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Personnel and the National Standards

*So, as fast as you can,
Think of something to do!
You will have to get rid of
Thing One and Thing Two!*

—The fish in *The Cat in the Hat*

It was one of those days. You know, *those days*. A thought runs across your mind: “If school didn’t have children and employees with all their problems and issues, then it wouldn’t be such a bad place to work!” It was a thought birthed in a moment of absolute frustration. After all, it was one of those days.

You became an educator to make life better for the world. It’s a calling, not just a job. But somewhere along the way you discovered that people are, well, just messy—whether they are 6 or 66 years old.

Let’s bring to light another thought: “Sometimes the adults at my school are worse than the students! They argue and bicker, they do the minimum and expect the maximum, and they are more interested in themselves than helping the students. I’m a people person,” you think to yourself. “How can I have these kinds of thoughts about people, especially people I care about?”

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Figure 1.1 A Chain Letter

Dear Colleague,

This chain letter is meant to bring happiness to you. Unlike other chain letters, it does not cost any money. Just send a copy of this letter to six other schools that are tired of their principals. Then bundle up your principal and send him/her to the school at the bottom of the list. In one week you will receive 16,436 principals, and one of them should be a dandy. Have faith in this letter!

P.S. One man broke the chain and got his old principal back.

If similar thoughts have crossed your mind, welcome to the club. It is part of our human condition.

Theodor Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss, introduced us to several unique characters in his classic book, *The Cat in the Hat*. Thing 1 and Thing 2 are two characters who wreak havoc in Sally's home on that cold, cold, wet day. The truth of the matter is Thing 1 and Thing 2 were accomplices of another instigator of chaos—the Cat in the Hat. All three of these characters had an undiagnosed case of listening deficit disorder (LDD) compounded by a compulsive behavior driven by their own selfish agendas. This troublesome trio had taken up residence in Sally's home, much to her chagrin.

The antics of Thing 1 and Thing 2 evoked pleas from the fish to evict this destructive duo. But being a victim of LDD, the Cat in the Hat repeatedly ignored the fish's pleas. Only when Sally and her brother took strong overt action, involving the use of a net, were Thing 1 and Thing 2 brought under control. (Throughout history, the net has proven to be an excellent intervention strategy when dealing with out-of-control things.)

School personnel have all types of needs, characteristics, and personalities. How do we effectively lead employees resembling the Cat in the Hat and his sidekicks, Thing 1 and Thing 2? Unlike the Cat in the Hat, we don't have the option of placing our Thing 1 and Thing 2 in a locked box no matter how much we wish to do so.

A few years ago, a chain letter made the e-mail rounds (Figure 1.1). The consequence of breaking the chain reminds us that personnel matters need to be resolved using proven strategies. Unlike the Cat in the Hat's solution, we can't ship our personnel problems far, far away.

A typical school budget allocates over three-fourths of its revenue for human resources (Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2006). This means the majority of a school's resources are expended on this one item. Principals must be good financial stewards. Whether or not the school's vision will be achieved depends on the wise use of human resources. Effective school leaders exude a passion for empowering and promoting growth in the adults in their buildings—the *school personnel*.

Who are the personnel on a campus? *The Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (Stein, 1967) defines personnel as "the body of persons

employed in any work, undertaking, or service.” Using this definition, personnel on a school campus include teachers, diagnosticians, counselors, cafeteria staff, custodians, bus drivers, librarians, coaches, security staff, and principals. Has anyone been left out? If so, we must include them as well. Simply stated, the term school personnel means all the adults who have some compensated role on the campus.

Personnel is not a stand-alone concept. Other concepts closely associated with personnel include the following:

Professional development—informal and formal activities designed to improve the skills, abilities, and attitudes of the personnel

Professional development needs—needs that arise in the assorted employee groups for an assortment of reasons

Personnel administration—the activities involved in attaining individual, group, or school goals through acceptable use of the school’s human resources

Personnel policy—the written rules and regulations stating the general aims and intentions of the school district governing the working relationships and rules

INTERSTATE SCHOOL LEADERS LICENSURE CONSORTIUM STANDARDS AND PERSONNEL

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards are a logical place to begin a discussion on the relationship between leaders and personnel. Yet these standards can appear distant to leaders engaged in the heat of battle in leading schools.

A brief examination of the ISLLC standards provides an overview of the authors’ assertion that the ISLLC standards address personnel issues and do indeed speak loudly to leaders engaged in the heat of battle. The lofty goals of the standards *are* connected to the reality of leading schools. The 2008 ISLLC standards and their accompanying functions can be downloaded at www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/elps_isllc2008.pdf. The 1996 ISLLC standards are available at www.educ.ksu.edu/EDADL928/ISLLCStandards.pdf.

ISLLC STANDARDS

1. An education leader promotes the success of every student by *facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.*

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2. An education leader promotes the success of every student by *advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.*
3. An education leader promotes the success of every student by *ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.*
4. An education leader promotes the success of every student by *collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.*
5. An education leader promotes the success of every student by *acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.*
6. An education leader promotes the success of every student by *understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.*

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008. (Italics added.)

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), a national organization of state-level education leaders, created the ISLLC (Murphy & Shipman, 1998; Shipman, Topps, & Murphy, 1998). The Consortium spent years developing a set of standards that codify the skills that effective principals possess. These standards, revised in 2007, remind leaders that improving teaching and learning is a central responsibility of those in leadership positions. The standards demand active, not passive, leadership. The standards assume that leaders are collaborative and inclusive in leading their schools. Finally, the standards do not subscribe to any particular theory of leadership. No one leadership theory has proven to be adequate to be franchised as *the* leadership theory for school administrators. The necessary skills and characteristics of leadership must still be developed and fostered in school leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002).

To facilitate our examination of the ISLLC standards, we have assigned a moniker to each standard that condenses the underlying principle of the ISLLC standard into one word (see Table 1.1). This moniker provides a “mental shoulder tapping” to remind us of the underlying concept behind the standard, which is typically referenced numerically.

The ISLLC standards are examined through a personnel lens in an effort to explore how the national leadership standards address personnel matters. This examination will provide us with some guiding principles for personnel matters.

Table 1.1 Monikers for the ISLLC Standards for School Leaders

Standard 1	Vision
Standard 2	Learning
Standard 3	Environment
Standard 4	Community
Standard 5	Ethics
Standard 6	Global

ISLLC Standard 1: The Vision Standard

An education leader promotes the success of every student by *facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.*

Each of the six standards begins with the words, “An education leader promotes the success of every student by.” These standards exist to promote student success.

A particularly intriguing word in this standard is *stewardship*. Peter Block defines stewardship as “the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organization by operating in service rather than in control, of those around us” (quoted in Smith & Piele, 2006, p. 138). This sobering thought places a mantle of responsibility on leaders to *serve* the personnel in an effort to mold the school’s vision, which drives all aspects of the school. Table 1.2 provides examples of principal behaviors from ISLLC Standard 1 that demonstrate how principals assist personnel with vision.

The first ISLLC standard is purposefully about vision because clearly defined visions are hallmarks of effective organizations. The connection between the ISLLC vision standard and personnel management is obvious even to the casual observer. School personnel must have ownership of the school’s vision. This happens when each person in the school has a personal vision that is aligned with the school’s vision *and* also has the requisite skills and talents to turn the vision into reality.

Introduction to the Personnel Success Model

The Personnel Success Model in Figure 1.2 provides a graphic representation of the relationship between school vision, personal vision, and

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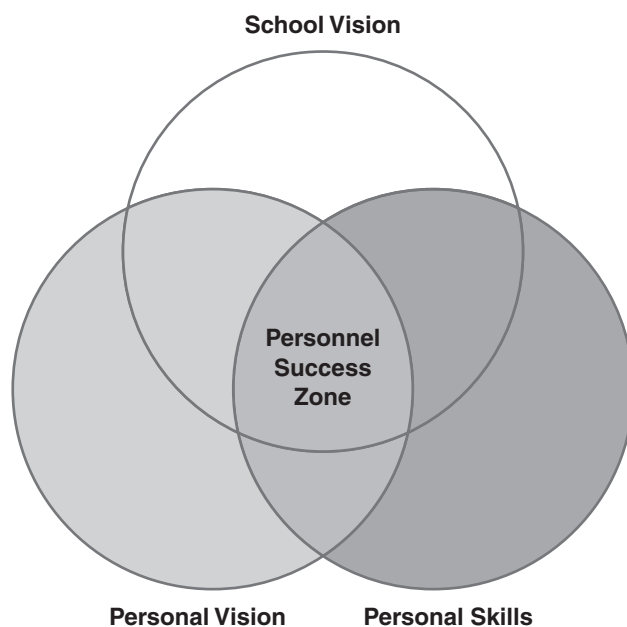
Table 1.2 Select Ways Leaders Assist Personnel With Vision

Leaders work with personnel to

- Use existing resources to support the vision and goals
 - Develop the vision with and among the stakeholders
 - Identify, clarify, and address barriers to achieving the vision
 - Use the vision to shape educational programs, plans, and activities
 - Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans with personnel
 - Promote continuous and sustainable improvement
 - Recognize and celebrate the contributions of personnel toward the realization of the vision
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Source: Council of Chief State School Officers (1996, 2008).

Figure 1.2 Personnel Success Model



personal skills. The alignment of these three factors produces the Personnel Success Zone. As the alignment of these three factors increases, the size of the Personnel Success Zone increases. If 100% alignment of the three factors could be achieved, the three circles that represent them in the model would be positioned on top of each other, making the Personnel Success Zone appear as a single circle.

When considering this model, it is important to remember once again that dealing with people is messy. Although the model is “frozen” on the printed page, in practice it is anything but static. The three factors are in constant motion, affecting the size of the Personnel Success Zone, which in turn impacts personnel success, which impacts fulfilling the school’s vision, which . . . you get the idea.

Leaders facilitate the vision process when they involve stakeholders in creating a school vision that everyone owns. Beautifully framed vision statements hanging on school walls or printed in personnel handbooks are useless unless the personnel carry similar personal visions and recognize a purpose in what they do.

People need a purpose in life. Rick Warren (2002) emphasizes this in his best-selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. Warren proposes that many people’s lives are driven by guilt, resentment, anger, materialism, and the need for approval. He asserts, “Without a purpose, life is trivial, petty, and pointless” (p. 30). According to Warren, living a purpose-driven life provides meaning, adds focus, provides motivation, and simplifies life. Warren’s *purpose in life* is analogous to the Personnel Success Model’s personal vision component. People need to know how their personal skills assist them in fulfilling their personal vision and the school’s vision. School leaders assist personnel in this process in a variety of ways including school visioning activities, formative and summative evaluations, general conversations, faculty and grade/department meetings, and private conversations. As people discover strengths and weaknesses in their personal skills, some will seek intervention because their personal skills and their personal vision are not aligned. Personal skills need continuous improvement.

Effective leaders help personnel discover their purpose in life, develop their personal skills, and own the school’s vision. They also show how these three factors intersect to create personnel success.

Principaling a school is a lot like pastoring a church. Both principals and pastors help people discover their purpose in life, support them, and offer advice. Often people seek advice about issues not directly associated with their jobs but with private issues that affect their job performance. Principals, like pastors, celebrate successes of their personnel, share in the joy of births, mourn deaths, and comfort in times of frustration and illness. They also serve as sounding boards and benevolent taskmasters when needed.

Two Case Studies

The following case studies use the Personnel Success Model in Figure 1.2 to illustrate personnel problems that develop when misalignment occurs in the areas of personal vision, school vision, and personal skills.

THE CHEMISTRY IS GONE CASE STUDY

Mr. Coffee, a high school chemistry teacher in his early 30s, became embittered and sarcastic about his job. He knew chemistry and possessed decent instructional skills that he improved by attending professional development activities beyond what was expected.

But Mr. Coffee's personal vision was not congruent with his school's vision. He was not happy in his job. The conflict between his personal vision and the school's vision manifested itself in a "love-hate" relationship with teaching. One minute he would express his anger and frustration with the students over a litany of issues—many of which had become greatly magnified in his mind. The next moment he would be verbally debating with himself on how he could better teach stoichiometric calculations or Avogadro's principle.

One year at midterm Mr. Coffee resigned. He immediately joined a family member's construction business and is now happily building homes.

Analysis of the Chemistry Is Gone Case Study

Figure 1.3 illustrates Mr. Coffee's situation using the Personnel Success Model. His personal vision was not aligned with his school's vision. This lack of alignment caused the tension in this case study.

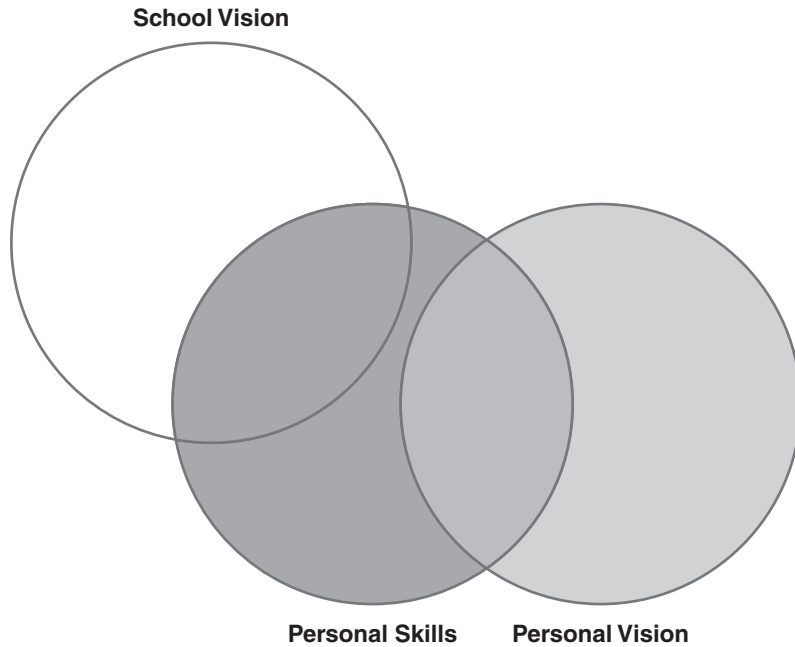
The personal skills circle and the school vision circle remain intersected because Mr. Coffee possessed the necessary teaching skills to help achieve the school's vision. The personal skills and the personal vision circles remain intersected because he had the necessary carpentry skills to be successful at his new construction job.

The Personnel Success Zone, the area where all three circles intersect, disappeared in Mr. Coffee's situation. (The Personnel Success Zone is depicted in Figure 1.2.) Personnel success is more than academic success because teaching also includes social and emotional components. Mr. Coffee was able to teach the course content, but he was not a contented individual. Mr. Coffee's abrupt and sarcastic manner adversely affected the learning environment.

The school was able to hire another chemistry teacher whose personal vision was aligned with that of the school's. Everyone benefited from Mr. Coffee's self-realization that teaching was not his passion.

Congratulate Mr. Coffee on having the courage to leave the teaching profession. Everyone needs to live a purpose-driven life that comes about when one's personal vision and the organization's vision are aligned.

Figure 1.3 Analysis of Mr. Coffee’s Situation Using the Personnel Success Model



THE COOKIES CRUMBLE CASE STUDY

Mrs. Field was a kind and gentle primary teacher whose students knew she loved and cared for them. Mrs. Field was also well liked by the faculty and her principal, Mrs. Pierre. Mrs. Field reminded faculty and students of a favorite aunt. Everyone loved her tasty homemade cookies.

Mrs. Field’s teaching and classroom management skills, however, were not so well developed, and her classroom was frequently chaotic. Children constantly talked and moved about the room while she attempted to teach. While the activities in her lessons were appropriate, they were eclectically bundled into what she thought was a lesson.

Mrs. Field’s fellow teachers expressed their concerns to the principal. They knew learning was not occurring in her classroom. Even the janitor told Mrs. Pierre, “Mrs. Field, she is not a good teacher. I can tell when I clean her room.”

Other data reinforced the principal’s assessment. Observations made by other school personnel, the principal’s classroom walk-throughs, parent requests to have students reassigned, and academic testing data all mirrored the same concerns.

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Mrs. Pierre had provided Mrs. Field with opportunities to observe effective teachers in practice on other campuses, sent her to workshops, provided her with a mentor, provided her individual feedback from formal and informal observations, and utilized other professionals to observe and provide her with feedback. None of these interventions resulted in any significant change in Mrs. Field's classroom performance. So after extensive coaching and mentoring over a significant period of time, Mrs. Pierre finally recommended the nonrenewal of Mrs. Field.

Analysis of the Cookies Crumble Case Study

When time came to dismiss Mrs. Field, Mrs. Pierre reported, "It was like firing my grandmother." Mrs. Pierre and Mrs. Field negotiated Mrs. Field's face-saving exit, and they have remained friends. Mrs. Field has moved on to other endeavors where she can use her skills successfully.

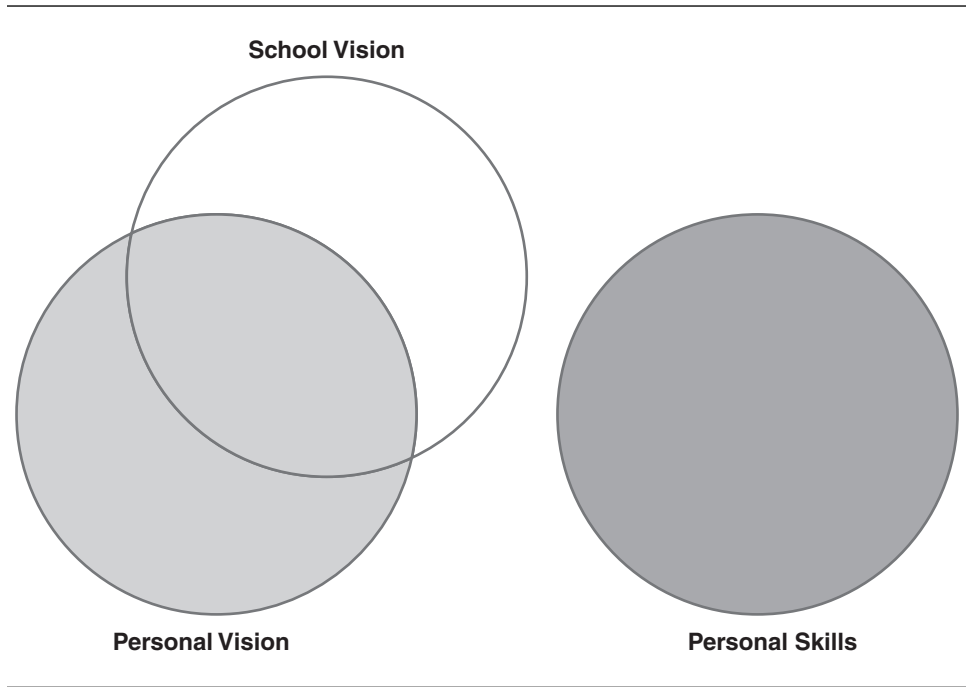
Figure 1.4 provides a graphic representation of Mrs. Field's situation using the Personnel Success Model. The school vision circle and the personal vision circle remain intersected because both the teacher and the school were interested in the children and their success. The personal skills circle is isolated because the teacher did not have the skills necessary to help the school achieve its vision, nor did she have the necessary skills to fulfill her personal mission to teach and help children. The Personnel Success Zone (see Figure 1.2) disappears because the teacher's personal skills were deficient and students were not academically successful in her classroom.

The principal's action personified the opening of each ISLLC standard, *"An education leader promotes the success of every student by."* The instructional leader's first obligation is to children and their education, not to the school's personnel. Personnel are entitled to due process and the opportunity to improve and grow professionally, but principals must not lose sight that children are the innocents in the system. No amount of rationalization by adults can change this fact. Adults must advocate for children.

School leaders are obligated to help personnel discover and develop their professional skills. One way principals accomplish this is through professional development designed to meet the instructional needs of the students and personnel. These needs are identified using multiple sources of data including the following:

- Conversations
- Personnel surveys
- Teacher observations and walk-throughs
- Analysis of student achievement data

Figure 1.4 Analysis of Mrs. Field’s Situation Using the Personnel Success Model



Using data and giving the staff opportunities to have input into the professional development planning increases the likelihood of personnel ownership in the professional development process.

ISLLC Standard 2: The Learning Standard

An education leader promotes the success of every student by *advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.*

The one-word moniker for ISLLC Standard 2 is *learning* (see Table 1.1). This ISLLC standard demands inclusivity of all the school’s stakeholders. No one gets a bye in the tournament of learning. ISLLC Standard 2 calls everyone to be a learner with its “instructional program conducive to *student learning* and *staff professional growth* [italics added]” clause. Staff professional growth: Is that not a \$20 term for lifelong learning? By reading this book, you are modeling lifelong learning to those in your arena of influence.

Staff professional development nails down the personnel dimension of ISLLC Standard 2 while simultaneously connecting it to the culture, to the instructional program, and to student learning at the school. Personnel matters touch every dimension of this standard. Table 1.3 lists seven principal performances associated with ISLLC Standard 2 that establish the relationship of personnel matters to this ISLLC standard.

Table 1.3 Select Ways Leaders Assist Personnel With Learning

Leaders work with personnel to

- Treat everyone with fairness, dignity, and respect
 - Focus staff development on student learning consistent with the vision and goals of the school
 - Ensure the staff feels valued
 - Encourage lifelong learning
 - Encourage high expectations for themselves and the staff
 - Supervise instruction
 - Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program
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Source: Council of Chief State School Officers (1996, 2008).

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAY FROM HELL

It's the first day of professional development at the beginning of the school year at Frostbite Falls Elementary School. The usual fare consisting of coffee, juice, and donuts is available.

The training is in the cafeteria. It could have been in the library. It doesn't really make a difference. Either place has furniture that is too small for teachers. The cafeteria contains folding tables with little stools attached to them. The slightest shift causes them to squeak. With the faculty seated, younger faculty swear they hear part of a Beyoncé song in the squeaking of the stools. The older teachers think they hear part of a Rod Stewart song. It is a generational thing. Minds run wild with thoughts like these because it is another day of forced professional development. The state legislature mandates it, but as usual doesn't adequately fund it.

While the speaker talks, teachers make mental lists of things they need to do to get ready for the first day of school. Some actually write their lists in the margins of the presenter's handout.

The squeaking and squirming continues. Do these people need pharmaceutical intervention for their hyperactive disorder caught from their students? What's up with all of this squeaking? You want to yell, "Quiet!" but it isn't your classroom. You're not the teacher. Today, you're the student. You are sitting on an uncomfortable stool. You wonder if this might be a reason students squirm a lot in your class: uncomfortable seating and a lesson that they see no reason to be studying. The thought bothers you a little bit.

The presenter is talking without a microphone and the acoustics are so bad in the cafeteria that you can't hear half of what she is saying even if you wanted to do so. You really don't want to listen, so you say nothing. You continue revising your "to do" list.

It's been 45 minutes now. The old "discretely-look-at-your-watch-to-see-what-time-it-is" behavior begins to spring up around the room. The presenter drones on. Who found this person? What in the world does this have to do with my job and me? Someone passes a note to you. It reads, "Where do you want to go for lunch?" You look at the author of the note and shrug your shoulders. Finally you write, "How about Chinese?" and send the note back. The originator of the note looks at you and nods. You pass the note to another teacher who looks at it and mouths, "Can I come too?" You nod. The communication continues to ripple through the cafeteria. In no time a group of 12 teachers are thinking about Peking Palace and their "to die for" egg rolls with sweet-and-sour sauce.

The presenter continues. You think, "If I were a cat in a hat, I could put this thing in a box with a hook and send it where no one would ever look."

A break is announced and everyone comes to life again. Free. You're free for 15 minutes. If you're good at this, you can stretch the break to 25 minutes and then beg for an extra 30 minutes for lunch. You are successful in both endeavors. The morning wasn't a total loss after all.

After a nice meal at the all-you-can-eat buffet at the Peking Palace, you return to your assigned stool again. "Will it ever end?" you think. The drone of the speaker, the warmth of the room, and your belly full of Chinese food makes it hard to stay awake.

Two younger teachers are text messaging each other. Another teacher is discretely listening to a podcast on her iPod. You are mentally organizing your "Welcome Back" bulletin board because you are older and are not high tech. You have an idea you know the kids are going to love.

But not all is lost yet on this day of professional development. The principal, who had slipped out of the room shortly after the presentation began so she could catch up on her office work, slipped back into the cafeteria just in time to dismiss you an hour early so you could work in your classroom. You immediately think, "Finally! I get to do something worthwhile today."

Before you leave the cafeteria, the principal asks everyone to complete an evaluation of the professional development using the official Frostbite Falls Professional Development Evaluation Instrument. This five-point Likert-type scale evaluation system is used to evaluate all professional development. It is convenient to use. It's on a Scantron® form, which makes compiling the results quick and easy. You wonder what ever happens to these data.

You start to mark the form to indicate how you really feel about the professional development, but you hesitate for a moment. You quickly mark 5, the high-end score, on all the standard indicators. After all, you received longer breaks, an extended lunch, and they let you go an hour early. If the evaluations aren't good, you might be assigned to a committee to plan the professional development for next year. That would be the kiss of death.

You stop by the soda machine, get a diet soda, and walk to your classroom. Now you can finally start working. Except for the Chinese food, it has been a wasted day.