

EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

SUPPORTING THE ART AND
SCIENCE OF TEACHING

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Supervision That Develops Expertise

Supervision has been a central feature on the landscape of K–12 education almost from the outset of schooling in this country. Witness the following comments from a 1709 document entitled “Reports of the Record of Commissions of the City of Boston” (cited in Burke & Krey, 2005, p. 411):

[It should] be therefore established a committee of inspectors to visit ye School from time to time, when as oft as they shall see fit, to Enform themselves of the methods used in teacher of ye Scholars and Inquire of their proficiency, and be present at the performance of some of their Exercises.

In the three centuries that have transpired since this proclamation of 1709, the world of K–12 education has changed dramatically. Along with changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment have come changes in perspectives on supervision and evaluation. In Chapter 2, we briefly trace these changes to provide a frame of reference for the recommendations made in this book. Throughout the remainder of the book, we lay out a comprehensive approach to supervision as well as address the implications of our approach for the practice of evaluation.

The Foundational Principle of Supervision

The recommendations in this book are grounded in one primary principle that we view as foundational to the evolution of supervision: **the purpose of supervision should be the enhancement of teachers' pedagogical skills, with the ultimate goal of enhancing student achievement.** Even a brief examination of the research attests to the logic underlying this principle. Specifically, one incontestable fact in the research on schooling is that student achievement in classes with highly skilled teachers is better than student achievement in classes with less skilled teachers. To determine just how much better, consider Figure 1.1.

FIGURE 1.1

Teacher Expertise and Student Achievement

Teacher Skill Percentile Rank	Predicted Percentile Gain for Student at the 50th Percentile	Predicted Percentile Rank for Student
50th	0	50th
70th	8	58th
90th	18	68th
98th	27	77th

Note: For a discussion of how these figures were computed, see Marzano and Waters (2009).

Figure 1.1 depicts the expected percentile gain in achievement for a student starting at the 50th percentile within classrooms taught by teachers of varying degrees of competence. A student at the 50th percentile will not be expected to gain at all in percentile rank in the classroom of a teacher of the 50th percentile in terms of his or her pedagogical skill. However, a student at the 50th percentile will be expected to advance to the 58th percentile in the class of a teacher at the 70th percentile in terms of pedagogical skill. The increase in student percentile rank is even larger in the classrooms of teachers at the 90th and 98th percentile ranks in terms of their pedagogical skill. Students in these situations would be expected to reach the 68th and 77th percentiles, respectively. Clearly, the more skilled the teacher, the greater the predicted increase in student achievement. Equally clear is the implication for supervision. Its primary purpose should be the enhancement of teacher expertise.

Although it is unreasonable to expect all teachers to reach the lofty status of the 90th percentile or higher regarding their pedagogical skills, it is reasonable to expect all teachers to increase their expertise from year to year. Even a modest increase would yield impressive results. Specifically, if a teacher at the 50th percentile in terms of his or her pedagogical skill raised his or her competence by

two percentile points each year, the average achievement of his or her students would be expected to increase by eight percentile points over a 10-year period.

We believe that when done well, the process of supervision can be instrumental in producing incremental gains in teacher expertise, which can produce incremental gains in student achievement. Additionally, we believe that the research provides rather clear guidance on how to enhance teacher expertise.

The Nature of Expertise

Relatively speaking, it was not that long ago that expertise was considered something that could not be developed. Rather, expertise was thought of as a natural by-product of talent. In his review of the historical literature on perceptions of expertise, Murray (1989) concluded that it was generally believed that talent was considered “a gift from the gods.” About this notion, Ericsson and Charness (1994) note:

One important reason for this bias in attribution . . . is linked to immediate legitimization of various activities associated with the gifts. If the gods have bestowed a child with a special gift in a given art form, who would dare to oppose its development, and who would not facilitate its expression so everyone could enjoy its wonderful creations. This argument may appear strange today, but before the French Revolution the privileged status of kings and nobility and birthright of their children were primarily based on such claims. (p. 726)

Talent bestowed by the gods, then, was considered the prime determiner of expertise. Over time, the fallacies in this perspective were disclosed. Ericsson and Charness explain that “it is curious how little empirical evidence supports the talent view of expert and exceptional performance” (p. 730). They note that over the centuries, the talent hypothesis was inevitably challenged once it became evident that individuals could “dramatically increase their performance through education and training if they had the necessary drive and motivation” (p. 727).

Akin to the talent hypothesis is the intelligence hypothesis: highly intelligent people have the capacity to learn more, quicker. Over time, this trajectory leads to expertise. Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Romer (1993) note that this hypothesis has little backing: “The relationship of IQ to exceptional performance is rather weak in many domains” (p. 364).

If expertise is not a function of talent or intelligence, what then *are* its determiners? Based on the research on expertise, we propose five conditions that must

LESSON SEGMENTS INVOLVING ROUTINE EVENTS

Design Question 1: What will I do to establish and communicate learning goals, track student progress, and celebrate success?

1. Providing Clear Learning Goals and Scales to Measure Those Goals					
The teacher provides a clearly stated learning goal accompanied by scale or rubric that describes levels of performance relative to the learning goal.			<i>Notes</i>		
Teacher Evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has a learning goal posted so that all students can see it. <input type="checkbox"/> The learning goal is a clear statement of knowledge or information as opposed to an activity or assignment. <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher makes reference to the learning goal throughout the lesson. <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has a scale or rubric that relates to the learning goal posted so that all students can see it. <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher makes reference to the scale or rubric throughout the lesson.			Student Evidence <input type="checkbox"/> When asked, students can explain the learning goal for the lesson. <input type="checkbox"/> When asked, students can explain how their current activities relate to the learning goal. <input type="checkbox"/> When asked, students can explain the meaning of the levels of performance articulated in the scale or rubric.		
Scale					
	Innovating (4)	Applying (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)	Not Using (0)
Providing clear learning goals and scales to measure those goals	Adapts and creates new strategies for unique student needs and situations	Provides a clearly stated learning goal accompanied by a scale or rubric that describes levels of performance, and monitors students' understanding of the learning goal and the levels of performance	Provides a clearly stated learning goal accompanied by a scale or rubric that describes levels of performance	Uses strategy incorrectly or with parts missing	Strategy was called for but not exhibited

2. Tracking Student Progress					
The teacher facilitates tracking of student progress on one or more learning goals using a formative approach to assessment.			<i>Notes</i>		
<p>Teacher Evidence</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher helps students track their individual progress on the learning goal. <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher uses formal and informal means to assign scores to students on the scale or rubric depicting student status on the learning goal. <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher charts the progress of the entire class on the learning goal.			<p>Student Evidence</p> <input type="checkbox"/> When asked, students can describe their status relative to the learning goal using the scale or rubric. <input type="checkbox"/> Students systematically update their status on the learning goal.		
Scale					
	Innovating (4)	Applying (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)	Not Using (0)
Tracking student progress	Adapts and creates new strategies for unique student needs and situations	Facilitates tracking of student progress using a formative approach to assessment, and monitors the extent to which students understand their level of performance	Facilitates tracking of student progress using a formative approach to assessment	Uses strategy incorrectly or with parts missing	Strategy was called for but not exhibited