Indicator: Professional development of individual teachers includes an emphasis on indicators of effective teaching. (71)

Explanation: This indicator is similar to others but makes the specific point that professional development for individual teachers (as in their personal professional development plans) emphasizes indicators of effective practice.

Questions: Does your school provide teachers with a common set of effective practices and their specific indicators? Do these practices and indicators loom large in your professional development for individual teachers, through their personal professional development plans.

“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 (2007) 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 make 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 (Walberg, 2007, p. 84).

In Danielson’s 2013 edition of her Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument, she lists four domains—Planning and Preparation, The Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities—and each domain is made up of several elements, which in turn have several indicators. According to Danielson, “The Framework for Teaching identifies those aspects of a teacher’s responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research as promoting improved student learning. While the Framework is not the only possible description of practice, these responsibilities seek to define what teachers should know and be able to do in the exercise of their profession” (p. 3). Her main rationale for releasing a 2013 edition was “to respond to the instructional implications of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Since the CCSS have been adopted in the vast majority of states, it seemed to make sense to explore what these would mean in the classroom. The CCSS, when fully implemented, will have a profound effect on education in America. They envision, for literacy and
mathematics initially, deep engagement by students with important concepts, skills, and perspectives. They emphasize active, rather than passive, learning by students. In all areas, they place a premium on deep conceptual understanding, thinking and reasoning, and the skill of argumentation (students taking a position and supporting it with logic and evidence)” (p. 5).

A meta-analysis of 28 factors that affect school learning (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993) found that the single most powerful factor is classroom management – the way the teacher organizes and manages the complex variables of curriculum, time, space, and interaction with students. Classroom management is evidenced in the teacher’s “with-it-ness,” the learner’s accountability for learning, the clear procedures in the classroom, and the way the teacher mixes whole-class instruction, small-group instruction, and individual instruction. Teacher “with-it-ness” is described by Brophy (1996) as the teacher being "aware of what is happening in all parts of the classroom at all times…by continuously scanning the classroom, even when working with small groups or individuals. Also [the teacher demonstrates]…this with-it-ness by intervening promptly and accurately when inappropriate behavior threatens to become disruptive” (p. 11). The way a teacher plans, organizes, manages, and watches over the classroom determines the prevailing “culture.” Students adopt the ethos of the classroom culture, responding to what the teacher has created and to the way the teacher behaves.

References and Resources


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