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Five Steps of Evaluative Feedback that Promotes Teacher Development

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Five Steps of Evaluative Feedback that Promotes Teacher Development

Teacher effectiveness is commonly measured through the use of teacher evaluation systems. These systems often include classroom observations conducted by school leaders, such as principals, deans, or instructional coaches, which have a responsibility to promote teacher growth and development. Observing lessons is one of the most direct ways to understand the dynamics of a classroom (Blase & Blase, 2000) and to witness how a teacher interacts with students and utilizes instructional practices (Fan, 2022).

Effective evaluators move beyond the systemic compliance of classroom observations and provide teachers with feedback that leads to meaningful professional development (Leggett & Smith, 2019). Research indicates teachers recognize the rationale behind classroom observations is to promote professional growth and facilitate feedback to improve their skills and instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2015). As effective instruction is an important factor contributing to student success, all teachers, from novice to experienced superstars, can benefit from effective feedback to improve their practice (Bright, 2011; Kachur et al., 2009).

In a longitudinal study by Grissom and colleagues (2013), classroom walkthroughs were perceived negatively by teachers with student achievement, as frequent short observations rarely included high-quality feedback to the teachers. The study elaborates by concluding that classroom observations can be beneficial if they are used to provide teachers with feedback to improve their skills and not procedural minutia. Similar findings were discovered by Paufler and Sloat (2020) who found little to no change in teachers' professional practice when evaluations were perceived to have no positive effect.

This article aims to provide five succinct steps that effective evaluators can implement to provide teachers with evaluative feedback that promotes teacher development.

Step 1: Establish Norms

Norms set expectations for dyads, small groups, or large communities as they govern the expectations and behaviors of all members. Properly identified and established norms will encourage risk-taking, increase participation, and promote accountability (Clayton, 2015). Research suggests that a positive experience during teacher evaluation is needed as soon as possible because

negative experiences may be difficult to overcome (Reddy et al., 2017). Establishing norms can serve as the first positive experience as they represent a commitment to a positive learning experience and builds a sense of trust and assurance between the evaluator and teacher.

Step 2: Develop Relationships

The relationship established between principal and teacher can influence the perceived value of the evaluation process (Derrington & Martinez, 2019). Research suggests that teacher learning and growth are dependent upon appropriate interactions between teacher and principal (Downey et al., 2004). A relationship grounded in respect and trust can generate a strong, positive influence on perceived evaluation feedback. Exhibiting a sense of gratitude, praise, and recognition for good work by teachers creates a positive climate where teachers feel valued and build a sense of trust, paving the way for effective evaluative feedback (Stickle & Scott, 2016).

Step 3: Conduct Classroom Observations

There are various types of classroom observations. They may be announced or unannounced, formal or informal, each serving a specific purpose. For example, an unannounced, informal classroom ‘walkthrough’ provides leaders with a structure to consistently review and collect information regarding the learning process (Kachur et al., 2009). These variances should be discussed with teachers as norms are being established. When conducting classroom observations, stay focused on the objective of improving teachers’ strategies and behaviors (Marzano et al., 2011).

The more frequent the observations, the more of a holistic view of the classroom an evaluator will develop. Multiple observations also promote the use of evaluative cycles. Kraft et al. (2016) stated that cycles of observation, reflection, dialogue and feedback, and goal setting can provide teachers with new ideas as well as frequent and relevant feedback to support their professional growth.

Step 4: Provide Feedback

Feedback is a professional practice focused on increasing the performance of individuals by providing the necessary information to improve a skill (Mulder & Ellinger, 2013; Brookhart, 2011). The evaluator's role when providing feedback

is to provide guidance and promote teacher self-reflection, however, it must be specific, timely, and allow for reflection and follow-up (Mulder & Ellinger, 2013). Highly effective evaluators can promote teacher professional development that is both meaningful and effective by providing teachers with ongoing targeted feedback.

The successful delivery of feedback is linked to an immediate positive impact on the teacher's development (Harks et al., 2014); however, the opposite can occur if the feedback is controlling or negative (Wijnia et al., 2011). For example, if an evaluator begins the feedback conversation with a list of negative observations, the teacher will not likely turn the feedback into a positive learning experience. Table 1 provides samples of how an evaluator can modify the language of a question or observation to create opportunities for dialogue and reflection.

Table 1

Directed vs Reflective Feedback Examples

Evaluator Directed Feedback	Teacher Reflective Feedback
I noticed the following strengths during the lesson...	What do you believe were the strengths of the lesson?
I recommend these changes for next time...	Describe any adjustment you would make if you taught this lesson again.
You need to increase student participation methods.	Do you feel your students actively participated? How do you plan for participation?
Your assessment was not aligned with the student objective.	Can you explain how you measured student understanding of the objective?
A goal you have is...	Thinking back on this experience, what would be a goal you can make for yourself?

Step 5: Set Goals & Follow-up

It is important for teachers and the observer to develop measurable and obtainable goals for future instruction. Teacher generated goals may provide a sense of ownership and increase intrinsic motivation for accomplishment. Myung and Martinez (2013) describe in their research that teachers who do not develop goals after receiving feedback feel like they are simply being judged and the process is not designed to help them grow or improve their skills.

Follow-up is the process of the principal/evaluator checking in with the teacher and ensuring that implementation was successful (Mulder & Ellinger, 2013). A follow-up plan should be established when a teacher and evaluator develop goals. Research indicates the goal is more likely to be successfully implemented if a follow-up plan is discussed and executed (William, 2012).

Conclusion

This review may serve as a guide for leaders who frequently conduct classroom observations to be more effective. We believe these steps accomplish just that establishing norms and building a relationship provide the framework for conducting meaningful classroom observations. Using guided, open-ended questioning when providing feedback will encourage self-reflection by the teacher and the development of goals. Finally, effective evaluators can monitor and encourage positive changes through continual observations and feedback by establishing a follow-up plan.

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