

Essential Components in the Evaluation of Teacher Effectiveness

Dennison S. Bhola, Ph.D.

Teacher effectiveness is in the news. Let's discuss some answers to the following burning questions:

- 1) What do effective teachers do?
- 2) What should schools measure in order to evaluate teachers' effectiveness?
- 3) How would I measure what needs to be measured?
- 4) What is easy to do? What is difficult to do?
- 5) Why has "what is difficult to do" NOT been done properly before?

What do effective teachers do?

Effective teachers facilitate learning. In their classrooms, students learn; students of all socio-economic statuses, races, genders and ages – learn. Bottom line - in classrooms led by effective teachers, students learn. [In the evaluation of teacher effectiveness, it is therefore imperative that we accurately measure how much students learn!]

In addition to facilitating mastery of the learning objectives described in the state standards, effective teachers facilitate the development of the whole human being. This means that learners' needs are met in all domains: Cognitive (student achievement is covered here), affective (emotional growth is covered here), and psychomotor (skills development is covered here). To do this well the teacher must be viewed by students as trustworthy and as someone who has high expectations for them/someone who believes they can experience success. Treating students with respect and making them feel cared for like real human beings help teachers lay a solid foundation for building the trust relationship.

Effective teachers also contribute to the learning community by collaborating with colleagues, parents, alumni and external agencies - such as organizations, experts, and potential employers - for the benefit of students.

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What should schools measure to evaluate teachers' effectiveness?

To measure teachers' effectiveness, we therefore need to evaluate their impact in the following **three** main areas:

- 1) **Increases in student learning**

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2. Measure how students feel with a **student feedback survey** administered at several points in time. Longitudinal data tracking will enable us to see changes over time. These changes provide measures of how students' perceptions have evolved as well as indications of how the teacher has adapted and changed.
3. Measure perceptions of the teacher's effectiveness as a collaborator and networker with a **survey of colleagues, parents, and stakeholders** in the wider learning community. Again there is benefit to doing longitudinal data collection to be able to see changes over time.

What is easy to do? What is difficult to do?

It is easy to develop and administer the surveys mentioned above. In fact with online technology today, several processes including the data analysis could be automated. Some training will be required, at the outset, for the results to be interpreted accurately. Depending on who is involved, training to familiarize teachers and principals with the format and content of the survey results could take 1-2 hours.

It is easy to provide professional development for teachers to learn how to develop accurate assessments that are well-aligned with their instruction. Data analysis could be automated, and with a couple hours of training teachers would be ready to interpret the results accurately.

So, you might ask: "what's causing the difficulty?" A major part of the challenge stems from teachers not getting enough information and skills development in their pre-service teacher education courses to be competent and confident when faced with the task of developing accurate assessments that are well-aligned with their instruction. For this reason, the assessment development task is currently a daunting one. The time has come for professors in Teachers' College and Educational Assessment Departments to collaborate and team-teach much more than they currently do. Often these professors are in the same building but the students in Teachers' College do not benefit from the synergistic collaboration that could occur. Let's change this in universities and colleges everywhere, and have students work on joint "teaching methods-assessment" projects with real world applications.

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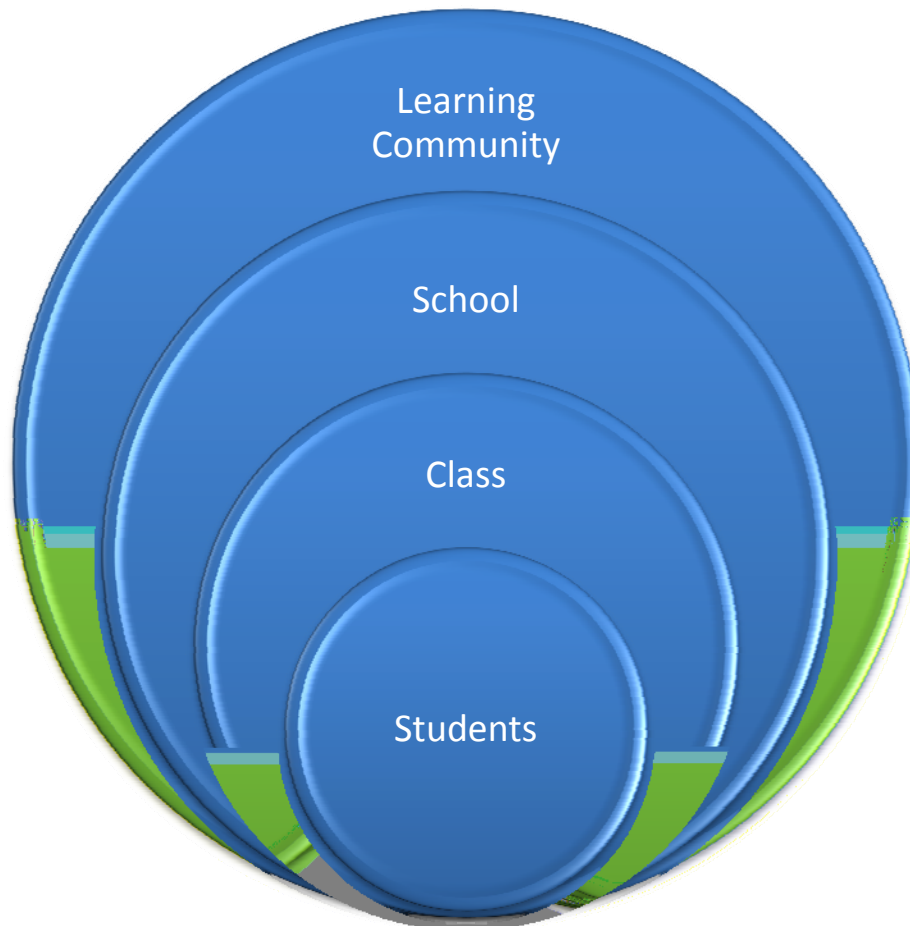
Why has “what is difficult to do” NOT been done properly before?

If “Teaching Methods” and “Assessment” professors would collaborate we would have a win-win situation. It will become quite obvious that assessment could be used to create a feedback loop that empowers learners to learn more, and simultaneously enables teachers to be aware of how they could increase students’ learning through remediation, differentiation, and the customization of assessment and instruction for groups as well as individuals.

The key is **accurate assessment of what was actually taught**. That is, accurate assessment of the standards students actually had **opportunity to learn**. In the past this process has been cumbersome and unwieldy because questions needed to be written, reviewed and tested. Then assessments needed to be assembled, administered and scored. Then data files needed to be created, and the scores needed to be analyzed. After analysis, the statistics needed to be interpreted, before decisions could be made and actions taken. Accurate assessment is difficult without easy to use systems designed using sound psychometric principles.

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Appendix 1: The Learning Community



The Learning Community is made up of students, teachers, principals, superintendents, parents, alumni, school board members, experts who students can learn from, potential employers, supporters, and well wishers. Learning happens when all of these resources are brought together for the benefit of students.