National Implications: Applying the Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model to Teacher Evaluation

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Abstract

The *Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model* (*BK-SLM*) focuses on six fundamental principles of effective leadership applicable to the use by principals in the teacher evaluation process. The model emphasizes reasonable and challenging expectations for teachers regarding their performance that is clearly communicated and consistently enforced (Badgett & Kritsonis, 2014). Teachers' performance is monitored and evaluated for effectiveness and accompanied by appropriate feedback and coaching. Finally, expectations are systematically reinforced or revised. The model is premised on the principal and teachers creating a culture of performance focused on teachers "being their best." The model's ultimate goal in the context of teacher evaluation is maximizing learning for children.

Background

For too long meaningful teacher evaluation has eluded both teachers and principals in many schools throughout the country. There are a plethora of reasons—some legitimate (time demands on principals) and some not (lack of commitment by both teachers and principals)—negating the teacher evaluation process from maximizing contributions to student success. Effective application of the *Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model* can resolve this unacceptable situation and put meaning back into teachers' evaluations, accompanied with a renewed commitment by teachers and principals to maximize teacher effectiveness.

The model is applicable as a supervision process for formative evaluation that may take place multiple times throughout the school year. It also can serve in the process of summative evaluation for the annual evaluation of teachers' performance.

Overview of the Badgett-Kritsonis
Strategic Leadership Model

The effective organizational leadership of a principal should be by design. We believe that school leadership that embraces clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations for teachers is destined to succeed because of the coherent messages, purposes, and processes utilized to maximum effectiveness. Principals can effectively facilitate success for building personnel by articulating a supervision leadership model premised on establishing a *performance culture* in which teachers' performance can flourish, and they can "be their best." This includes supervising teachers so that they achieve expectations which are vital to the school's mission and vision.

The Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model can be effectively used in schools at all levels—Pre-K through high school. The model utilizes several key principles that support the effective utilization of human capital and creates a teacher evaluation system that is meaningful to teachers, adheres to the evaluative responsibilities of principals, and ultimately benefits children's education. The six steps of the *Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model* are presented in Figure 1.
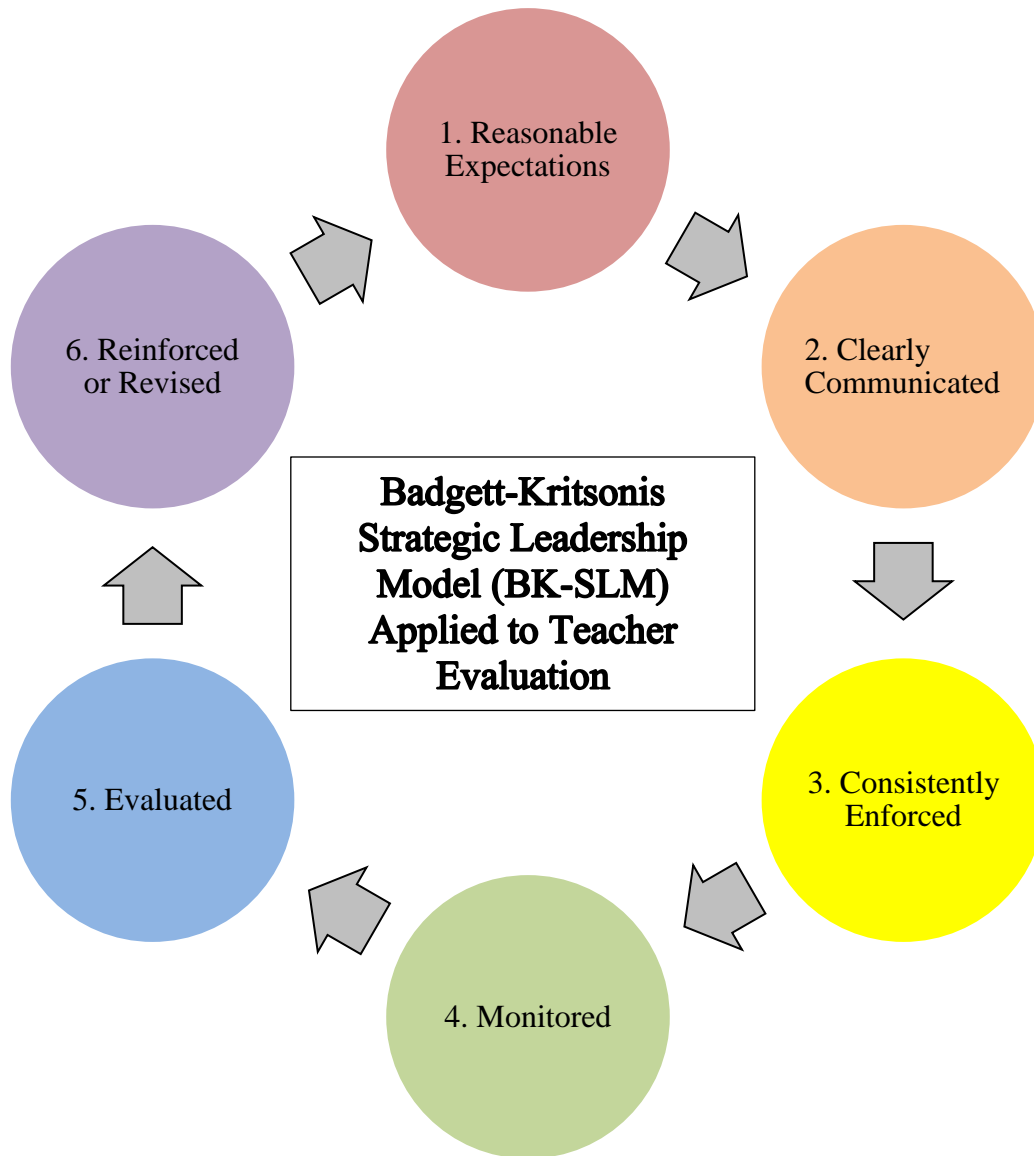
Figure 1. Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model (BK-SLM) applied to teacher evaluation.

Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model (BK-SLM)
Applied to Teacher Evaluation

The *Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model* focuses on six fundamental principles of supervision germane to principals effectively implementing a teacher evaluation system: *Step 1*—Expectations established are reasonable; *Step 2*—Expectations are clearly communicated; and *Step 3*—Expectations are consistently enforced. Once these foundational steps are established, the principal advances to the fourth, fifth, and sixth steps: *Step 4*—Results are monitored; *Step 5*—*Results* are evaluated for effectiveness; and *Step 6*—*Expectations* are reinforced or revised in a systematic and measured manner. This model is based on effective decision-making (Badgett & Kritsonis, 2014).

The six fundamental principles of the model are categorized into two levels—foundation and advanced—to emphasize that the initial three steps pertaining to expectations are building blocks for Steps 4, 5, and 6.

FOUNDATION LEVELS	ADVANCED LEVELS
Step 1: Expectations established are reasonable	Step 4: Results are monitored
Step 2: Expectations are clearly communicated	Step 5: Results are evaluated for effectiveness
Step 3: Expectations are consistently enforced	Step 6: Expectations are reinforced or revised
	(Badgett & Kritsonis, 2014)

Assumptions of the Badgett-Kritsonis
Strategic Leadership Model

A primary purpose of this model is to align teachers' performance contributions with the school's strategies for continuous improvement for serving children. A goal of a school utilizing the *Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model* is to create a *performance culture* (Fay, 2018) in which teachers can achieve *their best* and use their collective efforts to maximize the effectiveness of the school's vision, mission, and goals. This culture is achieved by creating situations in which teachers are fully engaged and immersed in pursuit to accomplish their expectations.

The school's leadership must embrace an authentic commitment to the model, including in-depth training of the principal and other administrators involved in the teacher evaluation process regarding how to effectively implement the model's steps. Buckingham (2016) stresses the need for principals to truly understand—conceptually and operationally—the approach the school uses to address the performance of its teachers through the evaluation process. It is also essential that staff development is conducted in advance of implementing the model for teachers to understand its specifics, ask questions, and offer input for putting the model into practice.

This model focuses on helping teachers perform at their highest level compared to some schools across the country in which principals, or the administrator designated for teacher evaluation, focus on "catching them doing things wrong." The model stresses *nearby management* in the context of principals "getting the best out of people" through working collaboratively with teachers and being actively engaged in supervisory responsibilities (Caplan, 2013, p. 175). Lastly, the model reflects a "two-way partnership between leaders and employees [teachers]" for continuous improvement regarding children's education (Peters, 2016, p. 139).

Application of the Model's Steps

Organizational psychologists have demonstrated that clear, specific, and measurable goals [expectations] lead to high performance. They have also demonstrated that feedback provides the necessary information that enables people [organization members] to improve. If you don't know whether the results are meeting the goals [expectations], how can you make changes? (Schiemann & Dinsell, 2016, p. 127)

The starting point of the model is *reasonable expectations* for teachers' performance anchored to maximizing learning for each child. As Hunt (2014) notes, "Effective use of goals

[expectations] increases employee [teacher] productivity, engagement, and motivation. Ineffective use of goals [expectations] can be the opposite effect" (p. 104). The expectations for a teacher's performance should flow from a job description, information from the most recent teacher evaluation (if there is one), the criteria for the current teacher evaluation framework, perceived improvement needs of the teacher, formative and summative student growth and achievement data, and the principal's judgment.

These expectations serve the purpose of "setting direction" for the focus of a teacher's behaviors (Hunt, 2014, p. 103). Virtually all teachers mean well, want to be effective, and have the true welfare of their students at heart. Reasonable and focused expectations—developed collaboratively between teacher and principal—provide a roadmap for teachers to potentially *be their best* and serve students' needs in an exemplary manner.

Reasonable expectations for teachers' performance that are clearly communicated and consistently enforced are the linchpins for creating an environment in which teachers have no ambiguity in knowing where their behavioral efforts are to be focused and the factors on which they will be evaluated. The expectation setting process in Step 1 (reasonable expectations) and Step 2 (clearly communicated expectations) reflects a *collaborative dialogue* between the principal and teacher, and not a monologue by the principal (Dalziel, 2018, p. 135). Teachers are viewed as partners with their principal for enhancing learning for each child. Bartz, DeMont, Hillman, and Miller (1992-93) note that "It is important for principals to create an environment in which all staff are likely to reach their *full performance potential*. Principals collaboratively setting performance expectations with individual staff members will greatly assist in reaching this full potential" (p. 14).

The model emphasizes limiting the number of expectations, so they are manageable and achievable for the teacher. "Too many simultaneous goals [expectations] can reduce performance" (Schiemann & Dinsell, 2016, p. 128). It is important to align teachers' contributions through meeting expectations with the school's strategy to succeed in the realm of continuous improvement (Schiemann & Dinsell, 2016). Once expectations are set (Step 1) and clearly communicated (Step 2) to a teacher, the principal reinforces the importance of the expectations by consistently enforcing their use (Step 3) as the focal point of the teacher's performance. This necessitates *active supervision* by the principal in the context, for example, of walk-throughs to have first-hand knowledge of a teacher's behaviors in the classroom. It also means numerous communications via notes, emails, texts, and face-to-face interactions.

After the principal has collaboratively worked with a teacher regarding Steps 1, 2, and 3 (foundation level) of the *Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model*, the principal reviews how information and data will be collected to monitor (Step 4) the degree to which the teacher's performance is meeting expectations. This data collection for monitoring includes direct observation of the teacher's performance, planning documents, artifacts, work products, formative student assessment data, and any other information sources directly related to an expectation. Step 4 (monitoring) needs to be well-planned in advance to identify at the time of the foundation level—Steps 1, 2, and 3—the data needed to monitor performance for each expectation. The principal needs to consider the *time span of discretion*—how long it takes to see the impact of what the teacher does on the job—as a reference point regarding data collection and usage (Lawler, 2017, p. 2).

Data and information from Step 4 (monitoring) serve as input to Step 5 (evaluation). Evaluation (Step 5) specifically identifies a teacher's performance that: (1) met expectations or (2) did not meet expectations. The next action is for the principal to provide feedback to the

teacher regarding performance for all expectations—those met and unmet. Eller, J. F. and Eller (2018) observe that "studies show employees crave effective, accurate feedback" (p. 54). Feedback works best when teachers are *active participants* in the process (Charan, Barton, & Carey, 2018). Regarding feedback, Bartz and Quick (2006) observe that:

> The performance of staff members should not be left to chance by administrators and thus assumed to *just happen* in an effective manner. Staff members deserve to have meaningful feedback from administrators pertaining to their job performance so that there are no *surprises* at the time of a formal performance appraisal or evaluation. (p. 6)

It is best for the principal initially to be descriptive as opposed to evaluative when giving feedback. An example of evaluative versus descriptive feedback is found in Table 1.

Table 1

Evaluative Versus Descriptive Feedback

Evaluative	Descriptive
"Your reaction to my comment is an example of your problem in making clear and accurate interpretations of information."	"Your reaction to my comment really surprised me because I expected a different response" (Hillman, Schwandt, & Bartz, 1990, p. 23).

It is essential that the principal view is furnishing the teacher with performance data as only the starting point of the feedback process. The desired end result of the feedback process is that the teacher: (1) understands, internalizes, and knows how to modify performance to meet unmet expectations in the future; and (2) receives positive reinforcement for expectations met. In both instances—met and unmet expectations—the emphasis is placed on the teacher understanding the "why" of the causation of behaviors with performance. A checklist for principals' benefit when planning and giving feedback is provided in Table 2.

When feedback indicates that the teacher's performance does not meet an expectation, the principal provides performance coaching. Feedback and coaching are highly interrelated. The difference is that feedback represents the information that *describes performance*, while coaching is the assistance given to *improve performance* when feedback indicates expectations are not met (Hillman, Schwandt, & Bartz, 1990). From the staff member's perspective, coaching addresses the question, "How can I improve?" (Bartz, D. E. & Bartz, 1995, p. 36).

Table 2

Feedback Checklist

Feedback should:	
1. Occur as soon as possible. 2. Allow ample time for discussion. 3. Be done in a confidential and private manner. 4. Be given only when the staff member or principal is not upset, frustrated, or tired. 5. Initially be descriptive as opposed to evaluative. 6. Be specific. 7. Focus on behaviors and not personality. 8. Demonstrate interest in the teacher. 9. Use factual information. 10. Use open-ended and probing questions. 11. Be given in relation to an expectation or a related task. 12. Demonstrate effective preparation by the principal. 13. Ensure that the principal and teacher understand what has been communicated.	14. Reflect adequate collection of information and preparation by the principal. 15. Encourage input from the teacher. 16. Address both effective performance and areas for needed improvements. 17. Note subsequent steps that may need to be taken for a performance problem if it is not effectively addressed. 18. Make use of effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills. 19. Encourage self-reflection by the teacher. 20. Respect the dignity and opinions of the teacher. 21. Exhibit a trusting climate. 22. Include suggestions, resources, information, and timelines to address areas of needed improvement. 23. Through coaching, develop an action plan when performance problems are acute. (Bartz & Quick, 2006, p. 7)

The definition for coaching used here is for *performance coaching* (Bartz, 2016). This contrasts with developmental coaching that focuses on assisting teachers in gaining knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform effectively in potential future role responsibilities in the profession. Performance coaching deals with the "here and now" in relation to meeting expectations.

Coaching is frequently more difficult for principals to effectively perform than is giving feedback. It is often easier for principals to indicate what is "right or wrong" with a performance for an expectation through feedback than it is to specifically identify ways in which the teacher

can improve performance for unmet expectations through the coaching process (Bartz, Thompson, & Rice, 2017). When coaching, the principal should strive for a *contextual understanding* of the teacher's environment in which performance takes place to identify needed behavioral changes more effectively. The principal also determines the extent to which the teacher needs assistance regarding the resources and skills required to make the behavioral changes.

Flowing from Step 5 (evaluation) into Step 6 (reinforced or revised) is (1) positive reinforcement feedback to the teacher for expectations met and (2) coaching activities spearheaded by the principal aimed at improving the teacher's performance concerning expectations that were not met. Revisions are also made to expectations, if needed. Through performance coaching the principal initially works collaboratively with the teacher to flesh out opinions, questions, and suggestions the teacher has regarding modifying behaviors so that an unmet expectation is successfully accomplished in the future. The principal then incorporates her/his solutions with the teacher's input to finalize an *action plan* for the behaviors needed so that the teacher's future performance meets expectations.

The Utility of the Model

The *Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model* can be utilized by any school's personnel whose leadership is willing to commit to creating a positive and engaging performance culture for its teachers and all other employee groups in the building (e.g., aides, clerical staff, custodians, coaches, and activity personnel). This broad utility of the model is due to its focus on clear and understood performance expectations for each staff member that is accompanied by performance feedback and coaching, when necessary. The model's broad base of applicability is also attributable to its simplicity and positive approach in aiding members of any employee group in "being their best."

Closing Thoughts

The *Badgett-Kritsonis Strategic Leadership Model* provides a vehicle for aiding principals in managing the performance of teachers effectively. Coupling the model with the teacher evaluation process facilitates the school's continuous improvement process to enhance learning for all children. At the heart of this leadership model is reasonable expectations that are clearly communicated to the teacher and consistently enforced by the principal. The teacher is intimately involved in the expectation-setting process via collaborative dialogue with the principal.

Performance data collected by the principal as a part of the monitoring process provides information for evaluating the teacher's performance in relation to expectations and serves as the source of feedback to the teacher. When feedback indicates a teacher's performance did not meet an expectation, the principal utilizes performance coaching. This performance coaching focuses on the behavioral changes needed by the teacher to meet the expectation in the future. Holistically, the performance of teachers is reinforced when their behavior results in expectations being met and revisions are identified for their future behaviors to accomplish unmet expectations.

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