

## What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

The core of success in schools is educator expertise. This book doesn't mince words about how hard it can be but sheds sunlight onto evidence-based processes that lead to improvement. *Differentiated Supervision* asks for excellent diagnoses of teachers' needs, their theories of teaching, and the impact of current methods. Furthermore, it uses multiple coaching and supervision models to assist in the fidelity of implementation and provides processes for educators to work together to evaluate the impact on the learning lives of students. The book is rich in using feedback, look fors, and walkthroughs, as well as developing evaluative mind frames and equity checks—all leading to a bountiful harvest of student growth.

—John Hattie

Emeritus Laureate Professor, University of Melbourne  
and Co-Director of the Hattie Family Foundation  
Carlton, Victoria, Australia

In reconceptualizing supervision as a supporting process of continuous feedback, Mausbach and Morrison provide valuable insights into how school leaders can improve teaching and learning. This wonderfully written, comprehensive guide provides school leaders with the tools and strategies needed to strengthen collective efficacy and achieve improved results.

—Jenni Donohoo

Author/Education Consultant  
New Orleans, LA

We differentiate instruction to meet the varied needs of students; why do we fail to do so for teachers? The authors have developed a model to remedy this, one that makes it possible for school leaders to provide the guidance and support all teachers deserve.

—Nancy Frey

Professor of Educational Leadership  
San Diego State University  
San Diego, CA

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# Differentiated Supervision

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*This book is dedicated to all students and teachers  
who love to learn and grow.*

# Differentiated Supervision

Growing Teachers  
and Getting Results

Ann Mausbach

Kim Morrison

 CORWIN

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# CONTENTS

List of Figures	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
About the Authors	xii
Introduction	1
A Few Things You Should Know	5
Chapter 1. Differentiated Supervision 101	7
What Supervision Is and What It Is Not	7
The Challenge	8
A Model for Improved Supervision	9
Why It Works	12
Making It Happen	17
Equity Check	23
From the Field	23
Key Takeaways	25
Where Are You Now?	26
Chapter 2. Element I: Universal Support With Qualitative Feedback	28
Clarifying the Model	29
Why It Works	35
Making It Happen	36
Equity Check	44
From the Field	45
Key Takeaways	46
Where Are You Now?	47
Chapter 3. Element II: Individual/Small Group Support With Qualitative Feedback	48
Clarifying the Model	49
Why It Works	53
Making It Happen	55

Equity Check	61
From the Field	62
Key Takeaways	63
Where Are You Now?	64
<b>Chapter 4. Element III: Universal Support With Quantitative Feedback</b>	<b>65</b>
Clarifying the Model	66
Why It Works	68
Making It Happen	71
Equity Check	76
From the Field	77
Key Takeaways	79
Where Are You Now?	80
<b>Chapter 5. Element IV: Individual Support With Quantitative Feedback</b>	<b>81</b>
Clarifying the Model	82
Why It Works	87
Making It Happen	89
Equity Check	93
From the Field	93
Key Takeaways	95
Where Are You Now?	96
<b>Chapter 6. Leading the Differentiated Supervision Model</b>	<b>97</b>
Principal A	97
Principal B	98
Leadership Behaviors and the DIIE Model	99
How Behaviors Align to Elements I, II, and III	101
Do This, Not That	102
Leadership Commitments	102
It's Your Time	105
Final Thoughts	105
<b>Appendix A. Differentiated Supervision Timeline</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Appendix B. Example School Improvement and Professional Development Plan ABC School</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Appendix C. Developing Look Fors Protocol</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Appendix D. Building Capacity Self-Assessment</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>125</b>



# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1:	Differentiated Supervision Model	9
Figure 1.2:	Feedback Timing	11
Figure 1.3:	Differentiated Supervision Practices	13
Figure 1.4:	Blueprint Processes for School Improvement	15
Figure 1.5:	Teacher Feedback	18
Figure 1.6:	Common Alignment Problems and Solutions	19
Figure 1.7:	Questions and Language for Developing a School Improvement Plan	21
Figure 2.1:	Difference Between Checklists and Look Fors	31
Figure 2.2:	Feedback Example After a General Walkthrough	33
Figure 2.3:	Difference Between Well-Crafted and Poorly Crafted Look Fors	34
Figure 2.4:	Professional Development Structures	38
Figure 2.5:	Professional Development Plan Example: Staff Outcomes	38
Figure 2.6:	Guiding Questions When Developing Look Fors	40
Figure 2.7:	Restorative Practices Look Fors	41
Figure 2.8:	Feedback Journal Example	43
Figure 2.9:	Walkthrough Summary Tool	44
Figure 3.1:	Three Rs of Feedback	52
Figure 3.2:	Structure for Learning Teams	57
Figure 3.3:	Recursive Team Action Planning Process	58
Figure 3.4:	Unpacking Look Fors Organizer	59
Figure 3.5:	Unpacking Look Fors Organizer	60
Figure 4.1:	Implementation Study Steps	67
Figure 4.2:	Implementation Checklist Example	68
Figure 4.3:	Observation Schedule	72
Figure 4.4:	SIP Implementation and Impact Data Example	74

Figure 4.5:	Implementation Study Data Analysis Questions	76
Figure 5.1:	Comparison of Formal Evaluation Phases	83
Figure 5.2:	Types of Feedback and Coaching Stances	85
Figure 5.3:	Supervision Conference Framework	91
Figure 5.4:	Teacher Map	92
Figure 6.1:	Leadership Comparison	100
Figure 6.2:	Do This, Not That	103

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# INTRODUCTION

*“Remember that children, marriages, and flower gardens reflect the kind of care they get.”*

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

## THE ROOTS OF DIFFERENTIATED SUPERVISION

*Supervision*—such a loaded word for many educators. For teachers, this means memories of hours spent nervously preparing lessons, hoping to fill the time with all the correct techniques so the principal can check all the correct boxes on an endless rubric, and then being agreeable during the post-observation conference so that the experience is over as soon as possible so they can get back to their classroom and teach in their “normal” way. For principals, it conjures up the stress of trying to fit in an inordinate number of observations in the last few frantic months of school, using cumbersome forms and then sharing generic feedback around broad and widely interpreted teaching standards. Lots of work for very little return for everybody.

Having been involved in both types of experiences, early on in our administrative careers (which now span over 20 plus years for each of us) we knew there had to be a better way to support teachers and positively impact the students in our care. Experience had taught us that if we messed with something like supervision it would have to be connected to our overall efforts in improving the school. Treating supervision as an isolated activity didn’t work; we had gone down that path and knew it was a big waste of time for teachers and leaders and resulted in little impact for students.

We began revisioning a system for supervision based on the principle that schools are complex systems, meaning they are made up of multiple interconnected parts. The more tightly coupled the parts the more likely improvements to the system would be sustainable. The level of interdependency inherent in a garden helps explain this thinking. Change one aspect of a garden (i.e., type of fertilizer) and it impacts the whole garden, either positively or negatively. We also believe supervision is all about growth and not just about pulling weeds. Addressing ineffective supervision required us to dig at the roots of the issue because changes would impact the entire school. Hacking around at the dead branches wasn’t enough; we needed a comprehensive framework. The differentiated supervision model is the response.

## DIFFERENTIATED SUPERVISION DEFINED

Differentiated supervision is a comprehensive model that provides a coherent method for supporting individuals, small groups, and the whole school in implementing high-leverage strategies that improve student learning. The model is organized so that leaders can differentiate based on both teacher needs and supervision practices. Differentiation by teacher means knowing, understanding, and responding to the unique needs of individual teachers. No two teachers' needs are exactly the same, so supervision practices that treat them as such miss the mark. Feedback tools in the differentiated supervision model are designed to help leaders pinpoint areas of support for individual teachers. Processes provide structure but also allow for flexibility so if a teacher needs more support that can easily be accommodated.

Differentiation by process means using a variety of supervision methods to provide support to teachers. Multiple methods are needed to provide the leader with an in-depth understanding of the teachers' needs. A mixture of supervisory practices (i.e., general walkthroughs, implementation studies, etc.) will be shared throughout the book, not to purport one method over another, but in an effort to help leaders know when and how to use these practices in a manner that creates coherence rather than chaos. In essence, we will be sharing how to differentiate which practice will have the greatest impact in the context of the work you are doing both at the building and individual level.

Supervision is more than a series of steps that lead to a final evaluation. For us, as corny as this may sound, it is a way of being. It is about creating a culture where examining practice, working together to figure out issues, and constantly improving are the norms. Supervision is about supporting and directing, not judging and complying. Changing the culture and achievement in a school requires a broadened definition of supervision, one that moves away from thinking it is just about appraisal and viewing it as a powerful fertilizer for growth.

## IT TAKES COMMITMENT

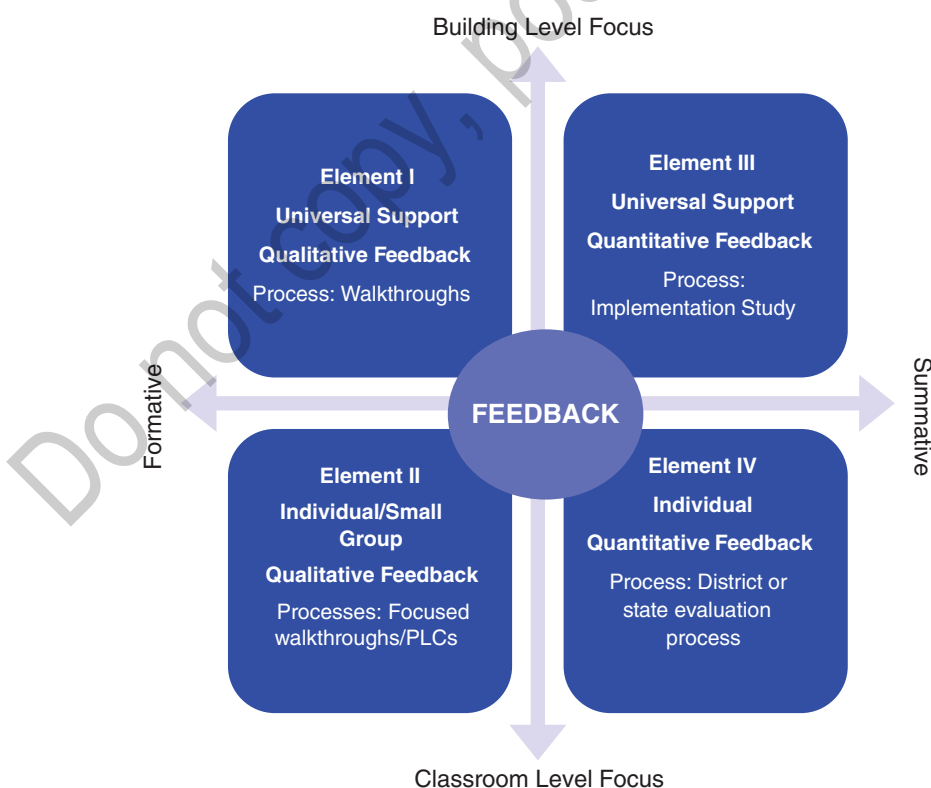
A commitment is a pledge or promise to the purpose of your enterprise. Making a commitment is crucial because it's what transforms words into reality. For those of us in schools, that means a commitment to learning. As we express and transmit commitments to those around us, it leads to the creation of new behaviors and attitudes (Daskal, 2016). When new experiences are provided that allow individuals to practice and build upon their learning, commitment increases. In other words, when we do the work, belief and dedication to change follow. This serves as a call to action for leaders. We must commit to doing this work by engaging in behaviors that will transform beliefs and ultimately the system, exactly what the differentiated supervision model is designed to do. Committing to the work of teaching and learning must be a deliberate process. Leaders have to be clear about

what they want to sow, then do the work required to plant and nurture seeds of improvement.

We have found three core leadership commitments help focus a leader’s attention and ensure that the differentiated supervision model gets implemented in an impactful way. These commitments flow from the components that make up the professional capital equation (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). These include human (individual talent), social (how groups work together and interact), and decisional (ability to make good decisions based on experience and learning) capital. Leading learning involves having all three capitals interact and work together to move the school forward. As you read the following chapters, we encourage you to reflect on how these commitments are manifested in the model.

CORE LEADERSHIP COMMITMENTS
Human: Use of a growth mindset to develop and enhance professional capital.
Social: Development of a school culture that promotes learning.
Decisional: Implementation of school improvement processes at high levels.

## THE BOOK CHAPTERS



## DIFFERENTIATED SUPERVISION MODEL

The differentiated supervision model graphic outlined in Chapter 1 is the organizer for the book. Four quadrants are used to describe the major areas of supervision as well as to demonstrate the interconnectedness between all components. One quadrant of the model is described in each of the Chapters 2–4. Leadership moves that increase the likelihood for successful implementation are included for each quadrant. The focus for feedback and practical examples of what this feedback would sound like will also be a part of each chapter. A From the Field vignette is used throughout the book to help readers see how the four quadrants work together to create focus.

Our buildings weather the seasons when they are nurtured by principals who focus on growth and know how to support teachers and students in this pursuit. We dedicated the last chapter to those leadership behaviors that will help do just that. Teachers flourish when led by a respectfully relentless principal. Chapter 6 teases out the specific nuanced leadership behaviors needed that help leverage the positive trajectory of a school.

## OUR INTENTIONS

In reading this book, we hope to expand your definition of supervision so you can see how impactful it can be when it is woven throughout your daily work. We also hope that you see how the processes and tools can create a community of learners, having a positive effect on both the culture and achievement in your school. In seeing the interrelatedness of this model, we believe you will not only be more efficient with your supervision but be better equipped to provide relevant and powerful feedback. While leading a school is never easy, our desire is that by reading this book you will not only be inspired but equipped to know you can make a difference. Finally, our ultimate intention is to help you support the teachers and students in your care so they grow beyond measure.



# A FEW THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Before embarking on a journey of differentiated supervision, we want to clarify a few terms that you will see throughout the book. Because these terms can mean different things to different people, we are sharing our definitions so that as you encounter them throughout your reading you will have a clear picture of what we are describing.

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP)

A school improvement plan (SIP) is the North Star for this work. Imagine building a house and having workers show up and do whatever they want to do. This sounds crazy, because it is, and yet it is what we do to teachers when they work in schools without a well-articulated SIP. Builders' blueprints outline what the structure will look like when it is completed. This provides direction and guidance so that everyone involved knows and understands what is being built. Building a strong school is no different. The SIP serves this function for schools.

A SIP is a planning document that outlines goals, strategies, and objectives. Having a clear, collaboratively developed plan that aligns with the mission, vision, and needs of the school helps create a culture that allows everyone to thrive because it creates a shared sense of purpose and builds a continuous improvement mindset. The goal of the SIP is to affect change in the system so it is developed in response to achievement and cultural data. Developing a focused plan will be outlined in Chapter 1.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS

Learning is messy. It doesn't occur in a straight line that connects point A to point B. It's more like the two-step—one step forward, two steps back. In addition to not being linear, learners aren't all starting at the same place or from the same vantage points. Deep learning requires time, practice, and feedback (Campitelli & Gobert, 2011). Organizing meaningful professional

learning for adults in a school is difficult, if not impossible, if we don't pay attention to these important factors. The differentiated supervision model addresses these issues by being strategic about planning for adult learning. This happens in two ways: first, by aligning learning content to the strategies in the SIP, and second, by organizing learning in such a way that provides teachers ample opportunities to learn in a variety of settings. This means providing some whole group learning (when the concept is new) and copious amounts of small group (via professional learning communities, or PLCs, or learning teams) and one-on-one learning (through feedback). Developing a comprehensive professional development plan, which is outlined in Chapter 2, ensures that both of these things will happen.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

The first step in making this work happen is to build an infrastructure of support. We use the term infrastructure because it refers to the physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of an enterprise. The infrastructure is pivotal because it is what holds up the rest of the work. Much like a trellis in a garden provides support and direction for plants to grow, so does the way a leader organizes the work of the adults. Without upfront planning on what these structures will be, the hope of implementation dies on the vine. Because more than one infrastructure of support is needed, we will address this concept in each chapter, providing specifics about what needs to be in place in order to hold up the framework as related to the content in that chapter.

## **TIMING**

The differentiated supervision model is designed as a recursive process that provides consistency and structure for the school leader. There is a rhythm to this work that is driven by the seasons of the school year. Leaders use the qualitative and quantitative data gathered throughout the year to make decisions and support teachers. Appendix A provides a suggested outline of what needs to occur as you move throughout the school year.