

Standard 6: Management and Evaluation of Instruction

Reflective Essay

Effective instruction is critical to student learning. The principal plays an especially important role in this process. As I've mentioned in previous standards reflection papers, I believe that supportive relationships between administrators and staff are essential to making schools strong. This also helps the evaluation process be a meaningful event rather than a mandated task.

Given the enormity of evaluating many teachers, administrators must be creative in their methods for accomplishing this. I don't believe that evaluating instruction should be approached as a form of policing, but rather as an opportunity for learning and growth. This encourages teachers to invest in themselves professionally. Recently the evaluation process has been expanded to include methods such as peer-to-peer observations and collegial mentoring. This can establish a strong support network between co-workers as well as genuinely strengthening classroom instruction (Southern Regional Education Board, 2005). Administrators can utilize this process by working with teachers both on a team and individual level. It can help principals work smarter by saving time. It can also help them connect with grade level or content area teams by having ongoing interactions with them regarding instructional delivery and other support needs. Quick five minute observations can establish a habit of interaction for the staff and administrator. One result or byproduct is that teachers and students will be more comfortable with examining instruction.

Another approach that administrators can use to streamline and strengthen the evaluation of instruction is through professional learning communities. In his recent

book, Rick Dufour discusses the applications of this process to instruction. He endorses focusing on ‘big ideas’ related to student learning such as results oriented thinking. One of the pervasive elements of his approach is building a culture of collaboration in a school.

Good evaluation of instruction requires more than time saving approaches and developing collegial relationships. The quality of instruction must be judged based on standard indicators for excellence in teaching. Most districts have streamlined this process by creating rubrics for rating instructional performance. If not, an administrator must decide what important behaviors, knowledge, and teaching skills are evident in a teacher’s repertoire. My intern experience really helped me see this in action.

My internship site was in the process of responding to pressure to address inconsistent student performance on state tests. Community factors such as mobility and free and reduced lunch rates impacted the make up of the classroom. Teaching in such an environment was challenging. The combination of the three approaches I’ve mentioned seemed to be making a difference in the principal’s perceptions about the quality of teaching as well as in the teacher’s beliefs about their own efficacy.

Related Artifacts

I believe that the evaluation cycle that I conducted with my colleague is an applicable artifact for this standard (artifact – Observation Cycle). I learned tremendous lessons about the process of evaluating instruction itself. One particularly important aspect of evaluation is conferencing with the teacher or colleague. While it can be time intensive, thoughtfully discussing goals and strategies with teachers can enhance the

degree of support they feel as well as the relationship between an administrator and employee.

Over the past several years and during my tenure as head of the business and technology department I have made a specific effort to talk with my peers about supporting each other through observation and discussion. Our collegial relationships have been strengthened through our support and encouragement of each other's teaching. I look forward to exercising my skills in this area as I believe it is foundational to quality instruction.

References

Dufour, R. (2004). What is a professional learning community? *Educational Leadership*, v 61, n 8, pp 6-11.

Southern Regional Education Board. (2005). *Teachers Teaching Teachers: Creating a Community of Learners to Improve Instruction and Student Achievement*. ERIC 486512.