

# Foreword

As every educator recognizes, teaching is enormously complex; teachers make (literally, people have counted this) hundreds of decisions every day. Teaching is demanding, not only physically and emotionally, but cognitively as well. Teaching, in other words, is a *thinking* person's job. And if we accept, and I think we must, that teaching is (among other things) cognitive work, then those who support teachers, in any capacity (mentor, coach, supervisor), must support the *cognition*.

In the framework for teaching, (the FfT), I have broken down this complex work into four main domains of teaching: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. This framework has helped educators in virtually every state in the United States, and many other countries, acquire a common language and shared understanding about good teaching. This has permitted self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation, all essential contributors to teacher learning.

The most powerful use of the FfT, and the one that should accompany any other use, is for teacher self-assessment and reflection. Even when it is used as the foundation of an evaluation system, it's imperative that structures be in place to promote professional growth. This is because, no matter how successful a lesson is, it could always be at least a little better, and so an approach that permits the analysis of a lesson, around a clear definition of good teaching, is so helpful for promoting learning.

But in order for the FfT (or any other tool) to contribute to professional learning, there must be a culture in the school in which it is safe for teachers to take risks, to try new approaches, and to be critical of their own practice. This culture suggests a need for an environment of trust: Teachers must not fear that their own honest

self-appraisal will be used against them. Such an environment is a matter of culture and is a critical ingredient of school leadership.

Learning how to build trust and communication among teachers and school leaders is a necessary ingredient for creating and sustaining a culture that supports teacher growth. The study of trust (and how this trust impacts teacher growth) is what makes Shelly's book so important for teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators alike.

*Charlotte Danielson*

Copyright Corwin 2014

# *Preface*

“**T**hey won’t care what you know until they know that you care.” This profound statement holds true for the teacher’s relationship with the students in the classroom, the faculty member’s relationships with families, and the relationship between educators and school leaders.

I’d like to begin the book by addressing some questions about the book and the topic of trust itself.

## **WHY WRITE A BOOK ON TRUST, AND WHY WRITE IT NOW?**

Trust is vital to every personal and professional relationship we have, but never was the time so ripe to explore trust in depth than when states, school districts, and schools were tasked to develop a new (or embrace an already-developed) evaluation tool. This new evaluation tool had the added responsibility of being tied to teacher pay, based on observations and the subsequent evaluation. “How do we know it will be fair?” was the cry heard around the nation. Administrators who had previously, in many cases, been managers of schools were now being asked to talk with teachers about their teaching more in depth than had previously been required.

While the level of knowledge of the school leader was touted as very important, perhaps more important became the issue of the administrator’s character. Soon, the issue of trust was emerging as a critical factor in successful evaluation systems.

As I studied the issue of trust in my educational doctoral program, I was concurrently examining my own past experiences with administrators and comparing those to the relationships I wanted (and in most cases, had) with the teachers in the school in which

I was currently the principal. Common themes emerged from my research and from my own practice in implementing the new teacher evaluation system in my own school, and the perfect storm was born.

### **WHO SHOULD READ THIS?**

While teachers will likely find this book incredibly insightful as to what other educators are saying about trust, the primary audiences are school leaders, district leaders, instructional coaches, superintendents, and professors in the area of educational leadership. More and more often, superintendents are sharing the profound need for their principals and assistant principals to have more education in this area. Therefore, universities and colleges across the country would benefit greatly by adding a course designed to improve trust and communication between school leaders and teachers.

### **WHAT DOES THIS BOOK OFFER?**

While talking about trust is interesting on any level of life experience, this text is chock full of strategies based on actual research that will enhance the trust and communication between teachers and school leaders. Tools as simple as word choice and seating arrangement are shared, along with a multitude of others.

The research on trust is substantial and often cited throughout. However, the tone of this book is intended to be conversational. As a colleague mentioned, “In reading pieces of your book, I felt as though we were talking over a cup of coffee.” The organization of the book includes an introduction, general information on trust, then a really deep dive into five of the high-impact builders of trust.

By the time you finish reading this book, my fervent hope is that you will have added some possible tools to your toolkit in helping teachers see teacher evaluations as a process that is done with them, collaboratively and in a culture that supports the growth process. You will also find the following:

- Reflection questions to which you can return again and again to evaluate the progress you’re making on building trust and communication with your staff
- Strategies for fostering a calm atmosphere in your school
- A process for building a climate of competence among your staff