Indicator: Professional development for teachers includes self-assessment relative to indicators of effective teaching and classroom management. (69)

Explanation: Teachers are professional who continuously hone their practice. With a common set of effective practices and their indicators is adopted by the school, each teacher can self-assess their own skill and strive for improvement. These self-assessments are a form of professional development, especially when combined with opportunities to share the results with other teachers and gain their suggestions. Self-assessment is also a key component in individual teacher professional development plans.

Questions: Does your school provide teachers with a common set of effective practices and their specific indicators? Are teachers provided with templates and a process for self-assessment? Is the self-assessment then linked with opportunities to share results and seek suggestions from other teachers? Are the self-assessments part of individual teacher professional development plans? Do they inform whole-faculty professional development?

According to Danielson (2011), “If we want teacher evaluation systems that teachers find meaningful and from which they can learn, we must use processes that not only are rigorous, valid, and reliable, but also engage teachers in those activities that promote learning—namely self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation” (p 38).

“Mastery learning,” a term coined by Benjamin Bloom in 1971, has little to do with specific content, but rather is a description of the process of mastering particular learning objectives. This school of thought presumes all children can learn if they are provided with the appropriate learning conditions. Bloom hypothesized that a classroom with a mastery learning focus would reduce the achievement gaps between varying groups of students, by helping students to master each learning unit before proceeding to a more advanced learning task—as opposed to the traditional form of instruction.

Walberg (2006) listed the essential elements of mastery learning, which combines suitable amounts of time for individual students and behavioral elements of teaching:

- “Cues” show students what is to be learned and explain how to learn it.
- “Engagement” is the extent to which learners actively and persistently participate until appropriate responses are firmly entrenched in their repertoires.
- “Corrective feedback” remedies errors in oral or written responses.
• “Reinforcement” is illustrated in the efforts elicited by athletics, games, and other cooperative and competitive activities. Immediate and direct reinforcement may some activities intrinsically rewarding. As emphasized by some theorists, classroom reinforcement may gain efficacy mainly by a rewarding sense of accomplishment or providing knowledge of results.

Formative tests are employed to allocate time and guide reinforcement and corrective feedback. Mastery usually takes additional time—a reported median of 16% but up to 97% more time than conventional teaching. On the other hand, its effects are enormous and, in some schools, some students are likely to require the extra time to attain mastery and eventual proficiency (Wubbels, 2006, p. 84).

Teachers should receive training on how to carry out formative evaluation of their own learning programs. Hattie (2009) found that supporting teachers in effectively assessing how well they are progressing with their learning programs led to improved student achievement across different student ages, duration of tasks, and frequency of measurement. Teachers should use multiple sources of data (data collected from classroom assessment, school-level data, etc.) when assessing their programs, because teacher self-assessment on its own won’t produce the desired effects.

Accurate self-assessment is an important component of professional development. Most teacher education programs include a focus on reflection and self-evaluation, but teachers in Head Start programs or charter schools may not have received this type of training because so many of them are not certified. According to Wright, Ellis, and Baxter (2012), video-based teacher self-evaluation is a simple, efficient, inexpensive, and easily implemented way for teachers to see and hear themselves delivering instruction and, therefore, is a promising tool for conducting professional development. Their study focused on teaching Head Start teachers how to accurately self-evaluate in the area of “working with young children’s behavior”—the most pressing training need of early childhood teachers as determined by a nationwide survey—using videotapes of their own teaching. The researchers chose elements of positive behavioral supports (PBS) as the basis for the training they provided to 51 teachers, after selecting one particular aspect of strategies for improving student behavior: praise. The teachers were randomly assigned to either one of two experimental groups or a control group. Every teacher was videotaped three times, with trained observers coding each tape for the amount and type of praise each teacher provided. While the control group received no other treatment, after the first videotaped lesson, both experimental groups were given training in a self-evaluation package, which including observation skills training, self-monitoring, and goal-setting exercises extracted from the PBS model. Following the second videotaped lesson, teachers in both experimental groups viewed their own videotapes privately and evaluated their own teaching—but while Control Group A (immediate feedback) viewed the tapes right after the second videotaped lesson and then taught their third videotaped lesson the next day, Control Group B (delayed feedback) just viewed the tapes immediately before teaching the third videotaped lesson. The evaluation package significantly increased the frequency of teachers’ general praise, but their use of specific praise, which has been shown to be more effective than general praise in positively changing a child’s behavior, did not significantly increase. And the timing of their viewing of their own teaching (immediate or delayed) did not have a significant effect on the amount of praise they provided. But according to the researchers, “The thrust of this research...is about more than simply having teachers provide more praise in the classroom; it is about empowering educators to take ownership of their professional growth. Increasing teachers’ ability to assess their own instructional performance can be crucial to improving their effectiveness and cultivating the self-awareness that contributes to real positive changes and sustained growth, as evidenced by this study” (p 198).

References and Resources


