

## **Making Teachers Better Not Bitter: Balancing Evaluation, Supervision, and Reflection for Professional Growth**

### **Executive Summary**

**ASCD – Premium Member book, August 2016**

**Tony Frontier, PhD & Paul Mielke, PhD**

*“This process isn’t making me better. It is making me bitter.”*

- Cindy Alexander, Middle School Teacher

*“We’ve spent all our time trying to figure out how to make this process more manageable when we should be asking how to make it more meaningful.”*

- High School Principal

### **The Need for Balance: Fallacies About How Evaluation Alone Will Support Expertise**

In this era of high stakes accountability for teachers, there is an unprecedented emphasis on teacher evaluation. In general, this focus has been on technical, transactional, and summative components of the evaluative process such as frequency and duration of classroom visits by administrators and due dates of artifacts and forms. While these processes are associated with the validity and reliability of summative evaluations, *they do not* build teacher expertise. We argue there are five fallacies that have prevented the utilization of comprehensive frameworks for effective instruction to improve, rather than merely measure, teacher performance. These fallacies are deeply imbedded in the narrative of how evaluation *works* and how comprehensive frameworks for effective instruction are *supposed* to be utilized. These fallacies include:

Fallacy 1: Evaluation itself will elicit expert teaching.

Fallacy 2: Comprehensive teaching frameworks are to be used exclusively for administrators for purposes of evaluation.

Fallacy 3: Teachers fail to improve because they lack the incentives or consequences to do so.

Fallacy 4: Evaluators are the only source of meaningful feedback and can provide enough feedback to help teachers improve.

Fallacy 5: Systems of evaluation are a catalyst for teachers to establish meaningful improvement goals.

Transactional implementation of new evaluation frameworks, new rubrics, and new deadlines will not transform teaching any more than transactional implementation of new state tests, new standards, and new calendars will transform student learning.

### **Evaluation, Supervision, and Reflection: Three Systems, Three Purposes**

Systems that improve, rather than merely measure, teacher effectiveness must balance the urgency of valid, reliable evaluation with systems of supervision that empower teachers to focus their efforts on goals for growth. This needs to be done in a manner that honors teachers’ capacity to engage in meaningful reflection as they chart their own path toward expertise. Specifically, we argue that balanced systems of evaluation, supervision, and reflection have the following key attributes:

- The purpose of evaluation is to ensure competent teaching in every classroom through a valid, reliable ratings process. The premise is that evaluation renders judgment in a performance environment. The payoff comes in the form of accurate ratings of teacher quality on a criterion-referenced scale.
- The purpose of supervision is to support teacher growth by creating opportunities for developmental feedback that focuses teachers’ efforts and empowers them to achieve goals related to improved professional practice. The premise is that supervision creates the conditions for developmental feedback to inform progress in a learning environment. The payoff is teacher growth.
- The purpose of reflection is for teachers to become autonomous in their ability to become expert in their craft. The premise is that reflection is the foundation for meaningful thinking and the purposeful, aware, and responsive actions made by experts. The payoff is autonomous teachers who are developing expertise.

Unapologetically defining the purpose and payoff of these components clarifies the shared premises that must be developed among teachers, administrators, and boards of education to drive implementation of protocols, processes, and practices that balance evaluation, supervision, and reflection to support valid measurement *and* improved teaching (see Table 1).

	<b>Evaluation to Ensure Competence</b>	<b>Supervision to Influence Growth</b>	<b>Reflection to Support Deliberate Practice and Expertise</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	The purpose of evaluation is to ensure competent teaching in every classroom through a <i>valid, reliable</i> ratings process.	The purpose of supervision is to support teacher growth by creating opportunities for developmental feedback that <i>focuses</i> teachers' efforts and <i>empowers</i> teachers to achieve goals related to improved professional practice.	The purpose of reflection is for teachers to engage in a <i>meaningful</i> thought processes that result in <i>purposeful</i> action that results in growth toward expertise.
<b>Premise</b>	Evaluation renders a judgment in a performance environment.	Supervision creates conditions for growth in a learning environment.	Reflection is the foundation for the purposeful, aware, responsive decisions and actions made by experts.
<b>Owned by . . .</b>	State/District	Teacher with the support of supervisor	Teacher
<b>Payoff</b>	Accurate Measurement	Improved performance toward growth goals	Expert performance
<b>Primary Effort</b>	Trained evaluators & observation conducted by principals.	Teacher gathers data, establishes goals, and engages in practices and protocols that help him or her better understand, and close, the gap between current and ideal performance.	Meaningful reflective and purposeful, deliberate practice by teachers to support intentional change.
<b>Processes</b>	A series of classroom visits and collection of data by an evaluator that culminates in a valid rating.	An on-going process designed to affirm strengths, identify opportunities for growth, create dissonance, and generate developmental feedback.	Continuous, recursive, internal process of meta-cognition, reflection, & deliberate practice
<b>Informed by . . .</b>	Walk-throughs, clinical visits, achievement data, artifacts	Observation, data, reflection, discussion	Student data, teacher data, collegial dialogue, modification, and intentionality
<b>Purpose of Comprehensive Teaching Framework</b>	<i>Comprehensive teaching framework</i> used to create common language of evaluation and expectations for competence.	<i>Comprehensive teaching framework</i> used to create common language to focus efforts toward improved professional practice.	<i>Comprehensive teaching framework</i> used to inform shared language of reflection and deliberate practice
<b>Type of Feedback</b>	Summative, judgmental	Formative, developmental	Formative, developmental, self-generated
<b>Frequency of Feedback</b>	Feedback is given occasionally	Feedback is accessed frequently through as many sources as possible.	Feedback is continuous.
<b>Disposition</b>	Performance Orientation	Learning Orientation	Growth Mindset + Internal Locus of Control + Learning Orientation
<b>Active Participants</b>	Evaluator & teacher	Teacher, supervisor, colleagues, coaches, mentors, students	Teacher, colleagues, students
<b>Primary Users</b>	Principal/district	Teacher, supervisor, coaches, colleagues	Teacher/colleagues
<b>Leadership Role</b>	Evaluating	Coaching, supportive	Supporting
<b>Focus on . . .</b>	General teaching behaviors, professional behaviors, student outcomes.	Specific teaching behaviors	Meta-cognition and modification of specific teaching behaviors based on student response to teaching.
<b>Controlled by</b>	State/district/board	Administration and teachers	Teacher
<b>Key Process Question</b>	How will we ensure evaluations are valid and reliable?	How will we create feedback that focuses teachers' efforts that empower them to move from their current level of performance to the next level of performance?	How will teachers utilize continuous feedback in meaningful ways to ensure the autonomy support, ownership, and purposeful, deliberate practice associated with developing expertise?
<b>Key Outcome Question</b>	How good is good enough to maintain or improve employment status?	What is the current level of performance and how can we support growth toward next levels of performance?	How will I develop expertise in the complex craft of teaching?

## A Balanced System

We advocate for the utilization of specific action steps to empower teachers as active users of comprehensive frameworks of instruction to bring balance among components of evaluation, supervision, and reflection. Each chapter in the book uses key questions as aligned to specific criteria to guide purposeful implementation of a balanced system (Table 2). Each of these components are built on a foundation of credibility and relational trust.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Criteria for Quality</b>	<b>Key Question</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>	valid	<i>Are ratings valid?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We utilize a valid, research-based framework to determine ratings.</li> <li>• We ensure valid ratings and credible raters.</li> <li>• We provide timely, accurate judgmental feedback.</li> </ul>
	reliable	<i>Are raters and ratings reliable?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We focus on collection of quality data, not just quantity.</li> <li>• Teachers are actively involved in data collection.</li> <li>• We have high levels of inter-rater reliability, different raters produce similar ratings.</li> </ul>
<b>Supervision</b>	empowering	<i>Is the context empowering?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We strive to create and support a learning environment where errors are welcomed and questions are honored.</li> <li>• We strive to build teacher autonomy through autonomy supportive practices.</li> <li>• We utilize frequent, high quality, developmental feedback from a variety of sources to support teacher growth.</li> </ul>
	focused	<i>Are goals focused?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers use the framework to establish meaningful, high leverage goals.</li> <li>• Teacher's goals are rooted in, and supported by, continuous data collection and modification of practice.</li> <li>• Teachers collaborate to calibrate.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflection</b>	meaningful	<i>Is reflection meaningful?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers operate from an internal locus of control; they believe their classroom practices matter profoundly to influence student learning.</li> <li>• Teachers have a growth mindset, they believe they can make dramatic improvements in any area they choose.</li> <li>• Teachers are meta-cognitive in their effort to clarify the gap between current and ideal performance.</li> </ul>
	purposeful	<i>Are reflection and action purposeful?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers utilize the framework and a structured, systematic approach to reflection.</li> <li>• We use the framework and structured processes to accurately clarify areas for specific, deliberate practice and incremental growth.</li> <li>• We are purposeful, aware of, and responsive to the relationship between student learning and effective teaching.</li> </ul>

### **Protocols to Align Purpose to Payoff in a Balanced System of Evaluation, Supervision, and Reflection**

If evaluation is the “summative assessment” of a teacher’s annual performance, what are the learning opportunities and “formative assessments” that can be utilized to ensure teachers are empowered to pursue focused goals for growth? Furthermore, how can teachers be given opportunities to reflect in meaningful ways so they are more purposeful about, aware of, and responsive to, the relationship between their teaching and each child’s learning? Systems that balance evaluation,

supervision, and reflection utilize a variety of protocols to ensure teachers consistently engage in deliberate practice to close the gap between current performance and expert performance. A variety of protocols (Table 3) are described in detail in the book to support a balanced system of evaluation, supervision, and reflection that can be used to ensure valid ratings *and* support each teacher's efforts to improve in the complex craft of teaching.

**Table 3**  
**Protocols to Align Action to a Balanced System of Evaluation, Supervision, and Reflection**

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Category	Protocols	Users					Purpose						Payoff						
		Administrators	Coaches	Teachers	Groups	Individuals	Generating Feedback	Processing Feedback	Calibrating Expectations	Guiding Dialogue	Defining Expectations	Creating Awareness	Goal Setting	Validity	Reliability	Empowering Teachers	Focused Goal Setting	Meaningful Reflection	Purposeful Reflection
Evaluation	Culture Check Survey	X	X				X					X	X						
	Clinical Observation	X				X	X	X	X		X	X	X						
	Inter-rater Reliability	X	X		X				X		X		X	X					
	Evaluators' Collegial Fishbowl	X			X				X		X		X	X					
	Evaluative Dialogue	X				X				X			X						
	Judgmental Feedback	X				X	X						X						
	Multiple Perspectives	X				X	X		X		X		X	X					
	Celebrating Success and Effort	X	X			X									X				
	Supervisory Walkthrough	X				X	X						X	X					
	Data for Evaluation	X				X	X	X	X	X			X	X					
Data Analysis	X				X		X					X	X	X					
Supervision	PDSA Coaching Process	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X			X			
	The Seven Coaching Hats		X			X		X		X					X				
	Appreciative Inquiry	X			X		X	X		X							X		
	Receiving Feedback	X	X	X	X	X		X		X					X				
	Developmental Feedback	X	X	X	X			X		X		X			X	X			
	Formative Walkthrough	X	X			X	X		X						X	X			
	Active Listening	X	X	X	X	X		X		X					X				
Reflection	The Ideal Classroom	X	X	X			X					X	X						X
	On PAR Framework	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X
	Meaningful Goal Setting	X	X	X						X	X		X				X	X	
	Instructional Rounds	X	X	X			X		X			X			X				X
	Peer Sharing	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X			X	X			X
	Collegial Fishbowl	X	X	X			X	X											X
	Self-analysis Framework Dig	X	X	X			X				X								X
	Teaching Inventory			X			X		X										X
	Student Surveys			X			X		X			X	X						X
	Video Analysis of Others' Teaching		X	X			X		X		X	X			X				X
	Video Analysis of Own Teaching		X	X			X				X	X			X				X
	Reflective Peer Visit		X	X			X				X	X							X
Structured Reflective Writing			X			X	X		X			X						X	

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