SHOULD TEACHER OBSERVATIONS AND APPRAISALS BE DIRECTLY ALIGNED WITH WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE CLASSROOM…. OF COURSE THEY SHOULD! A BALANCED APPROACH TO TEACHER OBSERVATIONS AND APPRAISALS

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Abstract

As a Principal, Administrator or Superintendent, we know exactly what we want for our students; that is to maximize the potential of every student on campus. We also have a strong idea of what we want to see in the classroom. Yet, have we thought about having a direct alignment of our School Improvement Plan, and our Vision for our students with our specific expectation of our teachers? Probably not.

Often the teacher observation procedures and the end of the year appraisal process are generic. The tools are adopted by a company that creates generic standards for teaching professionals. These typical standards come with a typical template and teachers get typical feedback. It is all typical. However, there is another approach to teacher observations and appraisals, and it is specially created to align directly to the leader’s vision and expectations. The system is straightforward giving teachers a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

Does your School Improvement Plan align with the previous School Inspection or Accreditation Report? Of course it should, as school inspections and accreditation processes are intended to objectively certify that students are receiving a quality education as per the expectations of the country’s government.

As the principal and primary person responsible for the success of your school, it is crucial that you take a very balanced approach to teacher observation and appraisal. It is critical that the vision you perceive is carried out, yet teachers remain empowered to run their class with the freedom to allow creativity and innovation. Everything in education is about balance.

Most subject teachers are given content standards or objectives to teach; these are mandatory to ensure that expectations are met, however in most cases they have the freedom to exercise their skill and expertise to deliver the content in a creative manner.

Likewise, most teachers will be observed and evaluated within the school year. Shouldn’t they be given a set of specific standards or objectives with the freedom to exercise their skill and expertise around it. Wouldn’t the likelihood of overall success transpire for students and teachers?

I am a witness that a teacher appraisal system that is directly aligned with the principal’s vision, expectation and previous accreditation recommendations will deliver implausible results. Students’ scores will increase, teachers attitude and receptiveness to feedback will improve and the impact of the entire school culture is guaranteed to improve. It is all about having the perfect amount of restraint and the perfect amount of freedom, balance.

Keywords: Teacher Observation, Appraisal System, Accreditation Report.