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Episode #96

Testing Your Hunches About Teacher Performance



Our Essential Question

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How can we draw sound conclusions about each teacher's performance, while helping them improve between now and the end of the school year?

Now Is The Time

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We've had plenty of opportunity to form an opinion of each teacher's practice by this point in the year.

Hunches Aren't Enough

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Our opinions can be a good starting point,
but they can't be the basis for our final
teacher evaluations.

We need to develop *working hypotheses*
for each teacher.

No Putting It Off

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The longer we delay *forming* and *interrogating* detailed opinions, the more difficult it will be to finish teacher evaluations and make a difference in teacher practice this year.

Hunches

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“I don’t think she’s putting
enough effort into planning.”

Hunches

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“I think he’s losing the students, and doesn’t do enough formative assessment to know when it’s happening.”

Hunches

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“I think she’s getting kids to be on their best behavior for formal observations, but really struggling with classroom management the rest of the time.”

The Myth of Judgment

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“I only rate teachers after all the
evidence is in.”



The Myth of Judgment

“I only rate teachers after all the evidence is in.”

- No you don't—we're constantly updating our mental assessments of our staff
- The earlier you articulate your hunches, the better you can validate and act on them

Develop Working Hypotheses

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We don't need to *withhold* judgment
until the very end of the year.

We need to *update* our judgments based
on new evidence.

Informal Evidence

Never say:

“This is non-evaluative.”

Everything you are aware of—regardless of the source—shapes your judgment...

...but not all information is equally trustworthy.

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Using Working Hypotheses



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Using Working Hypotheses

1. Articulate a judgment
2. Interrogate that judgment

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Overall Hunches

- Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory
- “Buckets” of similar teachers
- Areas of needed whole-staff PD

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The “Working Hypothesis” Approach

- In a given domain, teachers fall into certain “buckets” or categories that you mentally lump together:
 - Classroom Management: Warm, Loose, Strict, Student-Directed
 - Instructional Skill: Growing, Skilled, PD Leader
 - Reflective Practice: Self-directed, Collaborative, Introspective
- Decide which domains you’ll address
- Decide on initial “buckets” or “types” within each domain
- Re-use your writing when making the same claim about multiple teachers

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Articulate & Interrogate



Informal Evidence → Hypothesis → Formal Evidence → CEIJ

Claim

Evidence

Interpretation

Judgment

CEIJ for Improvement Plans

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Episode #92

Developing Employee
Improvement Plans

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Construct a CEIJ Argument

- **Claim**—A summary statement describing the teacher's typical practice in a given area. Key phrase: *"Is characterized by..."*
- **Evidence**—Multiple, specific, documented incidents and instances that support the claim. Key phrase: *"For example, on ___/___/___..."*
- **Interpretation**—A clear articulation of the consequences of the teacher's typical practice, e.g. on student learning, school culture, or other relevant outcomes. Key phrase: *"As a result..."*
- **Judgment**—The final rating of teacher's overall practice in specific area, using language and scale of evaluation framework. Key phrase: *"Therefore, ___'s practice in domain ___ is best described as Level ___."*

The Claim



- Is this just one isolated incident? Chance? One bad day? One exceptionally well-planned lesson?
- Or is this *typical* of the teacher's practice?

The Evidence



- Do I have multiple pieces of evidence to back my claim?
- If some evidence is informal (or hearsay), do I have firsthand evidence that supports or refutes it?

The Interpretation

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- Am I being arbitrary, or does this really matter?
- Is this a pet peeve of mine? Can the teacher be successful *without* doing what I think is best?
- What are the consequences for student learning? Do they flow directly from the teacher's practice?

The Judgment



- Specific rating on specific criteria
- If I'm not sure, now I know where I need more evidence
- If I don't gather more evidence, the default will be "satisfactory"

Takeaways

- Don't defer judgment until the end of the year
- Be honest with yourself about your current assessments of teacher practice—develop *working hypotheses*
- Articulate and interrogate your working hypotheses with CEIJ:
 - Claim
 - Evidence
 - Interpretation
 - Judgment
- Keep updating your working hypotheses as you gather new evidence
- Start using the Evaluation Organizer Spreadsheet

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