

Marzano's Nine Strategies as a Template for Teacher Candidate Supervision

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Abstract

This paper examines the need for the triad of supervisor, teacher candidate, and mentor/cooperating teacher to work in unity for clinical experiences to be successful for the teacher candidate and beneficial to the students in the mentor's classroom. To facilitate this mutual benefit, the Marzano Nine is utilized by this supervisor for provide consistency of terminology and satisfaction.

Keywords: supervision, student teaching, mentor, cooperating teacher, clinical experiences, field experiences

Introduction

Supervising and supporting teacher candidates in their field experiences has always been rewarding and challenging. This role as a university supervisor has consistently been unique in its challenges due to the varied levels of mentoring provided by cooperating teachers and the competency and dedication of teacher candidates to excel as a professional educator. Additionally, over the past nine academic years, I have served as the Elementary Professional Teacher Education Program Coordinator of the largest education program in the Rocky Mountain region. This has added to my view of the supervision process as this role called upon myself to intervene as needed in several field experience placements to resolve issues involving professionalism, content knowledge competency, and appropriateness of methodology. These interventions typically led to the desire to support students by meeting with and training cooperating (mentor) teachers, possibly reassigning the teacher candidate to a new classroom setting, conferencing with and providing a detailed plan for teacher candidates, and regularly relieving the university supervisor of their role for a specific teacher candidate and assuming this role myself in order to provide another perspective and approach to support.

One of the most influential sources on my role as program coordinator and university supervisor has been Classroom Instruction that Works (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). This literature, that has become known as the "Marzano 9" has guided the refinement of my approach in the supervision of teacher candidates in a manner that is meaningful and effective for their experiences.

The Marzano Nine

When Classroom Instruction That Works (2001) was published, the strategies appeared to make sense for use in the classroom. The case for using the strategies on a frequent basis was compelling, and the predicted results were promising. The nine specific strategies advocated by Marzano (2001) are presented below.

Each strategy offers a specific strategy to engage students in their learning through a research-based strategy. These instructional strategies are not written for specific for grade levels and content areas. These strategies provide an effective guidance for teacher candidates in designing and delivering instruction.

The Marzano 9 (instructional strategies and definitions)

1. Identifying Similarities and Differences:

The ability to break a concept into its similar and dissimilar characteristics allows students to understand and solve complex problems by analyzing them in a simple way.

2. Summarizing and Note Taking:

These skills promote comprehension by asking students to analyze a subject to expose what's essential and then place it in their own words. According to research, this requires substituting, deleting, and retaining information while having an awareness of the basic structure of the information presented. Research shows that taking more notes is better than fewer notes, though verbatim note taking is ineffective due to the lack of time to process information.

3. Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition:

Effort and recognition speak to the attitudes and beliefs of students, and teachers must show the connection between effort and achievement. Research shows that although not all students realize the importance of effort, they can learn to modify their beliefs to emphasize effort. According to research, recognition is most effective if it is contingent on the achievement of a specific standard. Also, intrinsic reward works better than tangible rewards.

4. Homework and Practice:

Homework provides students with the opportunity to extend their learning outside the classroom. However, research shows that the amount of homework assigned should vary by grade level and that parent/guardian involvement should be minimal. Teachers should explain the purpose of homework to both the student and the parent or guardian, and teachers should give feedback on all homework assigned.

5. Nonlinguistic Representations:

According to research, knowledge is stored in two forms: linguistic and visual. The more students use both forms in the classroom, the more opportunity they must achieve. Recently, use of nonlinguistic representation has proven to increase brain activity.

6. Cooperative Learning:

Research shows that organizing students into cooperative groups yields a positive effect on overall learning. When applying cooperative learning strategies, keep groups small. According to Welton (2002), group size would ideally be 5 members to facilitate decision-making.

7. Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback:

Setting objectives can provide students with a direction for their learning. The instructor's objectives should be easily adaptable to students' own objectives. Research shows that feedback in the form of constructive comments generally produces positive results. Teachers can never give too much; however, they should vary the form that feedback takes.

8. Generating and Testing Hypotheses:

Research shows that a deductive approach (using a general rule to make a prediction) to this strategy works best. Whether a hypothesis is induced or deduced, students should clearly explain their hypotheses and conclusions. This use of the Scientific Method is most effective in the formation and testing of hypotheses.

9. Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers:

Cues, questions, and advance organizers help students use what they already know about a topic to enhance further learning. Research shows that these tools should be highly analytical, should focus on what is important, and are most effective when presented before a learning experience.

(Varlas, 2002)

The definitions, and implied strategies for the nine strategies listed are in many ways common sense and are broadly understood among educators. Each strategy contributes to increasing student performance, and the effects of combining strategies promote even higher student performance in the classroom.

Supervision and the Marzano 9

These nine strategies provide the supervision triad (teacher candidate, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor) with a common set of expectations and a common understanding of classroom instruction. The strategies enhance the general supervision process and provide common language, focus, and observable actions from which cooperating teachers and university coordinators can guide the progress of teacher candidates.

Prior to the student teaching semester, teacher candidates participate in an orientation and, from this university supervisor, a sharing of the Marzano 9. Although the student teachers have had instruction and practice in instructional strategies earlier in their teacher preparation program, the information lacks consistency from one methodology course/professor to another. The need for a consistent and proven (through research) body of instructional methods and practices is beneficial to teacher candidates. Consistent instruction in pedagogical courses that aligns with the Marzano 9 ensures that the teacher candidates and university supervisors are aligned in their use of terms and expectations. This use of a “common language” is vital to ensure clear communication within the triad. Additionally, cooperating teachers should be provided with resources and an orientation on the Marzano 9 to ensure effective communication when their teacher candidates begin their field experiences.

Throughout the student teaching experience, the Marzano 9 is consistently integrated into my seminar assignments, formal and informal classroom observations, teacher candidate’s journal entries, and triad conferences. Cooperating teachers are encouraged to use the nine strategies as foundations for discussions, a basis for their rationale of methodology, and as a framework for discussion.

The use of the Marzano 9 has provided an avenue for the supervision of teacher candidates to be consistent in both focus and application. By providing a consistent and well understood foundation of strategies several changes have occurred. These changes include: an increase in quality of cooperating teacher observations, more focused observations, higher level of satisfaction by teacher candidates in the observation process, better coordinated plans to help teacher candidates improve, and more focused documentation and final evaluation narratives.

Conclusion

The supervision process is enhanced by focusing teacher candidate’s actions and learning experiences through the strategies identified in Classroom Instruction That Works by Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001). These nine strategies provide a framework for the overall clinical experience including assignments, journal writing, conferences, observations, and communication within the established triad of the student teaching experience. By using these strategies as a focal point within the student teaching placement, the teacher candidates are getting additional practice at using research-based instructional strategies. They are also participating in a student teaching experience that clearly communicates an identified set of expectations. Through the effective use of the Marzano 9 the student teaching experience is enhanced, and learning is promoted.

References

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