Jason Harmon

What to Evaluate

EDAD 632

Note with special interest “The Evaluation Decision” in Danielson’s Handbook for Enhancing Professional Practice. **Based on this week’s reading, provide examples for the various Evaluation Decision factors on pages 54-56**.

The heart of Domain 3 is engaging students in learning, and “It is engagement that ensures learning (Danielson, p. 77).” Although there could be a tendency to assess teachers in this domain merely through observations, an evaluator or administrator must take other factors into consideration when making the evaluation decision. Domain 3 is full of components that can easily be seen such as communicating with students, using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, use of assessment in instruction, and demonstration of flexibility and responsiveness. Out of all the domains, this one is the easiest to observe directly. These are some examples of what I would be looking for with regards to the evaluation decision factors discussed in Danielson (pp. 54-56).

**Inputs versus outcomes**

It isn’t enough to evaluate teachers just on what they do. “Teachers should be evaluated on the basis of the results they achieve with students (Danielson, p. 55).” An art, music, shop, or band teacher should partially be evaluated by the work and/or performances of students. A big factor in student achievement that must not be overlooked is growth. To evaluate outcomes an administrator must have a sound understanding of where students started. In the basic subject areas of Math, English, and Science, the MAPS tests and other standardized tests can show an accurate number for student growth from semester to semester, and from year to year. All of this data can be used to see how effective the teacher was in ensuring student learning. If a student learned, they must have been engaged.

**Weighting**

Although most of the components are of close equal importance, there is one that stands out. “If one component of the framework for teaching can claim to be the most important, it is student engagement (Danielson, p. 82).” I would have to agree with this. As I observe classrooms and teachers nothing sticks out more, than students who are disengaged, and seem not to care. Although not all students are easy to engage, it is critical to assure that a teacher is striving to meet all the elements of engaging students in learning. As an administrator, school, and district, it would be important to prioritize the standards, and know which components are the “deal breakers”.

**Compensation**

Can great performance in one area make up for poor performance in another area? It is very advantageous for a district, school, or company to play off of the strengths of their personnel. Every teacher will have areas where they are naturally better than others. I think that it is important to recognize these strengths and celebrate them. They help a teacher feel pride and ownership in their abilities and skills. I don’t believe that these areas of strength make up for poor performance in others areas though. I would expect such discrepancies. No teacher is perfect at teaching. I would expect my teachers to look at their areas of weakness with excitement, knowing that they still have room for improvement. Only in a case where I know that a teacher who is close to tenure is working hard on their areas of weakness, would I choose to offer them tenure based on their strengths and performance.

**Differentiated expectations**

It would be important to remember that starting teachers are coming in with less experience. In my mind we can’t expect less effort from new teachers, but we can expect them to be more volatile. They should be given time to prove they are learning, and becoming great teachers. I think it is good to have higher expectations for tenured teachers, but to remember that their performance can still vary. It would worry me though, if that variance was due to laziness. Personally I remember being evaluated my first year during a perspective lesson to 3rd graders. I was teaching them a difficult concept, and the lesson didn’t go as well as I had hoped. I know that my administrator understood I was still learning, and he didn’t base his decisions on just that one lesson, but on what he saw throughout the year. I was very grateful for that.

**Dichotomous judgment versus a multilevel rating**

It is interesting to consider what to do here. Although I agree with the text that dichotomous judgment can be beneficial to helping teachers focus on areas where they are not meeting expectations, I think that multilevel ratings are important to allow teachers more information on where they stand. The rating system mentioned in our text as the common one used is unsatisfactory, satisfactory, and outstanding (or exemplary) (Danielson, p. 56). I would choose to use a system that allows for unsatisfactory to be a category, but my second rating level would be a Focus Area, where the teacher knows they have much room for improvement. It is also helpful for teachers to know that the ratings help them know where to focus their attention, goals, and improvement plans.

Danielson, C. (2007). Enhancing professional practice:  A framework for teaching (2nd ed.). ASCD, Alexandria, Virginia

Danielson, C. (2008). The handbook for enhancing professional practice: Using the framework for teaching in your school. ASCD, Alexandria, Virginia