

2020 WL 5790529

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United States District Court, D. Arizona.

Roy and Josie FISHER, et al., Plaintiffs,
v.
UNITED STATES of America, Plaintiff-Intervenor,
v.
Anita Lohr, et al., Defendants,
and
Sidney L. Sutton, et al., Defendants-Intervenors,
Maria Mendoza, et al., Plaintiffs,
United States of America, Plaintiff-Intervenor,
v.
Tucson Unified School District No. One, et al.,
Defendants.

CV 74-90 TUC DCB (Lead Case), CV 74-204 TUC
DCB (Consolidated Case)

Signed 03/18/2020

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SPECIAL MASTER'S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION RELATING TO TEACHER EVALUATION TOOLS

Willis D. Hawley, Special Master

*1 The District uses at least a dozen different forms for
recording teacher effectiveness. This fact was brought to
the attention of the Court by the Special Master. In its
order, the Court directed the Special Master to identify the
discontinuities among these various ways of describing
teacher effectiveness¹.

The Special Master and Dr. Rebecca Montano, who is a
member of the Implementation Committee, examined the
following forms (some are rubrics some are checklists)
that are used in assessing teacher practices:

1. The modified Danielson instrument – this is the
primary teacher evaluation rubric
2. The technology integration observation tool
3. The AVID elective classroom observational form
4. The Cholla High School instructional visit form
(many schools have their own forms).
5. The culturally responsive pedagogy and
instruction form.
6. The Observable behavior and reflection
instrument for 2019-20
7. SPARKS—a summary of culturally responsive
teaching behaviors

8. The Mexican-American student services classroom checklist

9. ALP monitoring notes

10. Schoolwide restorative practices assessment instrument

11. The AVID consultant K-12 classroom observation tool

There are other forms that the Special Master and Dr. Montano did not assess including the site-based walk-through observation instruments, the AVID tutorial observation and feedback tool and additional forms used in dual language classes.

In most of these forms, teacher practices are described in somewhat different ways and different strategies are prioritized. While it is possible to match some of these practices on different forms, the terms used are different in many cases, which makes them subject to different understandings.² The District says that these various measures determine priorities for professional development but it is not clear which reports should be used for designing professional learning opportunities. The ambiguity involved in these different messages about teacher practice also makes it difficult for evaluators to provide consistent information to teachers about what they need to do to improve.

Recommendation

The most important school school-based influence on student learning is teacher effectiveness. If the tools used to identify what teachers need to know and be able to do are inconsistent and convey different priorities for improvement, the ability of the District to enhance student cognitive and social development is undermined.

The District should align the various descriptions of effective teaching using the same terminology to describe the same practices whenever possible. To the extent possible, the practices being assessed should be aligned with the revised Danielson instrument because that tool is the most comprehensive, the best validated, the one with the formal role in rating teacher expertise and the one shaped by District teachers and administrators. This alignment exercise should be completed before the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.

***2** This recommendation should not, however, be mandated by the Court. The USP is silent about the ways the District should evaluate teachers.

All Citations

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Footnotes

¹ There are well over 100 different descriptions of teaching practices on the several forms, but not one specific description appears more than once.

² When ambiguity characterizes messages, the person receiving the messages will tend to fit the meaning of those messages into their current understanding of what their responsibilities are.