

T-TESS Tips – November Edition #4

Coaching

- As Sheila Collazo, the state’s lead T-TESS trainer, says, “T-TESS without coaching is just evaluation.” Evaluation (accurately knowing where we are with our practice) is a necessary step, but T-TESS’s value lies in what comes next – the partnership between teachers and appraisers as they work to provide even more effective teaching for their students.

Conferences

Conferences are significant components of T-TESS, and they can be uncomfortable for appraisers and appraisees as they first start interacting with the process.

Appraisee Anxiety

- Any conference about an individual’s practice, which is personal and is something in which educators take pride, can be a difficult topic of conversation.
- The relationship that exists between appraiser and appraisee will go a long way in lowering the appraisee’s anxiety about conferences (and with each conference that occurs, the relationship should generally strengthen).
- The culture of appraisal will shape an appraisee’s perspective on conferences - those districts and campuses that have sold the message of development – that it’s okay to be where you are as an educator, but it’s not okay to stay there – will be able to build beneficial conference environments relatively quickly.

Appraiser Anxiety

- Content knowledge - the primary job of an appraiser during a conference is not to tell a calculus teacher how best to teach a lesson on optimization, but instead to provide evidence back to the teacher on how students responded to the practices the teacher deployed during the observed lesson.
- Pedagogy - as an instructional leader, the appraiser should have insight into pedagogy so that he or she can help determine why the students didn’t respond favorably to an aspect of the lesson (the rubric helps guide that insight).
- Most importantly, the conference is an opportunity to promote self-assessment on the part of the teacher. The appraiser isn’t present frequently enough to be the sole source of formative feedback during the year.
- The appraisee has to develop habits of reflection and accurate self-assessment to truly move into the Accomplished and Distinguished levels. No educator gets it right all the time, but those who have the ability to self-diagnose and adjust their practices when no one else is watching tend to be the most effective educators.
- In that sense, conferencing is about coaching – building habits of reflection and accurate self-assessment in teachers, much like developing muscle memory, so that it occurs naturally and regularly.

Please take advantage of your ESCs for support as you work through implementation.