

Ultimate Guide to Teacher Supervision, Coaching & Evaluation

FEATURING

3 'BIG IDEAS' TO HELP SCHOOL LEADERS
BUILD TEACHER CONFIDENCE & IMPROVE
STUDENT OUTCOMES



We're just going to come out and say it: teaching is hard.

That statement would be true in any case. Though some would argue that the difficulty score has gone up in recent years. The fallout from a years-long pandemic – widening academic gaps, historic teacher turnover, student mental health and discipline issues, etc. – resulting in an objectively tougher-than-ever work environment.

The research bears this out.

A recent [Rand Corporation](#) survey found that 73% of teachers deal with job-related stress compared to just 35% from other industries on average. When you ask school principals, it's even worse. Eight-five percent of site-based leaders say their jobs are stressful.

Percentage of teachers who deal with job-related stress vs. other industries. Source: [Rand Corporation](#), 2022



So, how do we reduce job-related stress, while creating space for teachers, principals and other school and classroom leaders to face down mounting challenges and help more students reach and exceed their academic potential?

There is no such thing as a panacea. But there are a number of strategies and ideas that can help. Chief among them, says former Boston principal, author, coach and researcher Kim Marshall: a stronger system for teacher supervision, coaching & evaluation.

“From the teacher’s point of view, it’s pretty nervous-making to have one or two chances a year to prove yourself,” says Marshall. “Imagine the principal or assistant principal comes in for one of these formal evaluations, where they sit at the back of the room with a laptop and take detailed notes, then score you on a rubric or something.” He pauses. Then says, “The current system is just ridiculous.”

Rather than do teacher evaluations in bunches once or twice a year, Marshall advocates for a system of shorter, frequent, face-to-face “mini-observations,” where feedback is delivered in enough time for teachers to change course and improve outcomes.



Building 'a better mousetrap'



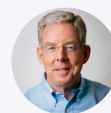
900 Average number of **lessons** taught, per year, **per teacher.**

 = 10 lessons

That's a lot of ground to cover.

"By spreading through the year, through the day and through the week about 10 visits a year, maybe 10 or 15 minutes, scattered through different parts of the week, different subjects that teachers teach, different groups they teach. Then, each time, having a face-to-face conversation with the teacher, ideally in their classroom when the kids aren't there, you can actually get a really accurate sample of teaching in your school," posits Marshall.

"Traditional teacher evaluations aren't effective when it comes to building rapport, building trust and improving teaching and learning. The process is overly formal and official and bureaucratic – that just creates more stress."



Kim Marshall,
former Boston
principal & founder,
Marshall Memo

If you're a principal, instructional coach or administrator

and you're interested in ways to support teachers through more effective supervision, coaching & evaluation, this guide features research and practical ideas from the likes of Marshall and other experts that you can use to start shifting your mindset (and established practices) today.

READ-ON TO CONSIDER

- 1 The time-saving benefits of 'mini-teacher observations'
- 2 Getting teachers and staff to embrace a new system
- 3 Sharing feedback & implementing changes on the fly

Ready to get started? Let's get into it.

1 The time-saving benefits of 'mini-teacher observations'

It's a well-known fact: teacher efficacy is closely tied to student achievement.

In a recent report for [Frontline Education](#), educator Sheila B. Robinson, Ed.D., references the work of famed education researcher John Hattie. It was Hattie's meta-analysis of student learning influences that put quality teaching at the top of the heap relative to student achievement.

But teacher efficacy isn't a given. Like any licensed profession, it requires continuous learning, attention to data and a rigorous study and application of evolving concepts.

That's where a strong system for teacher supervision, coaching and evaluation comes in. Unfortunately, while most educators are receiving some type of on-the-job feedback, many say they aren't getting enough good information to support positive development and initiate change.

Research from [Scholastic](#) suggests 79% of teachers receive at least one formal evaluation a year. The same report says that while a majority of teachers (59%) are satisfied with the frequency of their evaluations, many would prefer to be evaluated more.

What teachers say about the current state of evaluations



- Among teachers who are evaluated once a year, **21% indicate they should be evaluated more often.**
- Among teachers who are evaluated once every few years, **38% indicate they should be evaluated more often.**
- Among the very few teachers who are not evaluated at all (1%), **almost all (93%) say they ought to be evaluated.**

Source: [Scholastic](#), 2014

"It is easy to identify a set of common challenges with teacher evaluation systems. They're perennially rife with controversy, pitting administrators and teachers' unions against each other amid various local and federal political pressures endemic to public education."

Source: Sheila B. Robinson, Ed.D., [Frontline Education](#)

1 The time-saving benefits of 'mini-teacher observations' (cont'd)

An alternative to traditional teacher observations

One of the reasons that more evaluations don't get done is because they take time, which educators have little of. As a result, administrators end up doing the work in bunches, often at the end of the year.

What Marshall and others advocate for is an alternative system, or what Marshall calls "mini teacher observations," in which administrators meet with teachers face-to-face for shorter periods of time several times during the year.

5 keys to mini teacher observations

In-person	Must be face-to-face
Unannounced	No 'dog-and-pony' shows!
In-class	Conducted 'on the teacher's turf'
Brief write up	150 words, sent electronically
Formal	Goes in teacher's file, scored against a rubric

Source: Rethinking Teacher Supervision, Coaching & Evaluation, Marshall (RocketPD), 2024.



In terms of cadence, Marshall suggests, if you have 25 teachers to supervise, that you do 10 mini-observations throughout the year, or about one per month, per teacher. Each visit lasts 10-15 minutes, with perhaps an equal amount of time devoted to a short write-up, done electronically, to put into the teacher's file. Contrast that with the four to six hours it takes an administrator to do a traditional evaluation and the time-savings becomes obvious, says Marshall. "The visit to the classroom is short. The conversation is short. And the brief writeup is short. So you really can fit a couple of these little cycles into even a very busy day as a principal."



2 Getting teachers and staff to embrace a new system

No matter how efficient the mini-observation process may seem on its face, getting teachers and staff to buy into a new way of thinking – in this case, doing – isn't always easy.

Existing concerns

The current teacher evaluation system receives its fair share of criticism.

Courtesy of [Frontline Education](#):

Validity.

A principal can't glean much from one period a year.

Trust and privacy.

Many systems lack a clear paper trail.

Equity.

One set of metrics can't work for everybody.

Time.

There is only so much of it in a day, a month, a year.

These and other challenges have fueled a set of preconceived notions about the teacher evaluation process.

"Initially teachers are pretty skeptical of this," admits Marshall about the mini-observation system. After all, what can you expect to see in 10 minutes? "But once people have watched a short video of a classroom, they have this aha moment," he says. "My goodness. You see so much in 10 minutes."

If you talk immediately afterward and the teacher provides the right context – be it a lesson on the civil war, or maybe a student who has been through a traumatic experience – "it widens the principal's window to really have an accurate sense of what is going on in the classroom."

"It's counterintuitive at first, but mini-observations, as I call them, are actually a real winner in terms of creating an ongoing conversation about teaching and learning that lowers the stress level and creates a level of sort of authenticity," adds Marshall. "You can actually work on improving teaching this way and also appreciating from the teacher's point of view, what they're doing and the hard work that they're putting in."

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Kim Marshall



Because the observations happen several times a year...

1. Principals are able to glean a wider sampling of what's happening in the classroom.
2. Trust is built through face-to-face meetings and more practical feedback.
3. Equity is addressed through the use of a rubric (which we cover in the next section).
4. Time is made more efficient by portioning bite-sized evaluations during the year.

3 Sharing feedback & implementing change on the fly

Speaking of feedback – feedback, or lack thereof, is perhaps the biggest detriment to the traditional teacher evaluation system.

When evaluations get stacked, often toward the end of the school year – say, in May – it makes it difficult for teachers to effectively put ideas into play. An added benefit of multiple observations throughout the year: it allows principals or other administrators to focus on just one coaching point.

“Remember, you’re going to get 10 at bats,” says Marshall. This allows you to narrow your focus, so that teachers can hopefully take a single idea, or concept, and take it for a spin in the classroom with their students.

Another criticism of traditional teacher evaluation systems? Scoring.

As reported by Frontline and others, it’s not unusual for teachers to feel like their evaluations were scored unfairly, especially when those evaluations are heavily anchored in metrics like standardized test scores.

New teachers shouldn’t be graded on the same scale as veteran teachers. Likewise teachers in different disciplines may require a different set of indicators.

This is where rubrics have come into fashion. There are a number of rubrics currently at play in schools. Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching, from the Danielson Group, is perhaps the first and most well-known of these. It initially broke teaching into 76 components, or actions, over four levels of performance and was later slimmed to a more manageable 22 components. Robert Marzano, of Marzano Resources, features a rubric with slightly fewer components. Marshall has also developed his own rubric, the six components of which are broken out in the sidebar on this page.

6 Components of Marshall’s Teacher Evaluation Rubric

Source: Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubric, 2014, New York State Education Department

1. Planning & Preparation for Learning
2. Classroom Management
3. Execution of Teaching
4. Checking for Understanding
5. Parent & Community Involvement
6. Professional Responsibilities



The key, at least with mini-observations, is that the inputs for these and other rubrics are collected over a series of multiple touch points throughout the year.

“So you have many different windows into the teacher’s world and you get a fair assessment of those 900 lessons, along with the conversations and the team meetings and so forth,” says Marshall. “Then you sit down at the end of the year with the rubric and you have a meeting with the teacher. They score themselves, using a four, three, two, one scale. You score them and you come together and you compare and you discuss any disagreements.”

Ready to Rethink Teacher Supervision, Coaching & Evaluation in your schools? Start here.

Catch Kim Marshall on The RocketPD Podcast

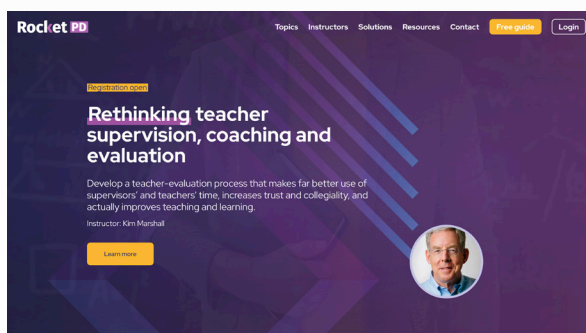
Catch Corey Murray's interview with Kim Marshall on The RocketPD Podcast. Listen to the full episode: [Rethinking Teacher Supervision, Coaching & Evaluation](#). **Subscribe to RocketPD on YouTube, or download The RocketPD Podcast wherever your favorite pods are found!**



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