



Principles of Teaching Excellence **Resource Guide**

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How to Use this Guide

The resources included in this guide are designed to facilitate a systematic approach to adopting principles of teaching excellence. These principles should serve as a roadmap for developing a structured, coordinated approach to faculty development. Therefore, this process of selecting principles that best fit the needs of the school is a critical first step to ensuring that the school community has a shared vision of teaching excellence. While these resources focus on three research-based frameworks of teaching principles, the guide may be used to evaluate the fit of any existing principles of teaching framework.

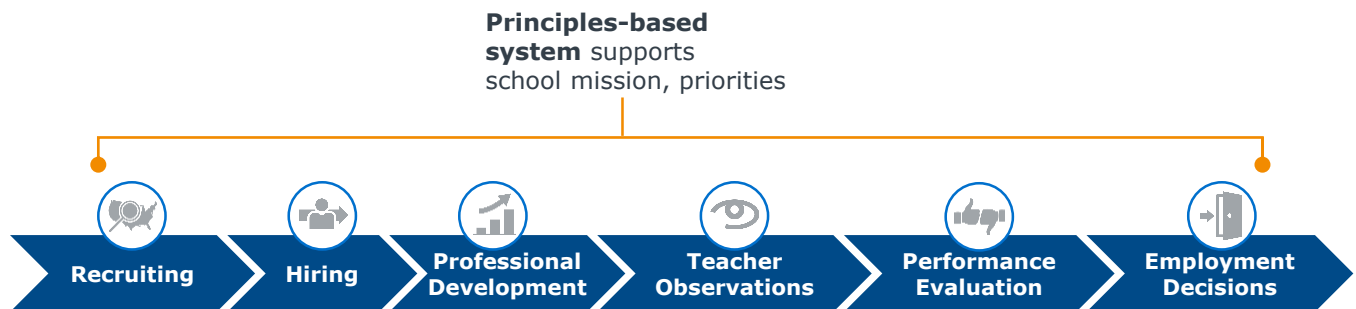
This guide is designed for academic leadership teams and committees responsible for faculty professional development or performance evaluation. The guide’s resources are based on EAB research and interviews with heads of schools and academic leaders at independent schools.

Resource Guide Overview

Building a Principles-Based Talent Management System

Independent schools have historically focused their talent development efforts on recruiting and hiring highly qualified teachers. All subsequent processes—the structure of professional development, the presence (or absence) of teacher observation and evaluation—are often disjointed and irregular. As such, talent management isn't structured, coherent, or intentionally planned. This lack of structure can leave teachers unaware of how they are doing and how they can improve.

A coherent, well-structured approach to talent management, from recruitment through to employment decisions around contract renewals, is necessary to ensure a top quality and truly transformative educational experience. Principles of teaching provide a shared definition of excellence, which is essential for assessing the quality of teaching practice and developing a system to promote professional learning. In a structured, coordinated system, each of the six stages of talent management highlighted below is grounded in these principles.



What are Principles of Teaching Excellence?

Principles of teaching excellence define the various aspects of professional practice that constitute great teaching. These principles reflect the aspirations and high expectations schools have for their teachers and guide teachers in their efforts to meet, and eventually exceed, these expectations. Principles of teaching excellence typically cover the full range of activities and responsibilities of teaching, from lesson planning to building strong relationships with students to establishing a safe learning environment.

Principles of Excellence Provide “True North”

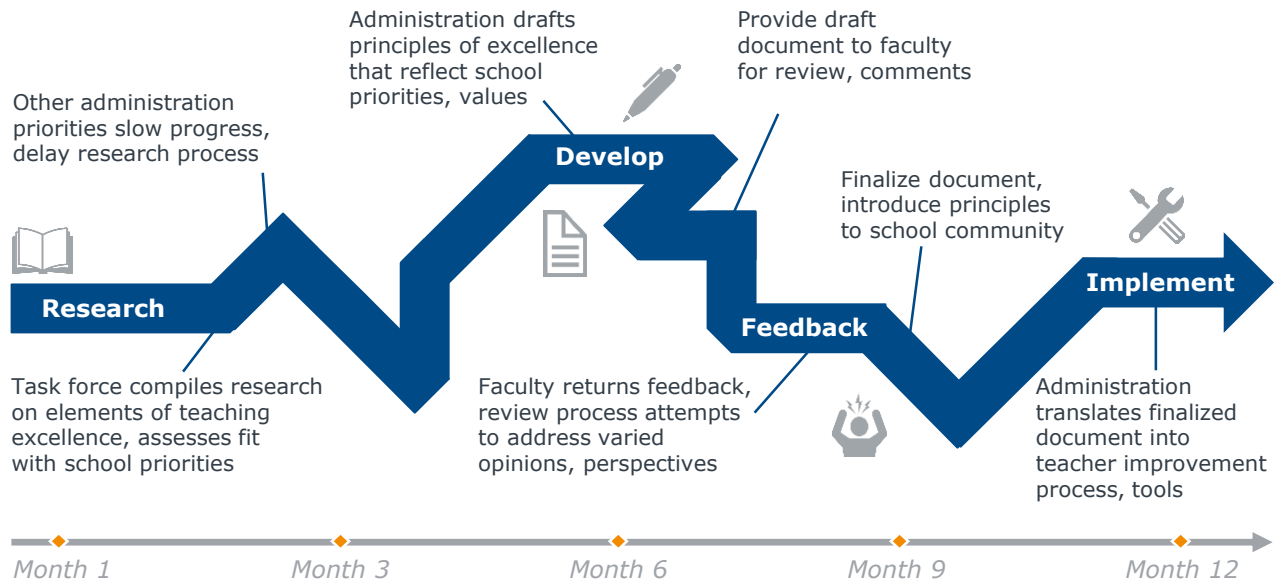
These principles serve as a guidepost for developing a structured, coordinated effort to ensure that teachers are equipped and motivated to translate those principles into great teaching. They guide teachers and administrators in their efforts to identify where they excel and where they can improve. Equally important, principles should guide the school's collective effort to provide coherent, effective, sustained professional learning opportunities.

Resource Guide Overview (cont.)

Creating Principles is Challenging

Developing principles of teaching excellence is often a complex, lengthy, and laborious process. Sifting through the research on effective teaching, distilling that research down into a meaningful, useable document, and getting school constituents to agree on the principles all require substantial work. A significant risk of this process is that in an effort to build consensus, schools will develop principles of minimal expectations rather than excellence. The figure below depicts this process.

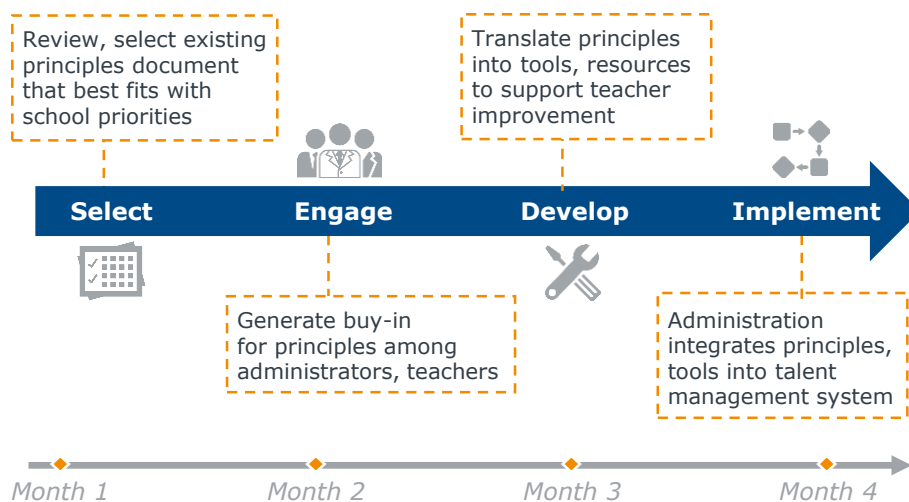
Indirect Path to Principles of Excellence



Adopting Existing Principles is a More Straightforward Approach

There are excellent, research-based principles documents already in existence. Adopting one of these documents will ensure that the school has an evidence-based, comprehensive focus on teaching excellence. The school is then able to focus on building the structures necessary for teachers to achieve this excellence, including generating buy-in, developing tools, and integrating the principles into all aspects of talent management.

Process for Adopting Existing Principles



7 Rules for Selecting a Teaching Principles Framework

Follow these seven rules when selecting a framework of teaching principles. These rules help to ensure that the selection process results in a best-fit framework, regardless of the specific approach taken or context of the school.



1 **Be intentional, selective about who to include in the process.**

Set limits on how many people will be involved in the process. Limit who is included by asking “Why is this person’s participation necessary?” Involving a large number of stakeholders in the selection process may increase buy-in but risks diluting definitions of excellence and prolonging the decision-making process.



2 **But make sure key constituents have input.**

Carefully select a group of constituents whose input is necessary to adopt and implement the framework. Members of the academic leadership team, highly respected faculty members, and department chairs all need to be on board and should be considered for a selection committee.



3 **Be systematic in selecting a framework.**

Create a structured, objective approach to assessing the fit of different framework options. Use a decision matrix to guide the selection process (see the matrix on page 9 in this resource guide).



4 **Find the right balance of specificity and flexibility.**

Select a framework that provides both specificity and flexibility. A framework of teaching excellence needs to have enough specificity to be understandable and applicable to each department. It is equally important for the framework to have sufficient flexibility to allow for appropriate variation across campus.



5 **Communicate with the school community.**

Communicate frequently about the process and celebrate the selection as an important step forward for the school. Transparency about the process of selecting a framework is critical to keep constituents engaged and will foster faculty buy-in.



6 **Stay focused on growth.**

Frame the process of selecting and instituting principles as supporting faculty growth, rather than judging performance. The selected principles should be used to promote a culture of continuous improvement among teachers and not simply as an accountability system.



7 **Keep an eye toward supplemental tools and resources.**

Selecting a framework is only the beginning of this process. The accompanying tools will make it a living document. Keep that in mind when selecting a framework.

Danielson's Framework for Teaching

Overview

The Framework for Teaching was originally developed by education scholar Charlotte Danielson in 1996¹ to provide a definition of excellent teaching. It is informed by research on teaching by Educational Testing Service and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. It is designed to be comprehensive and reflect the complexity of teaching. At the same time, it is generic and flexible enough to be applied to any division or discipline. The framework describes teaching at four levels of performance: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished.

Structure of the Framework

The framework is composed of four high-level domains of teaching, which are further specified in 22 components. Each of these components is composed of several smaller elements that further define each component. In the example below, the domain "Classroom Environment" is further specified by the component "Managing Student Behavior," which includes the element "Expectations."

Domains

1. Planning and Preparation
2. Classroom Environment
3. Instruction
4. Professional Responsibilities

Example **Component** within Classroom Environment:

Managing Student Behavior

Example **Element** within Managing Student Behavior:

Expectations: "It is clear from what the teacher says, or by inference from student actions, that expectations for student conduct have been established and that they are being implemented."

Benefits

- The extensive details in the framework promote a shared understanding across the school by offering rich examples and limiting opportunities for varied interpretations. This level of detail can foster the consistent application of the framework for observations and evaluations.
- Different levels of detail (domains, components, and elements) create flexibility for schools to choose the level of specificity that best suits the school.

Potential Drawbacks

- The framework can be overwhelming (at over 100 pages long) and might be perceived as overly complex, which can obscure the bigger picture about what constitutes excellent teaching.
- Danielson's framework does not include specific instructional techniques, which limits its use as a tool for administrators to recommend new techniques for teachers to implement.

More Information

Learn more about the Framework for Teaching at <http://www.danielsongroup.org/>



1) The most recent edition of the framework was produced in 2013.

Marshall's Teacher Evaluation Rubrics

Overview

The Teacher Evaluation Rubrics were developed by education scholar Kim Marshall, who also runs the Marshall Memo, a weekly newsletter compiling research and best practices in K-12 education. The framework is a series of six rubrics, each covering a different domain of teaching practice. The rubrics synthesize research on teaching and professional practice from foundational texts on teaching, including *The Skillful Teacher* (Saphier), *What Works in Schools* (Marzano), and *Linking Teacher Evaluation and Student Learning* (Tucker & Stronge). The rubrics include intentionally simple, brief descriptions of teaching practices in order to make them easy to use for classroom observations.

Structure of the Framework

Each of the six rubrics is one page in length and covers one domain of teaching. Each of these six domains of teaching is further specified in 10 elements. The rubrics include limited details about the elements of highly effective teaching. In the example below, the domain "Delivery of Instruction" is further specified by the element "Engagement."

Domains

1. Planning and Preparation for Learning
2. Classroom Management
3. Delivery of Instruction
4. Monitoring, Assessment, and Follow-Up
5. Family and Community Outreach
6. Professional Responsibilities

Example **Element** within Delivery of Instruction:

Engagement: "Gets virtually all students involved in focused activities, actively learning and problem-solving, losing themselves in the work."

Benefits

- The rubric format is designed to make the framework easy to use in classroom observations, feedback conversations, and evaluations of teacher performance.
- Two of the rubrics cover aspects of effective teaching that are less-emphasized in other frameworks: communication with families and monitoring, assessment, and follow-up.

Potential Drawbacks

- The rubric format, which includes only limited descriptions of effective practices, loses some of the nuances of teaching.
- The succinct nature of the rubrics may limit their usefulness beyond classroom observations and evaluations.

More Information

Learn more about the Teacher Evaluation Rubrics at <https://www.marshallmemo.com>



Marzano's Teacher Evaluation Framework

Overview

The Marzano Teacher Evaluation Framework was developed by education researcher Robert Marzano, Executive Director of the Learning Sciences Marzano Center. The framework was developed from Marzano's research on teaching methods that drive student success. The framework focuses on strategies and approaches that research indicates are effective at improving student learning and achievement. As such, the Marzano framework places substantial emphasis on improving student outcomes with specific, research-based instructional practices: 41 of the 60 elements in the framework are clustered in the domain "Classroom Strategies for Learning."

Structure of the Framework

The framework is composed of four high-level domains of teaching, which are further specified in 60 elements. Within each element, several specific practices are highlighted. In the example below, the domain "Classroom Strategies for Learning" is further defined by the element "Managing Response Rates" which includes practices such as using response cards.

Domains

1. Classroom Strategies for Learning
2. Planning and Preparing
3. Reflecting on Teaching
4. Collegiality and Professionalism

Example **Element** within Classroom Strategies for Learning:
Managing Response Rates

Example Practices within Managing Response Rates:

- *Teacher uses response cards*
- *Teacher has students use hand signals to respond to questions*
- *Teacher uses choral response*

Benefits

- The framework identifies specific techniques and strategies that teachers can implement to improve student engagement and achievement.
- These specific instructional strategies can be a helpful resource for administrators or instructional coaches to offer targeted suggestions for improving teacher practice.

Potential Drawbacks

- The framework gives less attention to non-observable aspects of teaching that occur outside the classroom, such as planning and preparation.
- With a heavy emphasis on specific teaching practices that teachers can implement in their classrooms, this framework may be viewed as too prescriptive for some independent school cultures.

More Information

Learn more about the Teacher Evaluation Framework at <http://www.marzanoevaluation.com/>



Framework of Teaching Principles Decision Matrix

Purpose of the Tool

The following decision matrix is designed to help schools select a framework of teaching principles. Based on our analysis of the Danielson, Marshall, and Marzano frameworks, we entered scores for each criterion for the frameworks. In this matrix, we limited the scores to 0 or 1, with 0 indicating that the criterion is not prominent in the framework and 1 indicating that the criterion is prominent in the framework. The steps below provide additional information on completing the decision matrix.

- Step 1: Choose the relative importance of each criterion and enter a score from 0 (not important at all) to 5 (very important) in the Weight column.
- Step 2: Multiply the assigned weight for each criterion by the score for each framework to get weighted scores. For example, if criterion #1 has a weight of 5, the frameworks would be scored Danielson=0, Marshall=0, and Marzano=5.
- Step 3: Add up the weighted scores for each column. The highest scoring framework is the best fit for the school.

CRITERIA	WEIGHT (0-5)	Danielson	Marshall	Marzano	Option 4
1. Specific instructional actions, strategies that teachers can implement into practice		0	0	1	
2. An in-depth, easy-to-read reference for adopting principles		1	0	0	
3. Includes descriptions of teaching at different levels of specificity		1	0	1	
4. A greater emphasis on aspects of teaching related to assessment, diagnosis of student learning		0	1	0	
5. An emphasis on the link between teacher strategies and student outcomes		0	0	1	
6. A high-level list of teacher actions that can guide observations or conversations		0	1	0	
7. Separation of teacher evidence and student evidence of elements of effective teaching		0	0	1	
8. Comprehensive coverage of teacher planning and preparation		1	1	0	
9. Extensive supporting documentation, resources, and opportunities for training on using the framework		1	0	1	
10. Uncomplicated for supervisors to use and easy for teachers to digest		0	1	0	
TOTAL					