Teacher Evaluation Using the Danielson Framework

7. Using Evaluation Data to Set Professional Development Goals

A. Using Evaluation Data to Set Professional Development Goals

After the Evaluation – Steps in Self Directed Professional Inquiry

CHARLOTTE DANIELSON: A really important part of the evaluation system for experienced, tenured teachers is what I call “self-directed inquiry.” And it is undertaken in those years in which a teacher is not having a formal evaluation of their practice, which generally happens every, say, three years, where you do the observations and you look at artifacts and so on. But then the question is if that’s really not necessary to do for experienced teachers every year. Which I believe it’s not. Then, what should happen in the other years? Now, it’s important not to call them off-years but other years. Because what they do in those other years is important work, and it’s important to their practice, and I call it “self-directed professional inquiry.”

And it has a number of different steps to it. People do this in slightly different ways, but let me describe the way I see it, sort of in general. It starts off with a teacher establishing a professional goal. Maybe more than one, actually, but let’s just keep it simple here for a moment, a goal. This goal is based on some self-assessment. It might be based on the evaluation the previous year, might be an outgrowth of that. So there’s some assessment that goes on but it’s strongest if it’s based on a teacher’s own self-assessment. Because then it reflects a need they feel. So okay, they set a goal or maybe several, and we’ll talk more about that in a moment. Then, they prepare a plan.

How are they gonna address this goal? And it can be simple. And let’s imagine for a moment that I want to learn how to do cooperative learning. I never did. My plan might be pretty simple. It might be simply that I read a book on this or an article, that I go to a workshop or take a course, that I go observe a colleague, that I invite a colleague or, in fact, even maybe my supervisor in to watch what I’m doing. I’ve taught my kids some things about roles in a group and so on. I might do a student survey towards the end of this effort to get their perceptions on this type of group work, for example that is. It’s a fairly simple plan, doesn’t have to be elaborate.

But it should be specified because then I need to keep a log of what I actually do in addressing this goal. Like did I take a course? What was it? Where was it? What did I learn from it? Or what book did I read? Whose class did I observe? What did I learn from that that I can use? What did I learn from my colleague coming and visiting and so on? So it’s a log that not only ticks off what I did, but it also offers me an opportunity to reflect on what I learned from each of those things. And then, if there’s an opportunity for it, I think it’s good to have an interim conference with an evaluator or a supervisor or possibly even a colleague. If this self-directed inquiry is done within the context of a
professional learning community, then it could be that we do that we do whole process with one another. But it’s still very real and it’s part of the evaluation system because it’s important that this be done well and it not just be a blow-off and a sort of, “This is my off year. I’m not doing anything.” No. It’s important that it be meaningful work for the teacher. So hopefully, we have an interim conference, and we sort of do a progress report, and what have I done so far and how’s it going, and so on. And if possible, the work that I do on this goal I do actually in a study group.

I mean, if there’s several of us working on, let’s say cooperative learning, that we actually meet together periodically and support one another. Or if we’re working on similar things, that is, there’s a lot of cross-fertilization that happens when teachers meet together and discuss what they’re doing and explore options with one another and so on. And then towards the end of the school year, I then have a reflection and closure conference with whomever, usually the evaluator but possibly a supervisor or colleague, in which I answer some specific questions. And they are things like: To what extent did you achieve your goal?

Of the activities that you had outlined in your plan, which ones of them turned out to be useful and which ones were a waste of time and why? What did you learn from your colleagues related to this goal? And are you finished with this or is this something you’d like to continue working on? Simple questions really but they invite a teacher to take a step back and look at the whole thing. Now, it’s important to appreciate that, as a teacher, I’m not going to be evaluated on whether I achieve my goals, and that seems a bit odd until you think about it for just a minute. Because if I’m gonna be evaluated on whether I achieve my goal, guess what kind of goal I’m gonna set. I’m gonna set one I know I can achieve.

It’s gonna be a low-level goal. I might set one I already have achieved and I just didn’t tell you. But, no. I mean, you don’t want to have anything in the structure of it that is going to depress – You want people to stretch, and so therefore, it’s not formally evaluated.

**Tips for Setting Professional Goals**

CHARLOTTE DANIELSON: We’re gonna talk for a moment about goals. Not all goals are created equal. And in fact I have seen a lot of teachers’ professional growth plans, and what they’ve written down for goals are really not even goals. And I’ve had the feeling that the culture surrounding it hasn’t been a professional culture. I mean, I get the feeling that they, and I’ve actually heard some teachers say this. Like they do this every year and they say, “Well, what am I gonna write down this year?” Like what am I gonna write down. Not what do I want to learn? Right? So that already gives you a clue that they’re not thinking about this as a professional activity for them. Okay, so what makes for a good goal? There are some school districts where they specify that a goal should be related to student learning. And I’d like to push back just a little bit on that.
Of course, everything we do in schools and in our teaching is about student learning, and so once you say that, it doesn’t actually tell you very much to say that a goal should be about student learning because everything is.

But sometimes teachers feel that they have to have a goal such as, “30% of my kids or 60% or 80% will achieve at a certain level in math.” Or, “I’m gonna improve my math scores by X amount.” Or reading or whatever. And I don’t – That’s sort of a goal, except that by itself doesn’t tell me what I should do differently as the teacher. What is required and needed I think for this, a self-directed inquiry, is a goal that represents my learning. So it could be that my math scores will improve if I become more skilled at teaching math problem-solving. But that becomes then my goal. It has to do with my learning. I want to be better at teaching math problem-solving, and as a result of that, I hope that the math scores of my students will improve.

So in my view, one of the important characteristics of a good goal is that it’s about the teacher’s own learning. That’s a place to start. Now, let’s talk for a second about how many goals. In a self-directed inquiry, I think it should be either two or three and never more and maybe only one. One should be about one’s own professional learning and how to improve that practice so that it will result in improved student learning. So like teaching problem-solving would be an example of that. Another one might have to do with something our team is working on, if there is such a thing. So we’re all learning how to, I don’t know, teach expository writing. We’re implementing a new program, say, and a new approach.

And so we’re working on that together, and my part of that is to do whatever. A third type of goal might have to do with a school or district initiative that we all have to do, if it’s appropriate. So there might be a school or district initiative about teaching writing across the curriculum, and if I teach science that might be something that I should pay attention to because I’m not really doing that. But it could be that I’m a science teacher, and I already do encourage my students to do a lot of writing, and I’ve already incorporated writing into my curriculum. And so because that’s not new learning for me, that doesn’t have to be a goal for me. I just have to document that that’s what I’m doing already. And so the selecting of goals has to be based on self-assessment. What do I need to do to improve my practice so my kids will learn better? And it might want to reflect either school or district initiatives or team initiatives, if those are appropriate.

**Observe A Professional Learning Community Goal Setting Discussion in Action**

SUSAN PARSBACKER: Looking at goals for next year and really I want to get you all thinking on what about really incorporating teacher self-reflection. As we look at our new evaluation and the rubric and that expectation as a higher achieving students,
teachers really need to self-reflect on the strategies that they’re doing in order to become more highly effective teachers. With that in mind, if our focus is teacher self-reflection.

DEBBIE SCIBILIA: Okay, well I really think that that’s an excellent focus because with the national board, teachers who get national board have to do that. And I always wondered why other teachers couldn’t have that same help and self-reflection. So I think that would be great to get like a professional development at the school with teachers self-reflecting. Of course, keeping the rigor and relevance and the differentiated instruction, we’re gonna keep moving forward on that. But imagine if the teachers would then self-reflect on how they’re doing that.

SUSAN PARSBACKER: And how effective that less was, and are all the children engaged? And again, when we’re looking at the rubric, that might even be really getting the teachers to really look at themselves. But Jen, you’re national board, right? How do you think that process of self-reflection and really using that as a way to become a more highly effective teacher, how do you think that’d be best brought into our school?

JENNIFER WHALEN: I think that it’s a difficult process. You have to be completely and entirely honest with yourself as an educator. I think that it would be really important to host some training or do a faculty book study or have some of that information at our school, available to our teachers to make sure that they understand what self-reflecting is. Because it doesn’t only include self-reflecting on curriculum and content and how you’re getting your information across to your students, but also how am I communicating with my parents? Are they actively involved in my classroom? What are other different ways I can increase my own reflection on student learning? Am I analyzing correctly? I mean, it’s difficult. There’s a lot of standards and sub standards that you have to look at for yourself as a person in order to be able to do that. I mean, we’re used to getting very constructive feedback, as a faculty, from each other, which always helps.

SUSAN PARSBACKER: And using that same idea, I’m thinking getting someone to model for the teachers who’s more or less – We’ve talked about their critical friend. To model how to self-reflect and those kinds of questions that you need to ask yourself.

JENNIFER WHALEN: Yeah, because when you begin to reflect on your own teaching, you will start changing and modifying what you’re doing. And so it does affect your students. It moves them forward because they’ll start to dig deeper as you start to dig deeper into what you’re doing with them in the classroom.

DEBBIE SCIBILIA: And also, what I’m thinking is, if you’re modeling for your students and you’re letting them know this is a process you’re going through yourself, how powerful is that that you’re showing your students that I make mistakes, too, and I learn from them.
SUSAN PARSBACKER: And I want to achieve at the highest level.

JENNIFER WHALEN: That’s right.

SUSAN PARSBACKER: Both as a teacher – And we’ve got fabulous teachers here, but I think even myself, I would really like that chance to be able to self-reflect. What can I do to, not only better myself, but to reach that higher level?

JENNIFER WHALEN: I just think that it’s another step in the right direction for our school as far as moving forward, because we’ve done rigor and relevance. We incorporated differentiated instruction, and the reflection part is so important to keep moving forward.

JAPERA HODGES: And that could be one of our goals for next year to add in. I mean, we already have some goals previously, and no, we have not conquered all of our goals, but this can be another tool.

JENNIFER WHALEN: And like Japara said, about using the 22 components to kind of self-reflect and assess what you’re doing, would definitely help maintain your focus on your reflective piece, and what your goal is going to be. I think teachers need to set their own self-reflection goal, and then though the processes that you would provide with staff development and training and mentors at our school, would help them maintain their focus and almost have small conferences or meetings about how are you reflecting on teaching now? And like Japara said, if you have that pre- and post, you can make it a continuous process and not just a before and after, but all the way through the school year.

DEBBIE SCIBILIA: Well, I definitely think the 22 components would be what you would look at because it would help you self-reflect. I also think that we’ve done a lot of work here with our professional learning communities and critical friends. So I think a lot of teachers already feel comfortable enough with their critical friend that they may even consider taking it a step further and have their critical friend look at the video with them. I think some teachers are to the point where they’re comfortable enough to do that.

SUSAN PARSBACKER: So is there anything else? We’ve talked our objective. We have talked about the strategies that we’re going to be implementing and really bring in some staff development. I think you all were going to maybe look together in your team. You’ve got some resources on strategies and maybe some staff development that we might be able to implement. We’ve got our Title I from the summer, too.

DEBBIE SCIBILIA: Jen had suggested maybe a faculty book study that she already has a resource in mind for on self-reflection.
JENNIFER WHALEN: It was a good evaluation tool for yourself, and you can write in the – The books that were provided have general reflection questions in there and you can reflect on what you’re doing.

SUSAN PARSBACKER: I think probably a book study would be fabulous.

DEBBIE SCIBILIA: Again, in their PLCs they’re very comfortable. It would be a more intimate –

JAPERA HODGES: A smaller –

DEBBIE SCIBILIA: Environment.

JAPERA HODGES: You feel comfortable mainly with your grade level that you work with and you’re able to elaborate more on how you feel about the program and what’s going on in your reflections and they can give their input of what things that you can do differently if you’re lacking in an area in one of the components.

SUSAN PARSBACKER: So what I hear you kinda saying – What I think I hear you all saying is maybe initiate it in our faculty meeting, but the followup be done within their professional learning communities.

DEBBIE SCIBILIA: PLCs.

JENNIFER WHALEN: And then if you wanted to move it outside of that, you could always do some vertical teaming in the future once everybody’s comfortable with what they’re doing to learn different strategies across the grade levels.

SUSAN PARSBACKER: That’s a really good idea.

Setting Professional Goals - Summary

CHARLOTTE DANIELSON: A goal should simply not reflect a teacher’s day-to-day teaching position and responsibilities. For example, a goal that states, “My goal is to implement the new math program,” wouldn’t be a goal. That’s part of your job. We’re all doing that. And now, it might be that a new math program, or say a new science program, incorporates in it some approaches to teaching that I’ve never learned how to do, like how to teach science in an inquiry manner. Well, learning how to do that could be a goal, and the reason I’m doing it is because it’s in this new science program. But it’s not just about implementing the new science program; it’s about learning some new skills.
So it’s about, again, my learning. That it can improve my practice. A viable goal might be to incorporate some new technology into my teaching. That for many teachers is a new skill. And learning how to do that and how best to use it and when not to use it, sure. The point is, here, it represents new learning on the part of the teacher that can have an impact on what they can offer to students. Now lastly, let’s say that a goal should be stated as a goal and not as some activities. Like a goal isn’t that I’m gonna take my students to the aquarium. Now, a goal might be that I want to develop a science unit around the life of the sea, the ecology of the sea, the whatever, lifecycle of fish.

Going to the aquarium might be one activity, but that’s what it is. It’s an activity. It’s not a goal. And the goal is what is the outcome for my learning that will be reflected in my students’ experience?

**Implementation of Self Directed Inquiry – Challenges and Considerations**

CHARLOTTE DANIELSON: One of the challenges that some people find in doing self-directed inquiry is how to structure it, and how to do the timing on it. When should things happen in relation to when other things happen and so on? This is a bit of a challenge. It depends on a lot of things including a school’s negotiated agreement because that might set some limits on what’s possible for time. But here’s what some people do. If they want to encourage teachers to work in study groups or learning communities of some kind and to use that as a time to do this work, then they set aside sort of protected time, dedicated time for that. Either during the school day or another option is after-school hours but ones that are already covered by contract. So for example, it might be part of, and it often is, part of a teacher’s contract that the kids go home at let’s say 3:15 p.m. and the teacher contract goes until 4:00 p.m. on Mondays, say.

And those are reserved for faculty meetings. But in some schools the teacher says, “Look, the first Monday of the month we won’t have a faculty meeting.” That’s a time for study groups to meet or learning communities to meet. And so that’s a time for you to meet with your team or your study group to pursue your goal, to work on your goal. Another aspect of timing has to do with when does the self-assessment happen and when does the goal-setting happen? Now, the way it’s usually offered is this is a September, or August or whatever it is, to May activity. And that’s certainly one way to do it.

But if, let’s say for example I’m a teacher in your school, and we finished our formal evaluation in the spring, like late April, May, and it emerges from that evaluation that I could benefit from some work in some area, let’s say questioning and discussion skills. That that’s weak and I’d – So I might, right then, with my supervisor or evaluator,
we might have the conference having to do with goal-setting right there as part of our evaluation conference. Because I might say I’d like to strengthen – this is my goal for next year. I want to strengthen my skills in using questioning and discussion in my classroom. If we agree to it at that point, and if I am inclined to take a course over the summer or something, I can build it in.

And that can be one of my activities, and I can maybe be working towards my Master’s or something anyway. And so it sort of does double duty, but it then becomes, instead of a fall to spring cycle for this, it becomes a spring to spring cycle. Where teachers are inclined to and have the opportunity to engage in some professional work over the summer, the plan can benefit from that investment. And lastly, about structuring of this self-directed inquiry phase, virtually every state now requires that teachers log a certain number of hours of professional growth in order to renew their license. And it’s something like 90 hours over five years or some number like that. That has to be documented somehow.

Somebody has to sign off on it. There’s no reason why the time that teachers devote to this self-directed professional inquiry can’t count. Why shouldn’t it? It just has to be approved. Well, that can be done. So if it is structured so that a supervisor or a principal signs off on the time that teachers spend doing this work, and it is, it’s pure professional learning. This is incorporated into an evaluation system, but it’s pure learning. Then there’s no reason why that can’t count towards the relicensing requirements. Now, this leads us to one last issue, which is: In many states and in many school districts, there is a requirement that teachers be evaluated every year.

And if they are using this three track model where for experienced teachers they are formally evaluated, that is their practice is formally evaluated, only every third year let’s say, and in these other years they are engaged in self-directed inquiry, then how is it that they can be evaluated? Well, even in those years, those other years, principals are, no doubt, making their rounds of informal drop-in observations the way they do. And so they will be aware of a serious problem that emerges, or let’s hope they are. But in addition to that, there can be an evaluation of this self-directed inquiry.

It’s not about whether the teacher achieves the goal because we know that if it’s a low-level goal that they’re bound to achieve, it won’t really encourage them to really learn. No. What gets evaluated is whether they have made a serious and honest commitment to this process. So for example, if I were a principal and one of my teachers was sort of blowing off this process, wasn’t taking it serious, was writing in something in as a goal that wasn’t a serious goal, couldn’t be talked into something more meaningful, to me that would be performance issue, and I would speak to the teacher about that. That is, that’s what would be evaluated is the commitment to the learning on the part of the teacher.
It can be evaluated. There’s not a formal rubric for it, and it’s a judgment. But in order to meet the expectations in my school for the other years, the self-directed years, I need to be convinced, and virtually everybody would if I’d explain this, I need to be convinced that they are making a serious and honest commitment to their own professional learning.

**Observe a Teacher-Mentor Discussion of Self Assessment, Goal Setting and Planning**

**SUSAN CAYWOOD:** Kate, it’s so good to see you. It was such a great year for you last year as your first year, and I know you’re really excited this year to meet your new class and get started. What kind of goals do you have set for this year?

**KATE NAKAMURA-STEIN:** Well, I do – one of my weaknesses last year was setting learning goals for my students. So and being able to scaffold that for my students, so that their learning was succinct. So my goals this year is to make sure that my students are meeting standards and being able to be engaged the whole time in my classroom. I had some issues last year with student disengagement from the curriculum, and so I wanted to make sure that they were more involved this year. So I attended a layered curriculum in-service by Kathie Nunley. And I also –

**SUSAN CAYWOOD:** Excellent.

**KATE NAKAMURA-STEIN:** Participated in the curriculum mapping for our district. So I was able to really delve into the standards, the goals, and the objectives and break them out into declarative and procedural knowledge with the help of the other U.S. History teachers that were there as well, and then we applied those into layered curriculum units that we did on a cross-curricular team. So we included the English teacher and the math teacher and the communications teacher, as well.

**SUSAN CAYWOOD:** Oh, excellent. You’ve had a busy summer, haven’t you?

**KATE NAKAMURA-STEIN:** I have. I have. But I’m really excited about this. I did a lot of reflecting and a lot of tweaking to what I really want to change for this year.

**SUSAN CAYWOOD:** Oh, that sounds terrific. You’ve been very directed in your own professional growth. I’m really impressed with those things, those steps, concrete steps that you’ve taken to become that master teacher that I know you want to become and are becoming.

**KATE NAKAMURA-STEIN:** Yes. Yes, thank you.
SUSAN CAYWOOD: That’s terrific. Tell me just a little bit more about the layered curriculum. I’m not as familiar with that as I’d like to be.

KATE NAKAMURA-STEIN: Okay. The layered curriculum is really based on a lot of brain research, and how students learn best, and how our brain works. It does have three different layers. That first layer is really all of the basics that you want the student to learn. It’s really building that background knowledge for the students to be able to apply in the next layer, which is that application layer. And then the third layer is really where they take that and apply it to real-world situations. So there’s that real-world application, “So what does this mean for me?” It’s telling the student to apply that and how it applies to their life today.

SUSAN CAYWOOD: Well, it sounds like you’ve taken a lot of time to reflect on the different needs of your students in the classroom and really broaden your view, your view as the teacher, of what those students needs are.

KATE NAKAMURA-STEIN: And that was a weakness of mine last year that I really wanted to focus on this year, is meeting all of those needs in the classroom. My classroom is so diverse this year. I have the five ED kids and the three IEP kids. And then I have some 504 students, as well. I have my GT students. So being able to be diverse and meet all of their needs, giving them choice in the layered curriculum is a huge thing for me. I have some assignments that really stretch beyond their basic knowledge level, and then I have some that can be adapted very easily for my special needs population.

SUSAN CAYWOOD: Oh, terrific. Terrific. What kind of support or collaboration are you engaged in with your grade level team to make this successful for you and your students?

KATE NAKAMURA-STEIN: My grade level team members and I actually – I created the first draft of this layered curriculum, and then I took it back to the team members and got input from them to see how we could truly make it a cross-curriculum activity and unit, to be able to apply into language arts and math and to communications. And so they gave me some ideas on how to make the different assignments more engaging and be able to be completed in their classrooms as well. So –

SUSAN CAYWOOD: Oh, that’s terrific. Absolutely terrific. Well, it sounds to me like you’re taking on a role as a teacher leader, and I know the district has an initiative to really develop sound, professional learning communities. Explain to me how you see your role in that initiative.

KATE NAKAMURA-STEIN: I’m hoping that I will become a teacher leader as far as being able to facilitate some of the conversations and maybe just share my knowledge on how our team has become a professional learning community. And how
we were able to really open the doors of the classroom to allow each other in to observe and observe specific things like setting learning goals and being able to scaffold that teaching. I would go in and maybe observe another teacher who was better at that than I am.

SUSAN CAYWOOD: Excellent, excellent. And that comes back to your evaluation from last year, and I know you had – We had talked about some things that you wanted to work on in regards to setting student objectives, the goals, for your students. Explain to me what kind of thoughts you’ve had about that over the summer and how you’re gonna look at that this year.

KATE NAKAMURA-STEIN: I specifically wanted to include that scaffolding for my individual student, but being able to tie it into the standards and looking also at Bloom’s Taxonomy and how that knowledge builds for my students. Being able to scaffold the U.S. History curriculum for them was really important for me because a lot of them come in with very little exposure to U.S. history, and being able to give them that background knowledge so that they’re successful was one of my goals, and the layered curriculum unit does that for them. It gives them that whole first layer as a lot of the background knowledge.

VOICEOVER: Assignment. This assignment is located in the handout section. Read each goal statement to ascertain if it’s a good goal for self-directed professional inquiry. Yes, no, or maybe? In the comment section tell why, and if it’s not a good one, how to improve it. When you’re completely finished, open the answer key also located in the handout section.

The Next Step – Strategies to Enhance Practice

VOICEOVER: Educational Impact offers the Danielson STEP Directory. STEP standing for Strategies to Enhance Practice. If your evaluation system is based on the Danielson Framework, this unique online tool will allow your evaluator and teacher to create a prescriptive and personalized learning plan. Connecting a teacher’s professional development to their areas of need, as determined by their evaluation, has been the missing link in many evaluation systems. The Danielson STEP Directory offers your administrators and teachers the ability to use the evaluation results to select online professional development that is aligned to one or more of the 22 framework components.

When you first log on to the Danielson Step Directory, you will view the Personal Learning Plan menu. Each component of the framework is listed on the left side of the screen. To create a personal learning plan for your teacher, select the specific framework components targeted for improvement. In this case, we will select component 3:D, Using Assessments in Instruction. Once you select a framework component, the right side of the screen will offer you a menu of video segments in the EI Academy of Online
Professional Development. These video segments range in length from five minutes up
to several hours and were suggested because they align to the framework components.
You can select as many segments as you deem appropriate. Each video segment includes
a brief description and can be selected by clicking add to PLP on the right. In this case,
we’ll choose “The Power of Student Involvement” that is part of EI’s Assessment for
Learning program. We will also choose a second segment that is part of the menu for
component 4:D, Participating in a Professional Learning Community. Now, as we move
back to the top and click on View Current Plan, we can see the videos we selected and
the total hours of video included in the Personal Learning Plan.

Now that we made our selection, let’s view a portion of the video in our teacher’s
Personal Learning Plan. Here we get the opportunity to hear Rick Stiggins talk about
student assessments.

RICK STIGGINS: One of the other things that we deeply believe in our
institute is in the power of student involvement in the assessment process. We believe
that a strong relationship can be a –

VOICEOVER: This powerful online tool makes connecting evaluation to
professional development so much easier. It puts the resources right at your fingertips.
The EI Online Academy includes more than 350 hours of online streaming video and
features hundreds of national expert and real classroom observations. For more
information on the Danielson STEP Directory, contact at info@educationalimpact.com.