

Thursday, July 31, 2008

## **Under-the-Radar Teaching Skills**

### **Catching Teachers Performing Well**

Principals and school district administrators that evaluate teachers can have a snappy bit of technology in their hands. This technology ensures that teachers receive lots of credit for all the exciting and creative work that those principals catch teachers performing. This nifty strategy that leaves "no superior teaching moment unrecorded" is accomplished by a hand-held computing device, and a behind the scenes server.

Unfortunately, the self-same device can be used by stress-focused, vendetta-prone, "I'll clean house of all undesirable teachers" principals. Sidebar You wish that talent and effort proved to be adequate job security. But in the days of "NCLB-slapped" administrators, the insecure (or inept) among their ranks "sometimes go after teachers" to make the case that they are competent administrators. "It's only those no-account slackers that have to go, and I am on their case to ensure that they either do their jobs or leave." So, how does this sneaky hand held computer system relate to stealth teaching methods?

Answer: Whether the principal/evaluator is "packing an always on" evaluation device, whether the principal is Obsessive-Compulsive; whether the principal is still rooted in paper and pencil checklists; teachers must maintain vigilance to ensure that they perform in a stellar fashion each time that they are "vigilanced-against."

The principal with the paper and pencil checklist can accomplish as much as the principal with the hand held computer, only the hand held computer accomplishes more with less effort.

Whether the principal is supportive, a laissez faire leader that always looks at your sunny side; or a henchman planning to wipe out your job, you need the same strategy.

Teachers must conduct class (from the first student meeting) in an "always being watched," "always aware of the scrutiny" pretending that the "hidden cameras that are running" state of alertness. Why Wouldn't a Principal want Such a Device? Imagine if principals could: Always have access to student and teacher contact data

Record observation data in real time, without having to connect to wireless systems

Cut teacher evaluation and paperwork time in half

Improve the teachers' evaluation reports by listing more details

Have this system customized to the school district's evaluation conventions And, for large campuses, principals can also have mobile student data that includes: Student attendance and schedules

Student photos and IDs

Student disciplinary records

Parent contact information What's more, the development company offers "no extra charge" for this customization and for their stellar technical support.

Contact: Austin Sky 877-759-7335 or visit Austin Sky A Cynic's View of Evaluation Evaluation of teachers is based more on belief and bias than on a perception of reality. And what principal, while conducting a drive-by evaluation; can grasp the skills, talents and abilities that a teacher has in play?

Just as sound bites have diminished our view (and our assessment) of political candidates, shrinking our perceptions around ten second sound clips... maybe 20 seconds if the media is biased in favor of the candidate... maybe 30 seconds if the media catches their "un favorite" candidate with a "colossal foot in his or her mouth."

The "thin slice of time" style of observation fails to animate a picture of a teacher's performance... not even as well as the stick figure drawing, thumbed for a fake animation, on the edge of a pad of paper.

The caution against the random sample, quickie observation is the same caution against evaluating a teacher based upon one or two high-stakes test days in April.

But, who can argue against saving time for the principal? Principal's Challenges Time-savings, less paper work, less work-related stress--in theory, this might mean a calm, cool, more hospitable and mellow principal.

But, these personal factors are more habit and conditioned behavioral responses than a reflection of the job situation.

What actually happens is that principals will still find their school day jammed to overflowing with attention-seeking issues and clamoring folks. Like the closet that is always full, no matter how large we build it; principals' workdays expand to fill every crack and cranny.

So, stresses never leave the presence of campus principals, and wishing for principals to mellow into a jovial mood is fantasy.

However, if the principal can complete an observation with less work, then at that particular moment, the likelihood that the principal might project that irritation and discomfort upon the teacher that s being observed is lessened.

So, making it easier for a principal to conduct the observation seems to at least level the playing field for the teacher, instead of amassing obstacles that aggravate the referee (principal). Summary So, look into easing the evaluation load on your favorite principal by advocating the use of hand-held tools. Your principal will thank you for it&hellip; although your next evaluation may fail to show that undying gratitude.

# Blog Export: Classroom Toolkit Newsletter, <http://classroomtoolkit.net/serendipity/>

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Under-the-Radar Teaching Skills at 03:00