



Faculty Accountability, the School Head, and the Athletic Director

There is a management conundrum that is usually hidden in the area of faculty accountability. The vast majority of what ISM has written relates to the support and evaluation of faculty with regard to their academic function, overlain with their numerous other responsibilities for advisory, lunch duty, and so on. However, many teachers—stretching across all divisions—also act as coaches within the school and thus also report in that capacity to the Athletic Director. As coaches, they are responsible to the Athletic Director for student athletic accomplishments, students' actions, successes and failures, parent relations, and volunteer coordination. It is a management tenet that an employee cannot effectively report to two people, and this dysfunction is a complication in many teachers' lives.

The contrast between the two roles is compounded by the evidence that, in too many cases, academic evaluations are typically done poorly or not at all. On the other hand, athletic evaluations are usually ongoing and subject to direct action if things are not going well, particularly at the higher grade levels. So, as a classroom teacher, the faculty member may receive significant attention at the beginning of her career through some form of induction process lasting up to three years. Thereafter, she is assumed to be "perfect" and may be evaluated, if at all, on a cycle ranging from three to five years. Rarely will her classroom be visited on any regular and intentional basis. Rarely will her student results, unless egregious, be the focus of conversation. Rarely, in fact, will she have meaningful feedback from her Division Director or School Head. This typical situation in our schools is astonishing; it is the reason for significant mediocrity and cause for deep concern. The rationale for it is equally disconcerting—there is no time to do carry out meaningful evaluation (or so it is perceived). And there is no public accountability—no regular statement of student performance, no significant measurement of student satisfaction or enthusiasm, no school assembly to laud yesterday's brilliant math class, no regular update on the Web—all ways that might help keep a faculty member accountable and engaged.

On the other hand, as an athletic coach, the evidence shows that, in many or most cases, a faculty member goes through an orientation session each year, is visited by the Athletic Director during games and practices several times each season, is debriefed at the end of the season, is held to public admiration (or scorn!) through regular exposure at school assemblies, is front and center

on the Web site, has pep rallies with teams of cheerleaders to provide enthusiasm, is featured regularly in the school newsletter, and has the ability to take students out of academic classes for between 30 minutes (typical early dismissal) to a couple of hours (travel) to all day (for golf). These teachers/coaches even miss classes themselves in the pursuit of athletic excellence. If student athletic performance is poor, the faculty member will not survive for more than one or two seasons before being replaced as a coach.¹

Under these circumstances, it can be significantly more fulfilling to be a coach than to be a teacher. The feedback loop is more consistent, it is clear what success looks like, the camaraderie of athletics promotes significant good feelings, and many of the coach's peers are always interested in "what happened." (When was a teacher last asked what happened in his math class?)

Think about this from the students' point of view. Students exist in a high-stress, high-expectation environment with volumes of homework that will take them into the evening. Participating in athletics is a physical outlet with no homework and a single focus that doesn't change from chapter to chapter; it provides a much more holistic approach to learning. It certainly involves moving from low to high skill levels, but it is constantly circling and reinforcing, within a team concept (with few exceptions) where constant coaching and mentoring from adults and peers alike are the norms. It is no surprise that athletics are so important to students. Not that there is no stress, particularly at the highest levels. But winning and losing ultimately do not affect college entrance (for the vast majority) and won't be noted on the SAT results.

As School Head, Division Director, or Athletic Director, what do you do? There is no easy answer because there is no way around the primary dysfunction of dual reports. Considering ISM's Success Predictors² (in particular the implications of No. 4: "Teachers hired and rehired based upon highly specific course/professional development contracts"),³ there are important actions that need to be taken.

1. Hold teachers accountable on an ongoing, annual basis for their classroom (and ancillary) responsibilities in a way that ensures continual excellence and continual professional growth. Make this accountability the Division Director's top responsibility.
2. Convene a meeting with the Athletic Director and Division Directors twice a season. The agenda would include:

- review of issues around teaching and athletic commitments by faculty;
 - review of academic, athletics, arts, retreats, and other calendar events and commitments; and
 - a give-and-take session around major events—such as the championship tournament and end-of-term exams—with students at the center of the conversation (how we ensure they are successful).
3. Invite all external coaches to a faculty meeting (with a social element) once a season to:
 - meet and talk with each other as colleagues;
 - place athletics as a main meeting agenda item with students at the center of the conversation (how we partner together to best meet the needs of the students); and
 - discuss, understand, and agree on the mission of the school as it is carried out within the academic and athletic realms.
 4. Hold all faculty meetings at times when faculty coaches can be present. It is the highest discourtesy to collegiality, professional growth, and academic endeavor to routinely time faculty meetings when a segment of the faculty will justifiably be absent for extended periods of time, ranging from one to three seasons.
 5. Rotate all classes in your schedule design to minimize the impact of athletic early dismissals.
 6. Publicly celebrate academic achievement and prowess in as intentional a way as athletics (although not necessarily in the same ways), including profiling great teaching,

publicly commending innovative professional development, and communicating and being proud of curriculum development.

7. Include athletics as one element of the Characteristics of Professional Excellence.⁴

ISM continues to support the teacher/coach, believing it to be the correlate to the scholar/athlete and an effective way of imbuing a student's life with the mission of the school.⁵ As athletics changes its complexion⁶ and the fierceness of academic competition continues unabated,⁷ school leadership must understand the management dysfunction issue for faculty of dual reports. Reduce conflicting messages as much as possible and ensure that academics and athletics are both developed and sustained in ways that will support student success. *I&P*

¹ This depends a great deal on the focus and mission of the school and how the School Head sees that mission fulfilled in relation to athletics. Given that it is increasingly difficult to hire a teacher/coach—and the desirability of having teachers coach (often without regard to their coaching ability)—sometimes the poor coach is tolerated (and not always replaced) because she is an excellent teacher.

² See "ISM's 20 Success Predictors for the 21st Century," *Ideas & Perspectives*, 36-2-5.

³ See "ISM Success Predictor No. 4: Highly Specific Course/Professional Development Faculty Contracts," *I&P*, 36-4-13.

⁴ See "Purpose and Outcome Statements: Characteristics of Professional Excellence," *I&P*, 31-8-31.

⁵ While the teacher/coach is important in making sure the school mission is represented on the field, there are some areas where the teacher may not be the right person for the Head Coach position. Your school may want to establish a policy that, if a teacher is required to coach but does not have the skill level or knowledge of the sport, such a teacher would be on the coaching team (e.g., Assistant Coach) and would ensure that the school mission is in place.

⁶ See "Essential Questions to Ask About Athletics and Character Development," *I&P*, 35-12-49.

⁷ See "Scheduling and the Harried Teen," *I&P*, 35-4-16.

Advancement: Development

Strengthen the Ties Between the Development Director and the School

In a 2007 study,¹ the Association of Fundraising Professionals found that Development Directors stayed at an organization an average of 3.6 years (3.5 for females and 4.17 for males). Given the time it takes for a Development Director to gain trust with a Board and develop relationships with school donors, it is important to develop strategies that would enable your school to keep its Development Director for a lengthy period of time.

The findings of ISM's 2001 survey of Development Directors align well with some of the AFP retention factors, including commitment to mission, compensation, job involvement/support, and support by the supervisor.² Another study by the Center for Creative Leadership, "Building Trust in the Workplace: A Key to Retaining Women," indicated that the shorter time spent by women in the job is parallel to the finding that women are less trusting of their bosses than men.³ In that study, a key finding was that job retention was correlated to trust. Key to trust is supervisor consistency—and this fits in with ISM's leadership research which found that merited supportiveness was a key leadership trait.⁴

As School Head and supervisor of the Development Director, consider the following steps to maximize the position's value, to support and nurture the Development Director and cement his/her relationship with your school, and to increase the likelihood of retention.

1. *Support and evaluation:* Outside of the job description, clearly delineate yearly objectives derived from the strategic plan and strategic financial plan, and the annual administration agenda (the data that will be used to measure success).⁵ Also, ongoing conversation, through formal meetings and informal interaction, will provide the support context for success.
2. *Professional support:* Provide the Development Director with a staff person who can input and manipulate data, as well as provide and interpret reports. Unless your school has fewer than 100 families, this is an important staffing point—without it, the Development Director will be overwhelmed.⁶
3. *Board support:* Invite the Development Director to at least some of the Board meetings. He/she should be seen as a counsel to Trustees (including the setting of annual giving goals), providing professional support to the Chair of the Development Committee. The Development Director should *establish relationships* with Trustees such that he/she can work with them collegially. This allows all the Board members—not just those on the Development and/or Major Gifts committees—to observe and appreciate the Development Director's competence and capacity to interact with local business leaders and other individuals of affluence and influence. Encourage the Committee on Trustees to