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*Everyone at the Table* is a text written for use by all stakeholders in education to understand the complex nature of teacher evaluation and the process by which it can be established. The book is divided into three major sections with emphasis in the last portions of the book on how to engage in the process from different perspectives. From the beginning to the end of the book, the authors make a point of emphasizing the success associated with engaging teachers in the evaluation process.

The reader explores the many demands of teacher evaluation through history to current reform controversy,
with key inclusion of the most popular arguments for and against teacher evaluation. Particular attention is paid to examples of individuals and groups in the field who have successfully shared their voices. The authors give an overview of the different terminology used by evaluation systems and programs, helping the reader to develop a vernacular necessary for further investigation into different state and district programs.

The first few chapters feature key examples of the purpose for engaging teachers, alongside charts presenting teachers’ views regarding merit pay and teacher effectiveness. In the second section of the text, the authors suggest a six step process for teacher evaluation and design as reproduced from the American Institute for Research (2012). The second section also includes references to past initiatives and groups that have engaged successfully in bringing teachers to the table. Hands-on explorations for readers are presented in Chapters Three and Four. Readers are encouraged to evaluate the system currently in place within their district.

In Chapter Four, the authors overlay the evaluation process with Yankelovich’s Learning Curve (Yankelovich & Friendman, 2011). They cite the process of evaluation as one in which the participants (teachers) are moving forward following the Learning Curve, moving from conscious raising to resolution by working together. This framework is carried throughout the remainder of the text and highlighted with detailed steps in the final section, part three, of the book.

Chapter Five breaks down the planning process and includes sample plans and timelines differentiated for the length of time designated for development of an evaluation plan. Chapter Six defines the roles, responsibilities and objectives of the different group members within the process. Tips are also presented for the moderator, as well as lesson plans for implementing the process. Additional activities for engaging teachers are presented in Chapter Seven.

Sprinkled throughout the text are activities for readers to complete that guide thinking through the process. At the end of the text, activities are written with principals in mind. The final chapter explores the roles of
administrators, parents and community members as they engage in the evaluation process.

A strength of the text is its ability to accurately present both multiple aspects of the argument regarding evaluation along with examples of success within the field. A limitation of the book is the in-depth analysis of both sides of the argument as the book is written to lend support to creating an evaluation system. The hands-on nature of the book allows teachers, administrators, and leaders in the field an approach to begin the development of an evaluation process. Suggestions included in the book stem from timelines to quizzes and definitions of roles, and responsibilities for all involved.

Readers of the text who are also teachers will find that their voices are integral to the process of developing evaluation, while administrators and other stakeholders will recognize the value of working to create an evaluation process that is built off of teacher voices. The book brings about a collective approach to reforming evaluation in such a manner that presents example of success from around the country. Those success stories value and prioritize the inclusion of teachers as professionals who are actively engaged in reforming their profession to meet the needs of students and teachers.

The text is written to be used as a framework for bringing together stakeholders to engage beyond reading the book. Throughout the text are opportunities, suggestions and activities for engagement. Using the framework of the Learning Curve (Yahkelovich & Friedman, 2011), readers are able to become participants in a process that gives voice to education reform by considering the role and process of evaluating teachers.

References

About the Reviewer

Lesley Anne Evans, PhD is the Teacher-in-Residence at the University of Dayton. She serves as full-time faculty in Early Childhood Education. Her research topics include teacher selection, differentiation, and teacher preparation.