

Strategy Du Jour

Beancounters were an inspiration to watch. The energy it took to not only *know*, unconditionally, that the teachers they had been hired to keep an eye on were *bad*, but to innovatively construct brand new ways of proving it?

Well, that was something to see.

Especially when the particular reforms which an evaluator endorsed had been founded upon constantly varying and persistently re-ordered policies, protocols and interventions; this made the very act of keeping up with the expectations associated to a *Strategy Du Jour* an astonishing feat in and of itself.

As the years of a statistical accountability advanced, an aggressively garnered test score evidence gave hard-hitting reformers powerful ammunition. Pointing to test scores as the only evidence required for the instigation of additionally invasive change, a sudden barrage of reforms repeatedly and uncompromisingly hit politically weakest buildings.

Almost none, however?

Was long-term, big-picture successful.

Anxious to draw attention away from the disappointing results produced by a weakly regulated – yet doggedly insistent – innovation, district hires were quick to grasp their place in the game. Rapidly they taught themselves in how to shift the blame away from reform, and allow it to slide, alternately and slickly, onto the backs of teachers. Anticipating a reception of ancillary funding, district financiers turned a blind eye to the increasing probability that their ruthlessly mandated programs were at fault. Conversely, whenever the phenomenally expensive (if poorly managed and minimally planned) innovations foundered, hinting broadly at a soon to come out-and-out failure:

Well, quite logically?

Additional beancounters were hired.

And sent out to locate, isolate, and aggressively evaluate.

Oh, no, not the problematic, and even egregiously failing, innovative programs; no, no, the *clearly bad teachers*. Those educators who, so suddenly and belligerently, had been mandated to put the arbitrarily instigated innovations into practice.

Duh.

Awkwardly; well, as it turned out?

The intentional accrual of that particular type of evidence required to most assertively identify modern-day-untenable teaching practices was a slow and frustratingly complicated process. Fortunately, innovative experts quickly ascertained that this complex and essentially interactive procedure could, in the fast pace of modern days, be greatly simplified through the concrete construction of – and ensuing devotion to – an immovable checklist of visually friendly Classroom Expectations. Efficiently streamlined for use in days of instantaneous, no-waiting solutions, a professional teacher evaluation soon operated smoothly and economically.

Like this:

You walked into a room.

You looked around.

Ignoring any actual instructional practices, methodically you consulted your carefully developed *good* teacher checklist. Either the thing you were looking for was there, and clearly visible?

Or it wasn't.

Check, check, check.

Really, evaluating educators was so darned simple!

No need, in days committed to the immediate magic of silver bullets, to complicate a multifaceted, experienced-based understanding of pedagogy by actually watching, and subsequently analyzing, any genuinely effective instructional practices; no need to notice, feel an interest in (or acceptance for) alternate methodologies. That checklist you had been handed? That list of absolutely essential classroom effects which you now carried; those reform-friendly expectations created, of course, by *experts*? Oh, surely this official checklist supplied any information which a person might need in order to have a true test-score-inspired perception of what really mattered.

And – what made this particular checklist *really* cool?

Was the fact that you could hand it out to, well, *anyone*.

Principals, area administrators, quadrant supervisors, coaches, facilitators, specialists, curriculum writers, visiting big-wigs – shoot, even that lady who wandered in, one day, looking for her grandson. Anyone at all, by carrying around and faithfully referring to this district-endorsed (and thus unquestionably legitimate) checklist could see *with an immediate clarity* the genuine value of any classroom.

And, even more tellingly?

Any educator.