



## **An Educator's Perspective on Evidence of Quality Teacher Practice: Kaivan Yuen**

Author: Kaivan Yuen

Date: May 19, 2011

Series Number: IPMS022-X043-2011

The CENTER XCHANGE is a repository of documents produced by and about UCLA students, alumni, and faculty on the work of transforming public schools. The CENTER XCHANGE is managed by an editorial board that meets monthly to review submission and develop new content. Access to these resources vary with copyright selection, however Center X strives to provide open and free access whenever possible.

© Copyright UC Regents 2011  
Center X is part of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies of UCLA  
1320 Moore Hall Box 951521  
Los Angeles, CA 90095  
[www.centerx.gseis.ucla.edu](http://www.centerx.gseis.ucla.edu)

## **ABSTRACT**

An alumnus of UCLA's Teacher Education Program currently working as a principal in Torrance Unified School District answers the question - If someone came into your classroom, what would you offer as evidence of the quality of your professional practice and why?

# **An Educator's Perspective on Evidence of Quality Teacher Practice**

**Kaivan Yuen**  
**May 19, 2011**

When entering a teacher's classroom, I experience a vibrant and welcoming feel where all students want to come to school and learn everyday. The bulletin boards have titles, followed by guiding questions related to the State standards with authentic work samples displayed to demonstrate students' understanding of the subject matter. The teacher actively engages the students, resulting in few student disruptions or students being off task. When students don't understand something, they feel safe to ask questions and share ideas. The teacher builds relationships with her students and parents and can point out each child's temperament, strengths, weaknesses, and personality. Students know the classroom rules and routines and understand the consequences if they don't comply with them. The nurturing, yet, serious learning environment lets students know that learning is their first priority, and that the teacher is there to help and guide them.

The teacher frequently checks for students' understanding by randomly calling on students to provide answers or having students display their answers on mini whiteboards. She provides immediate corrective feedback, instead of allowing students to repeat the same mistakes over and over. She differentiates the instruction to meet the needs of special education, English as a second language, gifted, and general education students. The teacher also integrates technology into the instruction by using document cameras, LCD projectors, interactive whiteboards, computers, various instructional software, and student response systems. Sometimes, there may even be an instructional coach or peer working with the teacher *providing* constructive feedback

to enhance instruction. These practices demonstrate a teacher's competence in teaching and learning, constantly making sure students understand the subject matter, adjusting the lesson to fit each student's needs, and using technology to enhance instruction.

Visible on the teacher's desk are her lesson plan book, grade book, and student portfolios. Student portfolios contain ongoing informal and formal assessments such as running records, student writing samples, writing rubrics, authentic math problem solving assignments, and anecdotal records to show student progression during the school year. The teacher develops standard-based lessons that build upon one another, and re-teaches them whenever students do not grasp concepts. The grade book reveals a gradual increase in students' academic achievement and all students make at least one year's progress by the end of the school year. Standardized test results also show gains from previous years. The teacher's planning, preparation, and data collection and analysis, often determine the teacher's instruction, management, and classroom environment.

As an elementary school principal, I work with teachers from different grade levels with a variety of styles, personalities, and competencies. These are some of the professional practices I would showcase as evidence of successful teaching practices. However, being an effective teacher requires more than effective preparation and delivery of instruction. The relationships a teacher creates and sustains with her students are powerful and can be life changing. A teacher who cares about her students, constantly challenges them, and takes a deep interest in their lives can make a positive lifelong impact on them. For instance, the teacher can empower and motivate students to make right decisions, do better in school, and become better people in life.

It is difficult to quantify the impact an effective teacher has on students because the effects may not be evident until decades later.

For instance, in the third grade, I was wrongly retained because I spoke a language other than English. I lost all of my confidence as a student and became severely depressed. The following year, I had a remarkable teacher, Mr. Egan, who gave me a chance. Mr. Egan quickly noticed my strengths and used them to help me learn. I felt valued and challenged in his class. At the end of the school year, I skipped a grade and was promoted to the fifth grade. Ever since that day, I knew I wanted to be a teacher to honor Mr. Egan for his work and to provide students with the same opportunities that he gave me. Does Mr. Egan know about the impact he has made in my life? No, he died that following summer, never knowing how important he was to me. Mr. Egan may not have been the strongest teacher, but he had a gift in mentoring and developing students.

It is foolish to solely judge a teacher's effectiveness based on superficial and narrow-minded information, such as high-stakes tests or the way the classroom looks. It is wiser to take the time to look at a variety of data, including the relationships a teacher has with students, in order to make an accurate judgment of a teacher's positive impact on students' lives.