Teacher Appraisal Models

Background

"On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). As part of this education reform effort, ARRA provided $4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund, a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states for education innovation. The program's goal is to impact student achievement by launching reform efforts in the following four areas:

★ Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy

★ Building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction

★ Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most

★ Turning around our lowest-achieving schools

One of the outcomes of this legislation has been unprecedented momentum toward developing new teacher evaluation systems. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is an advocacy group that promotes reforms in a broad range of teacher policies at the federal, state, and local levels in order to increase the number of effective teachers. In an October 2011 national issue paper entitled, "Trends and Early Lessons on Teacher Evaluation and Effectiveness Policies," the NCTQ noted the following: *"The demand for highly qualified teachers is slowly but surely being replaced by a call for highly effective teachers…Accountability for student learning and research confirming the strong impact teachers can have on student achievement has moved the field toward a decidedly performance-based focus on teacher quality."*

Dramatic changes in teacher evaluation systems have swept through the country. States are making substantive changes in their teacher evaluation policies, and most have adopted some type of framework outlining the components of teacher evaluation that all districts must follow. While some states have created their own process, many states are relying on the work that has been done by the following two major contributors in this field: Charlotte Danielson and Robert Marzano. Highlighted below is a brief summary of each model.

Charlotte Danielson: The Framework for Teaching

The Framework for Teaching was initially aligned with the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards. A revision of Danielson's framework occurred following the release of the Common Core State Standards. Over half of the states have adopted Danielson's framework as a model for their districts, and a number of others are presently in the pilot stage. Danielson has created a series of rubrics (22 total) that fall within the following four domains: (1) Planning and Preparation; (2) Classroom Environment; (3) Instruction; and (4) Professional Responsibilities. These rubrics can be viewed at the following website: http://usny. nysed.gov/rttt/teachers-leaders/practicerubrics/Docs/ ASCD_Rubric.pdf.

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Robert Marzano: The Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model

The Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model evolved from Marzano's research that was published in a number of works, including the following: "Classroom Instruction That Works" (2001), "Classroom Management That Works" (2003), "What Works in Schools" (2003), and "The Art and Science of Teaching" (2007). Marzano created a teacher evaluation model that incorporates the findings of his research. Marzano has also created a set of rubrics (60 elements) that are divided into the following four categories: (1) Classroom Strategies and Behaviors; (2) Preparing and Planning; (3) Reflecting on Teaching; and (4) Collegiality and Professionalism. Though Marzano's model is not as pervasive as Danielson's, a number of states have adopted it as one of their preferred models for teacher evaluation. To view these rubrics, go to http://www.marzanoresearch.com/documents/MarzanoTeacherEvaluationScales.pdf.

A thorough examination of the rubrics created by Danielson and Marzano will reveal connections to Kagan Structures in all four domains for each model. However, connections are easiest to identify in two of Danielson's domains (e.g., Classroom Environment and Instruction), and one of Marzano's domains (e.g., Classroom Strategies and Behaviors). The purpose of this document is to show how Kagan connects to the work being done in the field of teacher evaluation. If you have questions about anything contained herein, please feel free to get in touch with us. Contact information is listed at the end of this overview.

Connections

1 ### Kagan Structures impact all students.

Embedded in the rubrics of both of these models are practices rooted in educational research. If implemented properly, they have the potential to impact student learning. However, one of the shortcomings of traditional classrooms is that ALL

children are not actively involved. *If all students are not taking part in classroom initiatives, the achievement gap will not close.*

Let's examine both models to illustrate this point. Both Danielson and Marzano value student dialogue as evidenced below.

Charlotte Danielson: The Framework for Teaching
Component 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
Teacher creates a genuine discussion among students, stepping aside when appropriate. (Distinguished Level).

Robert Marzano: The Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model
Design Question #2: What will I do to help students effectively interact with knowledge?
Action Step 5: During breaks in the presentation of content, the teacher engages students in actively processing new information.

Clearly, both models advocate the importance of student conversation, and the intent is for teachers to involve ALL students in dialogue. However, neither model specifies how to make this happen. What does "genuine discussion among students" (Danielson) look like? What method should teachers use to "engage students in actively processing information" (Marzano)? Would it be possible for some students to dominate discussions? Worse yet, would it be possible for some students to remain passive? The rubrics simply do not provide teachers with methodology.

Traditional classroom practices—regardless of the initiative—fall well short in involving ALL students. Teachers will not be able to meet the expectations of the rubrics unless ALL children are fully engaged. Unfortunately, *the vast majority of teachers simply do not have strategies they can use which impact ALL.* Kagan Structures give teachers a tool they can integrate with other strategies to ensure all children

are active in the learning environment. In doing so, teachers are much more likely to perform at the highest levels on the rubrics.

2   Kagan Structures are robust.

One of the critical problems facing educators when it comes to school improvement is a lack of focus. In an effort to improve student achievement, many districts frequently change direction. The effects of constant change are devastating. In his book, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Michael Fullan stated, *"One of the most critical problems our schools face is not resistance to innovation but the fragmentation, overload, and incoherence resulting from the uncritical and uncoordinated acceptance of too many different innovations."* Doug Reeves described in his book, *Finding Your Leadership Focus*, how teachers experience initiative fatigue. Dr. Spencer Kagan has identified the dangers of the replacement cycle in his book, *Kagan Cooperative Learning* Kagan and noted, *"There is hardly a teacher who has been in education for more than five years who has not seen a good innovation come and go…When the next new educational innovation is presented, they give it little or no effort..."*

A review of both teacher evaluation models reveals that many classroom practices need to change in order to align with the expectations outlined in the rubrics. A traditional approach to meeting the demands of the rubrics would be to implement several different strategies. This, unfortunately, will only contribute to the problem highlighted above by overwhelming and overloading already busy educators. What teachers need are robust strategies—strategies that, to use an old adage, *"kill two birds with one stone."*

Such is the case with cooperative learning. ***Kagan Structures impact multiple areas of the rubrics simultaneously.*** Using language straight from the rubrics, note the power of the structures in the following examples.

Charlotte Danielson: The Framework for Teaching
Simultaneously, by using a single Kagan Structure a teacher can…

> ★ Use formative measure to determine if students are understanding the content
> ★ Provide opportunities for students to interact with one another
> ★ Effectively manage transitions
> ★ Manage materials and supplies well
> ★ Engage all students in class discussions

Robert Marzano: The Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model
Simultaneously, by using a single Kagan Structure a teacher can…

> ★ Reinforce classroom procedures
> ★ Organize students to interact with content
> ★ Chunk content into digestible bites
> ★ Make use of physical movement
> ★ Manage response rates

Kagan Structures are multi-faceted. Use of the structures enables teachers to meet multiple expectations outlined in the rubrics simultaneously. As a result, ***teachers who use structures are able to address many dimensions of student learning with a single instructional practice.*** It is not necessary to have numerous programs and strategies to help teachers meet the expectations defined in teacher evaluation instruments. Cooperative learning is a robust strategy—it impacts multiple components of the rubrics at the same time.

3   Kagan Structures are teacher friendly.

The past decade of school reform has placed tremendous pressure on public school educators. Higher

levels of accountability are being demanded, and the number of mandates from state and federal agencies is increasing. As a result, teachers are experiencing enormous amounts of anxiety. New teacher evaluation models are contributing to the strain many staff are experiencing, especially now that some evaluation systems are exploring the possibility of connecting student achievement data with employment decisions (e.g., tenure, salary).

Teachers need strategies that will help them meet these new expectations without creating additional burdens. School improvement strategies themselves cannot be complex and unmanageable, or teachers will become more overwhelmed. One of the benefits of Kagan Structures is how easy they are to implement. *Classroom teachers—given the proper training and coaching—can implement structures across grade levels and subject areas with relative ease.* Kagan Professional Development consistently receives feedback from educators in the field about the simplicity of the structures. In an age when anxiety levels have been heightened, this is a welcome benefit for educators.

4 Kagan Structures are administrator friendly.

Kagan Structures are not only teacher friendly but also administrator friendly. Building principals are expected to ensure that all teachers are satisfying the expectations defined in the appraisal process. Observing various aspects of the rubrics can be difficult—if not impossible—in traditional classrooms. While the creators of these teacher evaluation models have endeavored to make the rubrics as objective as possible, vagueness still exists when the rubrics are applied in traditional settings.

For example, consider the following question, one that is embedded in nearly every teacher evaluation model: Are all children engaged? How does an administrator make an accurate determination of

student engagement in a traditional teacher's classroom? How about a teacher who uses group work (e.g., activities lacking cooperative learning principles)—is it any easier? At best, administrators are speculating when they form an opinion about much of what is observed.

Kagan Structures, however, make many observations far easier for administrators because student behavior is more overt. *By making all students active in the classroom, many of the rubric components are more easily observed.* There is no guess work involved, for example, in deciding if students are engaged. A principal can use his senses (e.g., watch the students perform and/or listen to their conversations) to determine if all students are truly engaged. The same can be said for many other features of the rubrics. As a result, the appraisal process becomes easier for building administrators. This, in turn, leads to more effective feedback to teachers, which makes the appraisal process more accurate and beneficial.

5 Kagan Structures ensure engagement.

Research has confirmed what experience taught educators long ago—students who are active with content and with each other learn more than those who remain passive. All appraisal models value student engagement. Consider the examples below.

Charlotte Danielson: The Framework for Teaching
Component 3c: Engaging Students in Learning
All students are cognitively engaged in the activities and assignments in their exploration of content. (Distinguished Level).

Robert Marzano: The Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model
Design Question #5: What will I do to engage students?
The teacher scans the room making note of when students are not engaged and takes overt action.

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Student engagement is certainly valued; however, the problem with most teacher appraisal systems is that the definition of "student engagement" does not distinguish between group work and cooperative learning. To the untrained eye, the two strategies look remarkably similar at times. However, from a pedagogical standpoint, the two teaching methods are radically different and produce markedly different results.

A lack of differentiation between group work and cooperative learning in an appraisal model is problematic. *If a faulty definition of "student engagement" is used, it becomes possible to have activity in a classroom but still have low levels of engagement for many students.* In fact, group work—if allowed to exist on a widespread basis—can actually be counterproductive to improving student achievement. If activities are not structured properly, some students will do the work for others, and other students will be content to allow it to happen. When that occurs, major barriers to learning exist because those students who need to be the most engaged with the content are passive in the classroom.

Kagan Structures do not allow this to occur. The **PIES** principles are embedded in each structure. As a result, teachers can be assured that ALL students are truly engaged. No conjecture is involved. Teachers know, for example, that the structures will have Individual Accountability and Equal Participation for all students. Other instructional strategies may have activity in the classroom, but few—if any—can guarantee that ALL students are genuinely engaged with the content. *Kagan Structures create a common definition of "student engagement" for all educators, and they ensure that ALL—not a few or not some—students are truly engaged.*

Final Thoughts

There are certainly other connections that can be made between these teaching models and Kagan. However, the five connections noted herein demonstrate that Kagan Structures are not strategies that exist apart from the work being done with teacher appraisal processes; rather, use of Kagan Structures will enable educators to more effectively meet the expectations outlined in evaluation rubrics. If we hope to create a profession of highly qualified educators, we must embrace changes in instructional practices. Kagan has a long and proud history of helping schools across the country boost academic gains and close the achievement gap. It is our hope that we can establish a long-term relationship with your organization as you strive to improve the achievement of ALL children. If you would like to visit more about the information contained in this document, please feel free to contact either of the educators listed below.

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