

The Road to Effective Isn't Always Straight: Are teachers who are rated developing on a pathway to an effective rating?

Rationale

District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) IMPACT evaluation has five ratings: ineffective, minimally effective, developing, effective, and highly effective. A developing status leaves a teacher in a gray area of sliding down to minimally effective, but fighting to reach effective. There is no official protocol by DCPS to assist teachers that earn this rating. The IMPACT office suggest viewing the essential practice videos; however, the essential practice is just one element of the evaluation categories. If there is no identified and established plan of action committed teachers will suffer the ramifications of not being properly trained to do their jobs. DCPS teachers are given three years of low IMPACT scores before they are IMPACTed out. This creates a sense of urgency around the need for appropriate and purposeful professional development.

Literature Review

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, Gardner's (2017) work for the Learning Policy Institute gives a blueprint for effective professional development. The report details a complete definition of effective professional development. They have school level policy recommendation as well as district level. There is a clear distinction of the type of support a teacher should be able to receive. The highlight of this report is the design portion of professional development. They focus on seven essential elements that should be the focus of professional development. Darling-Hammond et al, make recommendations based off of adult learning theory.

Lumpkin (2018) draws on the personal experiences of the Washington Post, Principal of the Year. Her article allows the reader to gain insight on simple, but effective steps to quality leadership. Paul Pack, Loudon County, Principal of the Year is well known for his support of his teachers. He is highly regarded for his willingness to let them live outside of the box. Additionally, Pack, creates financial means to see their ideas come to life. He remarks that the support he gives his teachers makes a difference in their teaching and the way their students learn. These works are rooted in support for the teacher. It is a mindset shift along with action steps to empower teachers.

Background

Established in 2009, the IMPACT system was created to put teacher professional growth first. It is highlighted as being clear and actionable feedback. There are two major elements of IMPACT that DCPS highlights such as clarifying expectations and providing frequent meaningful feedback. The areas of focus are instructional practice, student achievement, instructional culture, and collaboration. In DCPS, your position determines the specific criteria for your IMPACT evaluation. For example, grades four through twelve have a value added component that reflects student standardized testing performance. This evaluation system includes elements of punitive damage such as

student surveys. In most school districts a student survey is used to develop a teacher's practice.

Data/Tools/Process

The data was created through a survey of 19 teachers. The primary criteria of the participants was a teacher rated developing. The survey was administered across the district in all 8 wards in April of 2018 until early May 2018. The questions ranged in format from yes/no, likert scale, short answer and multiple choice.

The survey's aim was to identify the supports that teachers need and want to progress from developing to effective. This survey takes into account location in the ward, the level of experience, preferred support, current supports, and the feelings towards climate of support to make policy recommendations.

Data Analysis

There were 18 respondents from all over the District. Wards 1, 2, 4, 5,6, 7, and 8. There was a wide variety of content and grade levels represented. Majority of the educators taught English Language Arts. The range of years teaching is spread evenly among the DCPS teachers. 21.4 percent of teachers taught one to three years. Additionally, 21.4 percent of teachers taught four to six years. 21.4 percent of teachers taught seven to ten years. 35.7 percent of teachers have over ten years of service. Individual Value Added (IVA) is a criteria for teachers in testing grades 4th grade plus. A majority of teachers were not IVA at 64.3 percent. The IVA affected teachers were at 28.6 percent. IVA is 35 percent of some teachers Impact score. This is heavily weighted if the scores in other categories are not high. The rest of the participants had a criteria that included special education at 7.1 percent. 46.2 percent of the participants were rated developing within the first 3 years of working for DCPS. 7.7 percent within their first four to six years. 23.1 percent within seven to ten years of working for DCPS. 23.1 percent of participants at over 10 years of service. The concern is that teachers in various stages can earn developing regardless of their years of service within DCPS.

There was an alarming percentage of schools that did not have a targeted plan to assist developing teachers. 9.1 percent of participants stated there is a plan to address developing teacher's performance.

The majority of respondents asked for informal observations with feedback. A few examples are as follows:

- *“How to craft a good objective, how to create a classroom culture conducive to success and strategies for pacing and creating higher order questions”*

- *“I would like to have more informal observations. I believe that we should be consistent about data meetings. Behavior concerns should not go all year long. Support should be given so that teachers can actually teach.”*
- *“Real time coaching. Side by side coaching. Modeling mentoring. Specific PDs: content area, lesson planning, behavior supports.*

These ask fors relate to the observation cycles and teacher need. Teachers acknowledge their needs to effectively perform; however, it is the responsibility of the administration to support developing teachers in most if not all of these areas. An important aspect to acknowledge is that 78.6 percent of teachers remained at a the school that they earned developing. It is concerning that the 21.4 percent of participants left the school. One of them stated their professional reputation is weakened with a rating such as developing. Another stated that administration had no bearing on the return; although, their greatest level of support came from seeking out colleagues.

Future Directions for Study

1. How is a developing rating impacting one's financial growth?
2. Is the IMPACT evaluation system affecting the retention of teachers?
3. Should DCPS create IMPACT rating specific supports for the teachers?

Recommendation

Each school should have an action plan that supports improving a teachers rating from developing to effective. This should be a living document that can meet the needs of teachers to earn an effective or highly effective rating the following school year. Support should be frequent and immediate in nature.

Suggested areas of focus could be:

- Commitment to School Community (CSC)
- Teacher Assessed Student Achievement Data (TAS)
- Student Survey of Practice (SSP)
- Core Professionalism (CP)
- Essential Practice (EP)

References

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyster, M. E., Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

District of Columbia Public Schools (n.d.). Retrieved April 29, 2018, from <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/impact-dcps-evaluation-and-feedback-system-school-based-personnel>

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