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Executive Secretary

Q: What actions should the principal take with respect to professional growth plans?

A: There are four steps in the process of professional growth plans where the principal has a key role. Principals can encourage teachers to visit the ATA

website at www.teachers.ab.ca as a resource for developing and implementing their growth plan. Professional growth plans can take many forms. They can be textual or graphical. They can include mind maps or web formats. Whatever the format, the plan must demonstrate a relationship to the Teaching Quality Standard and include the following essential information:

- Name
- Dates/timeline
- Goal(s)
- Strategies
- Indicators or measures of success
- TQS reference
- Reflections and implications

The second occurs early in the fall when the principal's role in growth plans should be to review the plan and provide constructive feedback to the teacher. The teacher's growth plan should be based on the professional judgment of the teacher and reflect priorities for growth identified on the basis of the teacher's own assessment of the teacher's professional learning needs. While some board policies require the principal to approve the teacher's growth plan, most require the principal to review the plan and this is the stance that the principal should take. *Review* means that the principal considers the teacher's growth plan, offers suggestions and provides constructive feedback, entering into a dialogue about the teacher's priorities for professional growth. However, *review* should not mean imposing the principal's own views about the teacher's learning needs. The teacher professional growth plans should be teacher authored and directed. Principals should use this opportunity to dialogue about observations they have made during supervision.

The goals of the fall review conversation are to

- empower the teacher in the review process,
- encourage professional reflection and collegial dialogue,
- link professional development to improved practice and the TQS,
- discuss the support required to facilitate future professional growth,
- discuss the teacher's role in achieving school and district goals and
- promote a collegial model for professional growth.

The teacher's role in the review is to

- be prepared for the review,
- lead the discussion of the plan if comfortable,
- provide a rationale for the goals and strategies identified in the plan,
- lead the administrator through the critical parts of the growth plan and
- identify resources that may help support the growth plan.

The school administrator's role in the review is to

- link information gained through supervision into the reflective questions asked of the teacher,
- ask reflective rather than evaluative questions,
- ask questions of clarification and
- help to identify the resources needed to complete the growth plan.

As the year progresses, the principal should provide support and assistance to teachers in implementing their growth plans. In many jurisdictions, the teacher's growth plan resides in the principal's office for the year but before the end of the school year, the plan should be returned to the teacher for possible use as a starting point for next year's growth plan. So, the administrator's roles in the implementation phase are to

- help the teacher implement the growth plan;
- gather information regarding the teacher's progress;
- be aware of the learning needs of all teachers on staff and keep them up to date with materials, PD opportunities and information about new developments in the area of professional growth;
- using supervision visit the teacher's classroom and provide feedback on his or her learning goals; and
- recognize the hard work, commitment and accomplishments of each teacher.

It should be noted that the growth plan cannot be used in the evaluation of a teacher unless the teacher agrees. Concerns about a teacher's practice should be addressed by the principal through supervision.

In the later part of the year principals will meet again with their teachers to review the completion of their growth plans. During this meeting the teacher will need to provide evidence that they have completed their growth plan. The year-end review of the professional growth plan is an opportunity to discuss the professional development activities and to showcase the results of the teacher's learning. Some typical questions could be:

- Where are you in terms of achieving your goals?
- What did you learn from this process?
- What difference has this made to your practice?
- How did you alter your plan? What was easy? What was challenging?
- What was the most beneficial aspect of this process for you? Where is this leading you for the next year?

The principal's role as the instructional leader in the school is written into provincial *Policy 2.1.5 Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation*. There is more information and support for both teachers and administrators on the ATA website. The two structured meetings around professional growth plans that you have with your teachers provides you a valuable opportunity to have individual conversations about teaching practices that optimize student learning.