The Art and Science of Teaching and Effective Supervision

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According to research and studies, the “single most influential component of an effective school is the individual teachers within that school” (Marzano, 2007). In order to conduct a successful school and produce successful students and citizens, there must be effective teachers within the classrooms. In addition, it is not enough to have effective teachers, administrators must be able to support and develop teachers so that the educational process does not become stagnant.

Robert Marzano is popular in education as an educational researcher advocating for evidence based education. He has written several books which include topics such as effective teaching practices and strategies for the classroom; effective leadership and supervision that support effective teaching; and effectively writing assessments and lesson plans for the classroom. This paper will look at two of Robert Marzano’s books: *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction* (2007) and a support guide for administrators titled *Effective Supervision: Supporting the Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). As administrators it is important to know what good teaching looks like and also to know how to mentor, support, and develop teachers so that good teaching continues to happen over time.

In Marzano’s book, *The Art and Science of Teaching* (2007), he describes ten aspects that contribute to an effective instructional framework: (1) establish and communicate learning goals, track student progress, and celebrate success; (2) help students effectively interact with new knowledge; (3) help students practice and deepen their understanding of new knowledge; (4) help students generate and test hypotheses about new knowledge; (5) engage students; (6) establish or maintain classroom rules and procedures; (7) recognize and acknowledge adherence
and lack of adherence to classroom rules and procedures; (8) establish and maintain effective relationships with students; (9) communicate high expectations for all students; and (10) develop effective lessons organized into a cohesive unit.

Marzano (2007) begins each chapter with an essential question, for example, “What will I do to engage students?” (pg. 98). The idea is that by the end of the chapter whoever is reading the book, be it teachers or administrators, should be able to clearly answer the question and implement the ideas in the classroom.

After asking the essential question that is the basis of the chapter, Marzano (2007) describes a classroom scenario that highlights what will be shared in the chapter. Within a page of beginning the chapter, Marzano jumps into the research and theory behind the idea being proposed. Understanding the theory behind why an idea works give credence to the practice and allows the teacher to become more invested in the idea of implementing it in the classroom. Looking at teaching practices through the lens of research shows the teacher that the practice is possible and will work in the classroom, thus creating a feeling of encouragement and a sense of possibility.

Next, Marzano (2007) proposes achievable action steps and concrete examples of strategies that can be used. He outlines, step-by-step, what teachers need to be doing in the classroom in a way that is detailed yet easy to understand. Sometimes teachers can feel overwhelmed by the idea of implementing new ideas, practices, or systems in the classroom, but by providing “baby steps,” Marzano is able to walk teachers through the process as painlessly as possible.

Finally, Marzano (2007) completes each chapter with a short succinct summary that repeats the essential question, states what teachers should be doing, and reiterates the action steps
that were proposed. After reading the book, the summaries provide a quick refresher about each chapter that can be used as a reference in the future. In addition, each chapter contains tables, models, and figures that are easy to read and comprise of research data, models and implementation plans for the classroom, and strategies and templates that can be used with students. Marzano (2007) has also included a detailed index with several topics and ideas that can be easily located.

Once Marzano wrote *The Art and Science of Teaching* (2007) in an effort to provide a guideline for teachers to become more effective, he saw a need to tackle the issue of effective teaching from another perspective in his book titled *Effective Supervision: Supporting the Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). In the same way that Marzano guides teachers in the first book to be more effective classroom leaders, he does the same for administrators in supporting teachers and becoming better school leaders.

In *Effective Supervision* (2011) Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston assert that, “the purpose of supervision should be the enhancement of teachers’ pedagogical skills, with the ultimate goal of enhancing student achievement” (pg 2). Marzano begins the book stating that one of the responsibilities of the supervision is to develop teacher expertise (2011). Teachers, and people in general, who feel that they are experts in a certain area also feel more confident in their abilities, knowledge and skills, thus making them more effective in the field of their expertise. By increasing teacher expertise, it is expected that student achievement would also increase.

Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston’s (2011) plan for systematically developing expertise follows five steps: “(1) a well-articulate knowledge base for teaching, (2) focused feedback and practice, (3) opportunities to observe and discuss expertise, (4) clear criteria and a plan for
success, and (5) recognition of expertise” (pg. 4). Marzano’s model allows for collaboration and feedback in order to develop and support a teacher in becoming an expert rather than handing them *The Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2007) and leaving them high and dry!

In the book, the authors dedicate a whole chapter to each step in the supervision model including supporting research, data tables, and figures and templates that can be used during supervision. Just as in the previous book, the authors have included a summary at the end of every chapter and compiled a detailed index for easy referencing. Included in the back of the book are several observation forms (long form and short form) that can be used for observing, providing feedback, and generating discussions with teachers. The forms are also detailed with several organized and easy to understand components. The long form showcases one area to observe per page. The top of the page includes a clearly defined statement describing the area to be observed and a place for taking notes. In the middle of the page there are two boxes, one for “Teacher Evidence” and one for “Student Evidence” which includes statements of examples the supervisor can be looking for. On the bottom of the page there is a rubric on which the supervisor can “grade” the teacher with each grade point, zero to four, clearly defined. A score of zero equals “Not Using” and a score of four means “Innovating.” The idea that a teacher can receive an “Innovating” score is encouraging because it means that not only are they an expert but they are coming up with new ideas. Most people would not be opposed to being called an innovator!

One aspect of the book which can be helpful in supporting and developing teachers is the chapter about building a knowledge based for teachers (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). The authors propose four domains in which to develop teachers: “(1) classroom strategies and behaviors, (2) planning and preparing, (3) reflecting on teaching, (4) collegiality and
professionalism” (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011, pg. 29). The authors use this chapter to review all the major components found in *The Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2007) regarding classroom strategies, planning practices, and supporting teachers, but takes supporting and developing effective instruction to the next level by including teacher self-reflection and building collegial and collaborative relationships (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

Another part of the book which is both enlightening and useful is the chapter about Recognizing Expertise (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). According to the authors, teachers many times are thought of and treated as “widgets,” that they are “parts of a system that are interchangeable and inconsequential to student achievement” (2011, pg. 98). Teachers are essential in the development and achievement of students and to think of them as widgets greatly decreases their value! Teachers are individuals who can have a real and lasting impact on students, and as such, teachers need to be developed and supported. In line with effectively developing individual teachers, the authors recommend that “teacher evaluation should recognize different stages of development progressing toward expertise” (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011, pg. 104). The rating categories recommended are as follows: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, and Innovating (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). And, as was mentioned before regarding the observation forms, who doesn’t want to be called an innovator!

Both *The Art and Science of Teaching* (2007) and *Effective Supervision* (2011) are great resources for educational research and practical applications based on research. Reading both books was insightful as they give the teacher perspective and supervisor perspective on the same issue, developing and implementing effective instruction. By following the guidelines set out in both books, school teams would be well on their way to establishing an environment that supports effective instruction and in turn increase student achievement.
References
