

Preface

This book is written from great appreciation of the service and results rendered by school principals. With very little discretionary time in their workday, they nevertheless provide leadership and opportunity for teachers to be their best. In spite of frequently inadequate evaluation procedures, principals find ways to encourage excellence, bolster morale, coach for technique, focus on student learning, and keep a team of educators working together.

This book presents a change in the fundamental question of how to know good teaching. Most current teacher evaluation poses the question to teachers:

How do you match up against this preconception* of good teaching?

We pose a set of two different questions to teachers:

1. What constitutes quality teaching in your case?
2. What is your evidence that quality teaching has happened in your case?

The reason for this change is that no specific preconception of good teaching is precise, agreed upon, or as demonstrably effective as advocates for each claim. However, it is possible with good objective and focused data to recognize good teaching when it has happened.

In addition to this change of the fundamental question, we suggest seven ways to make teacher evaluation more effective:

*Particular framework, set of behaviors, competencies, teacher characteristics, philosophy, style, kind of outcomes, or process of teaching.

x Effective Teacher Evaluation

1. Use the best objective evidence available.
2. Put the teacher at the center of the process; give choices.
3. Use multiple data sources.
4. Use data sources that vary by individual teacher.
5. Incorporate student achievement data, where possible.
6. Use teacher judgment.
7. Greatly expand the uses for teacher evaluation.

In this book we call for significant innovation and effort to be put into teacher evaluation. The need for more effectiveness in teacher evaluation is great: voters are concerned about educator quality, a serious achievement gap exists, support for public schools continues to be questioned, and even the best teachers have times when they wonder if their efforts really make a difference. We call for bold changes; there always will be educators who value standardization, control, and regulation above less predictable instances of individual excellence.

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