

Artifacts vs.

PRINCIPAL EVALUATION

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Evidence

In the new evaluation system, principals must increasingly use evidence—not artifacts—to prove competency.

The new principal evaluation system has the potential of improving education and encouraging reflective practice.

However, it will require more time and effort on the part of school administrators to prove competency.

Principals will now be rated on a four-tiered scale: Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient or Distinguished. To earn ratings higher than Basic, principals must present artifacts as evidence of their aptitude. The question becomes, what constitutes an artifact of evidence that is significant enough to increase their ratings?

A more poignant question was posed during a meeting of elementary principals convened by AWSP in October. The question centered on the notion that the terms “artifact” and “evidence” may not be synonymous. Is an artifact itself evidence of improved practice or do the two terms function independently of each other? An artifact is something you create, do or gather, (PowerPoint, notes from a book study, parent newsletter, baseline data), but an artifact in and of itself does not show evidence of impact. The outcome of the artifact would be considered the evidence.

For example, a principal may collect

baseline data which indicates that few of the teachers in her building are posting and referencing instructional targets throughout their lessons. The principal collaborates with teachers and explains the importance of posting and referencing targets, and demonstrates how to do so with the clear expectation that teachers will implement the practice.

During the principal’s subsequent classroom visits, the increase in posting and referencing

of instructional targets should be evident. If so, the increase of the practice serves as the evidence.

Conversely, in some cases, the artifact is indeed the evidence. Let’s say the intended goal is to improve communication between school and home. Demonstrating an increase in communication (flyers, email messages, etc.) would serve as both the artifact and evidence of an improved practice.

However, if the purpose was to increase parent participation, then the communication would be considered an artifact to inform parents of upcoming events but would not

serve as evidence of impact. Improved attendance counts from previous to current parent events, as a result of the new communications (artifacts), is the evidence in this situation.

Determining if an artifact can be used as evidence depends on which evaluation criterion is being addressed and how the information may be applied

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to signify growth. It is important to reiterate that in most instances it will be the evidence, not the artifacts themselves that will be used to substantiate an advance in practice or to prove proficiency in a specific goal area.

As we begin to implement the new evaluation system, administrators must understand the requirements needed to demonstrate progress along the continuum. Clarity regarding the differences between an artifact and evidence and how they might be used to substantiate principals’ work will prove to be an important insight as we move forward. ■