



Is Your Evaluation a Tool or a Trap?

By Educator Barnes – March 23, 2021

If you have a job, you probably have had an evaluation. Depending on your role and place of employment this may happen annually or a few times each year. Evaluations are not unique to the education profession. Since this profession is rooted in growing and learning, it is reasonable to believe that the evaluation would be used as a tool to help teachers. Unfortunately, that may not always be the case.

This school year, my school adopted a new evaluation. Teachers who have been at my school for a while have had their evaluation tool changed several times. It was important for me to ensure that the teachers I supervise know what is in their evaluation and that I will coach them in those areas to get to mastery. Instead, some teachers' experiences with the evaluation rubric are that it is a tool of harm.

When an employer chooses an evaluation rubric, this tool is supposed to show the employee's effectiveness or lack thereof. The areas covered in a teacher evaluation are supposed to show how effective the teacher is in growing students academically and helping them master the academic standards. A good administrator helps teachers understand how they are doing on the various indicators that have provided coaching and development.

I never want the evaluation to be a surprise. If a teacher is totally surprised by his or her evaluation, then the principal was not using the evaluation as an appropriate tool. Most teachers want to do well, but if the teacher is not receiving timely feedback, how can they improve? If the teacher is not being provided with coaching for their skill gaps, how can they improve? If evaluations rating are always a surprise, how does the principal still have a job?

Also, teachers have to take ownership. Each year, even as an administrator, I have expressed an area where I want more support from my evaluator. Sometimes teachers fear that this transparency will negatively impact their evaluation, but if the administrator actually wants to grow teachers' skills, they should welcome this type of information from their teachers.

An evaluation should never be a hunt and punish tool. Administrators who do this aren't leaders; they are emotional terrorizers. Teachers need support, and the evaluation should be a tool that aids in helping teachers understand where they are missing the mark, where they are doing well, and how they can keep improving.