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Defining effective teaching is a dynamic endeavor

By Jacqueline Kennedy

Worldwide, there is a shared concern about the effectiveness of education systems and a corresponding magnifying glass on teachers. Although most people recognize why we need good teachers, the more challenging question is how we define an effective teacher. In Qualities of Effective Teachers, James Stronge (2007) reminds us that no single method for developing teachers exists, but there are common attributes that characterize effective teachers.

According to Stronge, “Considering the degree of the teacher’s influence, we must understand what teachers should do to promote positive results in the lives of students with regard to school achievement, positive attitudes toward school, interests in learning, and other desired outcomes” (2007, p. ix). With that end in mind, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the Measures of Effective Teaching project (p. 18) to test new approaches to measuring effective teaching and improving the quality of information available about teacher practice. Furthermore, the Standards for Professional Learning declare that increasing the effectiveness of professional learning for educators, including teachers, is the most accessible leverage point with the greatest potential for increasing effectiveness and changing practice.

This issue of JSD focuses on effective teaching and serves as a resource for taking a closer look into effective
teacher practices and teacher evaluation systems. The practitioners in this issue provide the practical examples to illustrate effective teaching observed every day in classrooms and schools. Use the tools and tasks in this guide to frame both individual and team reflection and dialogue about how effective teaching is defined, observed, evaluated, and learned.

As you read the articles in the edition, individually or in teams, consider the following questions as they pertain to your school, school system, and organization.

1. What specific behaviors describe and define what effective teaching looks like?
2. What kinds of data are available to determine if teachers are effective?
3. What steps are necessary to measure and support effective teaching?
4. What will it take to ensure effective teaching occurs every day, in every classroom, in every school?
5. What steps will you take to positively influence a vision for teaching and learning to increase teacher effectiveness?

Reference


For more information on the Measures of Effective Teaching Project, visit www.metproject.org.
Vision, plus so much more, promotes effective teaching and learning

Most school reform efforts recognize the need for a clear and concise vision for teaching and learning. Use “The elements of effective teaching: Professional learning moves vision, framework, and performance standards into action,” by Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh (p. 10), to inform your initial round of conversations around the variables often overlooked when considering teacher effectiveness. Follow the process below as a guide to focus your reading and team conversations.

1. In the first row, independently record the key ideas described in the article for each of the elements of effective teaching.
2. In the second row, independently record your personal reflections based on your current experience with each of the elements described.
3. In the third and fourth row, with your teammates or partner, identify specific gaps and then possible solutions for growth and learning in each of the elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of effective teaching</th>
<th>Vision for teaching and learning</th>
<th>Instructional framework</th>
<th>Student learning outcomes</th>
<th>Performance expectations for educators</th>
<th>Policy, planning, and goals</th>
<th>Professional learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current experience</td>
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<td>Gaps</td>
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<td>Areas for growth and learning</td>
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Accessing student perceptions as a source of data

The Standards for Professional Learning assert that thorough and ongoing uses of multiple sources of data, quantitative and qualitative, help to inform decisions and provide schools and school systems with a comprehensive analysis of student, educator, and system performance. As described in “The view from the seats: Student input provides a clearer picture of what works in schools” (p. 24), many systems are collecting and analyzing educator, parent, and student data and taking a specific look at perception data from students.

The Tripod Project acknowledges the firsthand experience students bring to the conversation about teacher effectiveness by capturing key dimensions of classroom life and teaching practice as students communicate them. The set of classroom learning conditions that lead to student engagement have been described in what is referred to as the Seven C’s framework.

As you reflect on the value of including student voice to inform teacher effectiveness, use the Seven C’s as a guide to discuss the kinds of observable student and teacher behaviors that would serve as evidence for each of the framework dimensions. Chart the behaviors you identify, and in the space on the next page, identify gaps and possible areas for professional learning based on your completed columns.
## SEVEN C’S FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th>TEACHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Caring about students (encouragement and support)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Captivating students (learning seems interesting and relevant)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Conferring with students (students sense their ideas are respected)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Controlling behavior (culture of cooperation and peer support)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Clarifying lessons (success seems feasible)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Challenging students (press for effort, perseverance, and rigor)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Consolidating knowledge (ideas get connected and integrated)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### GAPS

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### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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Teacher evaluations evoke varied emotions

Developing a reliable and coherent evaluations system is no easy feat. Headden and Silva (p. 40) share lessons learned from the implementation of the IMPACT system in Washington, D.C. The highs and lows described in this article can become the springboard for engaging teams, schools, and school systems in discussions and dialogue around the diverse points of view about teacher evaluations and alternative approaches to current or future models.

Before discussing the article with colleagues, identify your own views on teacher evaluation and respond to the prompts from the six different perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you know about the role of teacher evaluations?</th>
<th>What are the possibilities and opportunities for teacher evaluations?</th>
<th>What are the benefits of teacher evaluations?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your gut feeling about teacher evaluations?</th>
<th>What are the cautions surrounding teacher evaluations?</th>
<th>What is the most effective way to move forward?</th>
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</table>
Directions

1. Use the questions to identify your own views.

2. Share your responses with colleagues in small teams.

3. Invite each team member to respond to one question at a time while others listen.

4. As you listen to the responses of others, note differences and similarities in points of views, and be prepared to share them as specified.

5. As much as possible, allow all members to share their responses to the same question before discussing similar and opposing views. Remember, the goal of the discussion is to relate to other perspectives on teacher evaluation. Different views are expected and should be embraced and acknowledged.

6. Share in a round-robin fashion, allowing all members to respond to the same question until all questions have been addressed.
Deconstructing multiple measures of effective teaching

As illustrated by Hillsborough County Public Schools (p. 32), the question of what constitutes effective teaching is one that has multiple answers, informed by multiple measures. As you read, use the chart to collect your thoughts and ideas about each of the measures. After you have collected your notes, engage others to exchange your thoughts and ideas, and devise possible solutions and implications for your work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGREEMENTS</th>
<th>ARGUMENTS</th>
<th>ASPIRATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value-added measures (student learning data)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rubric-based evaluation systems</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Peer and mentor observations</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
For further discussion

1. What assumptions about effective teaching are evident? Describe your findings.

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

2. What questions do these measures raise for you?

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_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

3. What are the implications for your work?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Teacher effectiveness efforts emerge from the flood

N P. Trist Middle School in Meraux, La., (p. 46) has a heart-wrenching story most cannot imagine, but it is the school’s resurgence that will inspire all that read about its journey. As you read, you will learn about the role the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement program played in the school’s success. As you read, note your responses to the following prompts. Use the questions on the following page when discussing the article with your team.

4 core elements of the TAP system and its impact on Trist.

3 connections made while reading about the school’s road to rebuild and reform.

2 ideas you have about rebuilding teacher quality as a result of the article.

1 thing you intend to do.

For more information on the TAP system, visit www.tapsystem.org.
For further discussion

1. Which of the four core elements identified on p. 48 would enhance teacher quality in your school or district?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. What could be the difference as a result of the enhancement?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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3. How might schools and districts learn how to implement and manage these kinds of systems?

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

4. What would need to occur first?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
JSD Professional Learning Guide

A bimonthly collection of tools to help educators expand their knowledge and learn about new practices through collaborative reflection.

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