2012 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: EVALUATING AND SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESS OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

The 2012 Educator Roundtable Session on educator evaluation, led by Gregory Mullenholtz, a 2011 Alumni Washington Fellow from Montgomery County Public Schools in Rockville, MD, attracted more than one hundred participants. Table discussions among participants addressed three questions: 1) what's working now, 2) what is the most urgent next step for the U.S. Department of Education, and 3) what educators can do now to advance teacher and principal evaluation. Following the table discussions, Mr. Mullenholtz invited volunteers to summarize the conversations at their tables.

On practices in current use that are effective, participants had a great deal to say about evaluation models, school culture, PLCs, and leadership, in addition to data use and student-centered teaching. Participants also had suggestions for the U.S. Department of Education regarding evaluation, funding, teacher preparation, help for schools in implementing Common Core, and better public relations for the teaching profession. In discussing what teacher and principal leaders can do now to advance the education profession, participants identified evaluation ideas, the continued modeling of good practices, continued learning, and never losing the "passion" for educating.

What's Working: Current Evaluation Practices
Evaluation garnered the greatest number of responses to "what's working." Participants noted advances in establishing and improving evaluation systems and cited examples in Colorado and Kentucky in particular. Race to the Top finalists were credited with stimulating the development of evaluation systems. In discussing the elements of a good evaluation system, several participants described using the work of Charlotte Danielson[1]. Participants also urged greater professional development in evaluation for administrators. Sample participant comments:

- *Multiple, shorter observations rather than 1-2 formal observations.*
- *Informal walk-throughs reveal patterns [that] become catalysts for conversations.*
- *Moving from checklist to reflection.*
- *More self-evaluation – teacher performance rubric.*
- *More accountability – helps us focus on improvement for underrepresented populations.*
- *Make sure to let teachers know what is noticed as a success in the classroom.*
- *Unsatisfactory teachers are being identified through observation and given assistance.*

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[1] http://www.danielsongroup.org/Default.aspx

- *Teacher-dominated discussion in the evaluation process.*
- *Conversation with the teacher as part of the document: What are the teacher's concerns and what are his/her needs?*
- *Quality, in-depth discussions between teacher and evaluator following formal observations.*
- *Collaborative goal setting by principal and teacher (evaluation); tying these efforts to individual professional growth plans.*
- *Change in mindset from "proficiency to growth."*
- *[there is a] disconnect between "teaching to the test" to reach evaluation and "teaching to the whole child."*

One participant laid out the essential elements of effective evaluation:
- *Periodic observations and walkthroughs;*
- *Formal and informal feedback;*
- *Peer evaluation and observations;*
- *Goal-setting that impacts methodology (teacher-driven but administration-influenced);*
- *Evaluating all staff members (instructional and non-instructional) on similar criteria;*
- *Voice of all stakeholders – students and parents;*
- *Intervention plans (allowing 6-8 weeks to measure progress);*
- *Collaboration among teachers; and*
- *Mission alignment.*

What's Working: School Culture

"Collaborative" was the byword for successful school cultures, mentioned most often in participants' remarks. Collaboration was raised in connection with regularly (daily, weekly) opportunities, teacher collaboration, and a collaboration model that "respects teachers' time and need to work together" via early-release and late-start scheduling. Other aspects of school culture that are working include:

- *Culture of faculty competition that is "healthy competition" and is supportive.*
- *Making teachers feel valued.*
- *Not creating a punitive culture.*
- *Trust and respect for teachers with high expectations.*
- *Communication! Conversations!*
- *More frequent conversations about teaching.*

What's Working: School Leadership

Participants' comments on leadership addressed both leadership teams and effective principal leadership.

- *Leadership Councils that are elected—teachers with administrators and one parent to improve communication.*
- *Distributed leadership—teachers as leaders.*
- *Teams given authority and relevance.*
- *A great principal who is supportive and stays "in the trenches."*
- *Principals as educational leaders and support to faculty.*

What's Working: Focus on Student Learning

- *Use of core standards as focus for student learning.*
- *Students' hands-on learning—teacher as facilitator.*
- *Blooms Taxonomy Accountability—new level of teaching.*

- *Empowering teachers to respond to students' needs.*

What's Working: Peer Learning
Professional learning communities received many mentions; participants also identified peer coaching and peer observations as part of what's working in National Blue Ribbon Schools.

What's Working: Data, Response to Intervention, and Mentoring
Smaller numbers of participants noted data analysis done by teams for the whole school and technology for recording data, Response to Intervention to address problems early, and mentoring of new staff as effective practices.

U.S.D.E. Steps: Evaluation
Discussion about a federal role in evaluation systems included concerns about validity and objectivity, alternative measures, and time constraints. One participant called for a national curriculum and national assessment based on the Common Core standards. Other comments include:
- *40% student growth measures are too high without considering variables that are not under the teachers' control (e.g., home life, previous educational experiences of students).*
- *Make sure evaluation tools can be used effectively in the building to improve teaching.*
- *Need evaluation process to be a lead into PLCs and professional development.*
- *Shift student performance measures away from only standardized testing.*
- *Better measures of student growth.*
- *[Make the] PARCC Assessment national.*
- *Reconsider Tennessee TEAM system.*
- *Concerns about how to do continual effective assessment & support with time constraints and other principal responsibilities.*

U.S.D.E. Steps: Funding
As one participant noted, "we don't believe funding is the end-all to a quality education (people are), money is essential to show value." Other comments:
- *Funding is the most urgent overall need.*
- *Funds are sometimes tied to too-specific criteria.*
- *Help fund innovation among schools.*
- *Higher starting pay.*
- *Address inequity in state-by-state funding.*

U.S.D.E. Steps: Teacher Preparation and Support
In addition to expressing a wish for "common language and shared practices," participants suggested national requirements for teacher preparation and relating teacher preparation to 21st century teaching.

U.S.D.E. Steps: Public Relations
Participants sought further professional recognition for teachers and more public relations about the "legitimacy" of the teaching profession.

What Education Leaders Can Do Now: Changing Evaluation Practices
In addition to notions such as peer observation and collaborative walk-throughs mentioned under "what's working," participants also described changing evaluation protocols. Sample comments:
- *Collaborative walkthroughs.*
- *Immediate specific feedback.*
- *Focus on accountability beyond standardized tests.*

What Education Leaders Can Do Now: Strengthen Good Practices
- *Promote communication and healthy competition*
- *Model good practice*
- *Positively reinforce good practices*
- *Strong/singular vision of what good teaching is!*
- *Work on collaboration and building trust*
- *Have meaningful dialogue on best practices*
- *Celebrate success*

What Education Leaders Can Do Now: Support Collegial Learning
- *Train/mentor new teachers.*
- *PLCs .*
- *Constant collegial learning.*
- *Encourage/nurture teams of teachers.*
- *Mentors for 1st year teachers with implementation of curriculum and standards.*
- *Support teachers in teaching less and collaborating and planning more to <u>enable better teaching and improved student achievement.</u>*

What Education Leaders Can Do Now: Support Student Learning
- *Ensure that students are ready for career/college.*
- *Have resources to provide what kids/students need.*
- *Give tools/technology to support student learning and engagement.*
- *Advocate for collaboration to support student learning.*