

Unit 4, Activity 3: Link research with practice

Purpose	To recognize essential elements of the practice from the research-based film clip and to consider them in light of their own practice.
Time	75 minutes
Required roles	Participants, facilitator

Preparation to view film clip

Approximate time: 10 minutes

Before viewing the film clip, write on the chart below what you might expect to see in a school if the principal is a strong instructional leader.

A school with a principal who is a strong instructional leader will have the following characteristics related to teaching and learning:

View the film clip in Unit 4, [“Improving Instruction”](#) to identify behaviors exhibited by the principals as they work directly with teachers on ways to improve instruction.

Individual review of the film clip

Approximate time: 10 minutes

You will see how Tresa and Kerry monitor teacher and student progress. In both schools, the principals work with teachers to strengthen their practices in ways that improve instruction.

- (Time code: 0:08) Tresa begins by explaining, “We’re supposed to be instructional leaders. That’s the new term — leaders who focus on instruction, who focus on good teaching.” She adds, “You have to be in the classrooms to see the teachers ... talk to the students and ... make sure they’re doing what they’re supposed to be doing.” Tresa observes a sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Staudohor, who provides whole-group instruction, then engages with individual students and small groups. Tresa notes, “She is just one of my best all day long.”

- (Time code: 1:08) At the same time, Tresa assists a new, struggling first-grade teacher, Mrs. Dubin, and tells her that she will have a temporary support person in the classroom. Mrs. King, a retired teacher, models effective instructional strategies, classroom management, and planning for Mrs. Dubin. She also gives practical advice. After four months, Tresa decides the evidence shows that Mrs. Dubin has not met expectations and “has to go” for the benefit of the students.
- (Time code: 4:01) Kerry participates in a teacher-led meeting with third-grade teachers about why student reading comprehension is low. Agreeing with one of the teachers, Kerry notes, “The idea of feedback is so important, and if it’s not immediate, it is not worth giving.”
- (Time code: 4:40) Tresa conducts a professional development meeting with her teachers, assigning a task that helps them to reflect on and improve their practice. A teacher responds, “By doing this activity, you’re forcing us to take the time that we need for ourselves to recognize our performance and our performance as a school.” Tresa emphasizes the importance of assessing student readiness and tells them, “Some of you are slipping.”

Discussion after viewing the film clip

Approximate time: 15 minutes

After viewing the film clip consider the following questions in small groups. Be prepared to debrief salient points discussed with the larger group.

1. What instructional leadership practices did you observe in the film clip?

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2. What didn't you see that you would have expected?

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3. What advice would you give Tresa and Kerry about instructional leadership?

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Role play and discussion

Approximate time: 40 minutes

In this scenario-playing exercise, the facilitator organizes participants into pairs and assigns a role to each participant: Tresa, Kerry, or Annette Gurney from the district office, who is functioning as a “critical friend” rather than a district auditor as she does in Unit 5 film clip, [“Managing people, data, and processes.”](#)

Recall that at Nash, Tresa Dunbar’s school, 98 percent of students are from low-income backgrounds, and at Harvard Park, Kerry Purcell’s school, 87 percent of students are from low-income backgrounds. As you complete this exercise consider how these schools are different from or similar to high-poverty schools that you are familiar with and that you know produce positive results.

In groups of three complete the chart below using the viewpoint of the character you were assigned, one of the principals or critical friend.

Complete the chart below using the viewpoint of the character you have chosen, either one of the principals or the critical friend.

1. The principal “Tresa” or “Kerry” will begin by filling in the first column.
2. The principal and “Annette Gurney,” the critical friend, will complete the second column together.
3. The critical friend will complete the third column.
4. After completing all columns, partners discuss their choices.
5. The facilitator may ask each pair to select one row to share with the larger group.

Principal practices for improving instruction and student learning	Indicators of effectiveness	What else could the principal have done?