

I work closely with my assistant principal to rotate our time with teachers. We share the responsibilities of this work. —Mary Kleekamp

The No. 1 way to do this is to empower your staff! Building leadership capacity among faculty is the key component that allows me to be an instructional leader and be present in classrooms on a daily basis. —Cheri Parsons

**What Really Works**

We made the evaluation process better by asking teachers to use the form as a self-evaluation before we wrote up the evaluations. I also have an efficient office staff and excellent secretary. —Naomi Matsuzaki

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The best process we’ve found that seems to have the most long-lasting impact is videotaping lessons, followed by self and mentor evaluations. Although it makes our staff nervous, each session leads to reflection on practice and always to a better instructional session the following day. That mirror in the back of the classroom catches everything. —Joe McMahon

The collaborative goal-setting process, and targeting strategies that support all students and our schoolwide goals. —Erisa Gaynes

At our school, teacher evaluation is viewed as an integral component of bringing the best possible education to our students. The process of offering support and encouragement, rather than judgment and criticism, has fostered a school of professionals who embrace new ideas and strategies. —Pamela Stiles

The self-reflection piece of the evaluation gives teachers an opportunity to look at the rubric for teacher evaluation and determine where they are in the continuum and where they want to go. It is very positive for teachers to have time to reflect on their own professional growth. —Sara Nishibus

When I commit a portion of the day just for teacher evaluations, I feel that I can stay on task. My staff and parents understand that I am out and about, working and learning with teachers, and that other things will need to wait. —Mary Kleekamp

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