Teacher and Leader Evaluation that Supports Educators’ Development and Student Learning

EES Council Meeting June 2, 2022

Dr. Morgaen Donaldson
Associate Dean for Research
Director, CEPARE
Neag School of Education
Agenda

• Introduction
• How can evaluation support educators’ development & student learning?
• Lessons learned--Teacher evaluation
• Lessons learned--School leader evaluation
• Conclusion
About me

- Expertise in educator evaluation, school reform, especially in urban and rural schools
- Led 2013 SEED pilot study
- Principal Investigator on multiple federal, state, foundation grants on educator evaluation
- Current projects: mentoring of leaders, principal evaluation, recruitment/retention of BIPOC educators

Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Teacher Evaluation
Understanding the Research and Theory
Morgaen L. Donaldson
Why Invest in Evaluating Teachers and Leaders?

• If we want to enhance student learning...
  — We need to improve the skills, knowledge, and capacities of adults who teach and support them.
  — Why? How?
  — Teacher and principal evaluation and professional learning are prongs of a larger approach to enhance educator effectiveness.
Why Invest in Evaluating Teachers & Leaders?

• Good feedback has a big, positive impact on educator performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996)

• Teachers and leaders:
  – want feedback (Coggins et al., 2010; Frase, 2001)
  – care deeply about the feedback they receive (Milanowski, 2005)

• But evaluation has been lackluster historically
  – Few teachers or leaders receive rich, sustained feedback (Donaldson & Papay, 2015; Mavрогордато et al., 2021)
How can evaluation support educators’ development & student learning?

- Feedback, goal clarity, and supportive relationships prompt change (motivation theory)
- Learning is social (learning theory)
- Given sufficient human capital, internal accountability and shared vision and goals can motivate improvement (human capital, accountability theory)
How can evaluation support educators’ development & student learning?

• Design system to support **Accountability & Development**

  • Accountability
    – Personnel decisions **and** day-to-day pressure

  • Development
    – Via feedback and connections to professional learning

• Often framed as opposed, even competing goals

• Actually work in concert with each other
  – *accountability without development is punitive*
  – *development without accountability is naïve*
Teacher Evaluation
Evaluation can Improve Teachers’ Skills

- Design and implementation failures hamper teacher evaluation’s impact => large-scale studies with null effects (e.g. Bleiberg et al., 2021)

- Teacher evaluation can improve teachers' instruction and students' performance
  - Urban and rural districts (e.g., Dee & Wyckoff, 2015; Dee et al., 2019; Hunter & Bowser, 2021; Steinberg & Sartain, 2015; Taylor & Tyler, 2012)
Teacher evaluation supports teacher development & student learning when schools...

- place an overall emphasis on improvement 
  (Donaldson & Woulfin, 2019; Marsh et al., 2017; Reinhorn et al., 2017)
- deliver frequent, supportive feedback with high expectations 
  (Reinhorn et al., 2017)
- implement evaluation as one of a set of strategies that improves educators’ practice 
  (Marsh et al., 2017; McLaughlin, 1990)
- Attend to human, social, and material capital within evaluation
How human, social, and material capital shape teacher evaluation’s influence on teachers’ learning and practice

Donaldson & Firestone, 2021
When Designing Teacher Evaluation

• Balance accountability & development
• Incorporate student learning without building in perverse incentives
• Build supervisor human capital
• Advance equity
  – Emphasize culturally sustaining practices in rubrics (Richmond et al., 2019)
  – Offer ongoing training to reduce potential bias in observation ratings against teachers in lower-performing schools and classes (Jacob & Walsh, 2011), teachers of minoritized students, minoritized teachers, and male teachers (Campbell & Ronfeldt, 2018; Drake et al., 2019)
Principal Evaluation
Evaluation Can Build Principals’ Skills

- Principals benefit from evaluation that includes coaching, feedback, PD, and support
- Combining formative and summative evaluation approaches supports principal improvement

(Goldring et al., 2020)
When does evaluation support leaders’ development?

• When supervisors believe that
  – the aim of principal evaluation is both development **and** accountability
  – improvement is more important than compliance
  – evaluation aims and activities should cohere and be integrated with the principal’s work
  – they can and should coach principals

• When supervisors possess the capacity to
  – coach principals
  – preserve time to engage in coaching
Where does evaluation support leaders’ development?

• In districts where
  – principal evaluation functions as a **facilitative** rather than **primary** lever to improve practice
  – supervisors understand principals’ work and are skilled at coaching them
  – principal evaluation taps into principals’ intrinsic motivation

  (Donaldson et al., 2021a; Donaldson et al., 2021b; Mavrogordato et al., 2021)
How do supervisors implement principal evaluation differently?

• Supervisors in
  – higher-performing, higher-resourced districts tended to implement the process loosely but maintained a focus on instructional leadership
  – Lower-performing, lower-resourced districts implemented the process rigidly but broadened the focus to various aspects of leadership

• District evaluation standards prioritized instructional leadership, may have disadvantaged principals in lower-performing, lower-resourced districts

Donaldson et al., 2021a
Concluding Thoughts

Educator evaluation works best when it...

- is integrated with other district efforts to support teaching/leading
- features regular, rich, instructionally focused conversations
- prioritizes effort, learning, risk-taking and improvement
- balances accountability and support
- is led by supervisors who
  - are deeply knowledgeable about teaching/school leadership
  - hold high expectations for teachers/school leaders (Accountability)
  - provide regular, high-quality feedback
  - AND offer support (Support)
- Attends to equity
Thank you
For more information:
Morgaen.donaldson@uconn.edu
References


References, continued


