

Pilot Alternative Formal Observation Process

2023/2024 PSD Negotiation Meeting



December 5, 2023

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Executive Summary

Ninety-three percent of PSD teachers and evaluators who participated in the alternative formal observation process indicate a positive experience and that PSD should continue to offer this option in future years. This evaluation report presents the findings from the

Teachers with three prior years of highly-effective ratings were eligible to participate in the AFO process. Teachers who chose to participate in the AFO process but had not started at the time of the survey were excluded from this study.

Two surveys were developed and used to gather input from participating teachers and evaluators. Both surveys were open from November 20th to November 29th, 2023. A total of eight evaluators and thirty-two teachers voluntarily participated in these surveys. All 29 evaluators and 161 teachers who had participated in the AFO process were invited to participate in these surveys. Twenty-eight percent of the participating evaluators (8/29), and 20% of the participating teachers (32/161) completed the surveys.

The AFO process provided a collegial learning environment that encouraged immediate application and reflection, while the *Traditional Formal Observation (TFO) process* is recognized for its structured feedback but criticized for its lack of meaningful impacts on experienced teachers' practices.

The meaningful differences from both evaluators and teachers' perspectives summarized as follows:

The AFO process is highly valued for its emphasis on peer learning and genuine growth. Teachers particularly appreciate the opportunity to observe and implement strategies from their peers' classrooms, finding this approach more meaningful and practical for experienced educators. It rejuvenates teaching practices through direct application of new ideas and focuses on personal growth and reflection. In contrast, the TFO process, while well-structured and familiar, is often viewed as a routine task that lacks the individual goal-setting and learning opportunities of the AFO process. It is perceived as more of a formality, useful for providing structured feedback and setting goals, particularly for newer teachers. However, seasoned educators tend to find less value in the TFO process.

The impacts of participation for both processes were measured by a 4-point scale on various teaching practices include classroom management practices, knowledge and understanding of subject(s), instructional practices, teaching of students with special learning needs, and handling of student discipline and behavior problems. Mean scores are illustrated below in Figure 1.

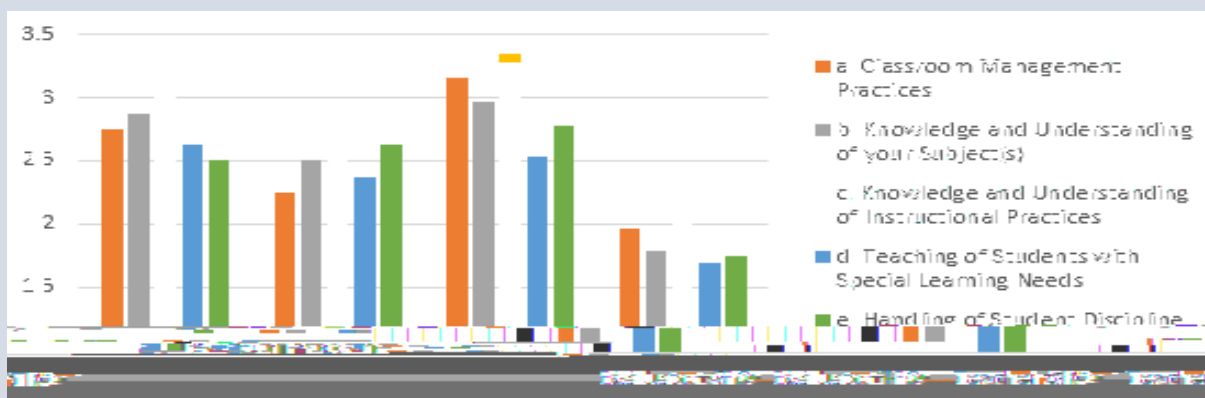


Figure 1: Comparisons of the impacts of both processes on five practices from teachers and evaluators

Paired -

PSD evaluated the pilot Alternative Formal Observation (AFO) process during the 2023/24 school year to provide meaningful feedback on this pilot process during the 2023/24 negotiations process. The process involves an administrator/evaluator observing a teacher's class, followed by feedback. The process includes peer observations, where teachers observe each other and participate in a reflective process. To explore how classroom observation processes and associated professional reflection have impacted/benefited teaching practices, two separate surveys were administered to gather valuable insights from teachers and their evaluators, who have participated in this new evaluation process. A total of eight evaluators and thirty-two teachers voluntarily participated in these surveys.

Among teachers who responded to the survey, sixty-nine percent are experienced teachers with over 20 years in teaching. The remaining teachers are distributed as follows: 16% have 16 – 20 years of experience, 9% have been teaching for 11 – 15 years, and both the 6-10 years and 3-5 years ranges are represented by 3% each. Teachers also come from a diverse range of class sizes: half taught classes of 11 to 30 students, 16% had classes of 31 to 50 students, 6% were responsible for 71 to 150 students, and 28% instructed more than 150 students this year. The majority of the teachers instruct grades K through 5, with 23 teachers in this range, followed by 9 teachers serving 9th through 12th grades, and one teacher specializing in Technology and Gifted and Talented (GT) education. Seventy-five percent of teachers provide reading and writing instruction, while 63% teach math and science. Additionally, 59% are involved in teaching social studies, 22% specialize in technology, and 6% focus on art and social-emotional life skills. A smaller percentage, 3%, is dedicated to Gifted and Talented (GT) and Work-Based Learning programs.

The evaluators are the administrators associated with each teacher that was eligible and chose to participate. Four evaluators are associated with Elementary Schools, three with High Schools and one with a K-12 School. Of the eight evaluators, four have been an evaluator in PSD for 6-10 years, and one each of the remaining 4 evaluators served in PSD for 1-2 years, 3-5 years, 16-20 years, or more than 20 years respectively.

Five of the eight evaluators chose () as their overall opinion regarding the AFO and the others chose (). Eighty-eight percent of evaluators () that PSD should continue the AFO process as an option for future evaluations in PSD. One evaluator disagreed with continuing the AFO process and provided the following open-ended response: *"Formal observation every other year for tenured teachers would be a way to decrease workload."*

Evaluators who advocated for the continuation of the AFO process in the future made the following comments:

"I really enjoyed the experience and other teachers at my school raved about observing teachers at our school and having the option to go to another school and observe there as well. I think this is the most beneficial way to go to grow as a teacher."

"Could we remove some of the required meetings? Still takes a decent amount of time. If teachers can waive the second observation, can we just call it one observation per year for continuing contract?"

Figure 2: Comparisons of the impacts of both processes on five areas from evaluators

Evaluators were asked the frequencies of observing and providing feedback to their teachers (formal & informal), who participated in the Alternative Formal Observation process and for those that did not participate in the AFO process. The results indicated that evaluators tended to observe and offer a bit

Teachers were asked about their experience or specific examples about how the AFO process has impacted their teaching practice. The AFO process appeared to have a profound impact on teaching practices including:

Professional Development and Learning:

- Learning from break-out sessions and gathering new resources.
- Gaining understanding of curriculum and standards.
- Acquiring organizational and classroom management practices.
- Observing and implementing new lab structures and hands-on learning.
- Learning from observing different content areas.
- Implementing new student desk rubrics and goals.
- Experiencing the role of an observer to reflect and improve teaching practice.

Peer Observation and Collaboration:

- Observing a colleague for new teaching methods.
- Sharing and discussing observations with colleagues.
- Collaborating to understand and support other teachers' practices.
- Observing peer classrooms to see different instructional strategies.

Personal Growth and Reflection:

- Reflecting on self-identified areas of growth.
- Decreasing stress by focusing on relevant instructional practices.
- Gaining confidence by comparing own practice with peers.

Classroom Management and Student Engagement:

- Observing classroom management structures.
- Seeing student engagement and discipline strategies.

Cross-Grade Learning and Curriculum Implementation:

- Understanding how other grades work and run their classrooms.
- Observing and adapting teaching for different grade levels.

Curriculum and Instructional Strategies:

- Observing interactive notebooks in use.
- Watching peers to gain new ideas for teaching.

Evaluation of the Observation Process:

- Some expressing it had no impacts or mentioning the lack of compensation for the observed teacher.
- Others mentioning that it's a more effective approach than traditional observation.
- Acknowledging the value of observing and learning from peers.

Curriculum Adaptation and Instructional Improvement:

impacts of the AFO process on each of the five practices were larger than the impacts of the TFO process, suggesting there were improvements in all five areas from the TFO process to the AFO process, particularly in the areas of classroom management and knowledge and understanding of instructional practices and your subject(s). Figure 3 presents the impacts of both processes on five areas, suggesting both the AFO and the TFO processes were seen as most effective in improving knowledge and understanding of instructional practices. It indicated that

Figure 3: Comparisons of the impacts of both processes on five areas from teachers

Teachers identified a few *between the AFO process and the TFO process*. The

reflection form for after the alternative process was helpful. It was a meaningful way to share what I observed and not overly burdensome and lengthy." Another remarked, *"I was able to share ideas that we are looking to implement school wide."* Others said, *"Time has been given to support learning and understanding from ourselves as professionals to grow as educators."* Additional specific comments were as follows:

"It solidified and reassured that my practices are similar from 4th to 5th and that we are doing complimentary things for warm ups etc. I also walked away with a very different structure that