

Working with Teachers to Grow and Improve

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Athens Academy
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Athens Academy

- Independent College Preparatory
- Academically Challenging
- 90% AP scores 3 or above, 66% 4 or 5
- 4.2 miles from UGA
- Wide mix of student ability
- 24 buildings on 152 acres
- 914 students K3-12



Faculty



- 147 Full Time and 26 Part Time faculty members
- 39 Full time and 1 Part time Middle School teachers
- 30 faculty members with over 25 years of experience (eight this year!)
- Average experience 17.4 years, 18.5 in Middle School



Where we started

Answer Garden -- WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EVALUATION & OBSERVATION?

Type answergarden.ch/2135921 into your phone/browser to submit your thoughts



Why is this important/why is it hard to do

- Being judged
- Showing our weaknesses to others
- Trust
- Money / advancement
- Veteran teachers
- “You don’t understand my class”



Starting at the End -- what we created

The big picture

The little picture

Observation and student feedback

Reflection and conversation

Athens Academy Middle School
Reflections on Teaching

Name _____
Grade & Subject Area _____
Date _____

- Synthesize results of student feedback & peer/admin observation feedback:
 - Reflect on trends within your classroom & within your discipline.
 - What are some patterns you see from the recent past and present?
 - How do you see things evolving in the future?
 - Address the scope & sequence of your subject area in Athens Academy Middle School.
 - How does your curriculum (content, skills, assessments, essential questions) align with the standards?
 - How do you see your role in developing middle school students in your subject area?

Middle School Observation/Evaluation Cycles

Timeframe	"Green": teachers new to AA & teachers who have cycled out of White status	"White": teachers who have completed Green cycle; will eventually cycle back to Green
Observation OF a peer--ONE per year (minimum) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Within or outside of your subject area & grade levelObserve a different teacher each year within a cycleFill out observation sheet & submit to DeanDean will coordinate observer/observee requests	Teachers new to AA: upon Director approval Others: 1 year	All teachers: 3 years (May be extended as needs arise)
Observation BY a peer--ONE per year (minimum) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Within or outside of your subject area & grade levelObserved by a different teacher each year within a cycleObservation sheet will be completed & submitted to Dean--filed in your Growth & Eval. folderDean will coordinate observer/observee requests	YES	YES
Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none">at least once per yearshould be anonymouspeer-created surveyfiled in your Growth & Evaluation folder	YES	YES



Discussion Starters

I have about 21 days with them, and I will be the first to acknowledge that I am wandering (possibly lost) in my search for what to teach them.

Getting feedback on my tendency to be harsh and sarcastic in my responses to students.

I think my team has a reputation with the students as being mean personally and hard academically. And I think that reputation gets stronger every year. This can be great but it can also be defeating.

Children have changed. Trends have changed. Students are less auditory and more visual than they were in the past.

Teachers' and students' relationships are changing as we learn from each other. My role is shifting from the sole owner of information to facilitator and guide to learning.



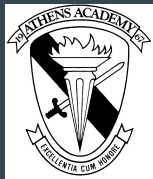
Getting started and the creation process

Step 1 -- Give yourself time & grace to create something sustainable and revise if needed

- Year-long process: Fall semester was research & planning; Spring semester was the pilot; Summer was the revision period

Step 2 -- Make the process a two-way street instead of top-down to get buy-in

- Faculty development day to answer big questions & set goals
- Steered by the Dean but all input came from teacher small groups & large group discussion



Questions we had to answer together:

“The process that must not be named” -- What do we want it to look like?
And what should we call it?

1. What does it mean to be a “good teacher”?
2. How can we measure good teaching?
3. How can we measure progress towards goals and growth, especially for a veteran teacher?
4. Who should be involved in the observation/feedback/evaluation process & why?
5. What are the unique opportunities & challenges of evaluation in an educational setting?
6. Why are we lucky in our particular educational setting today?

The development process continues.....

- Google form to get volunteers for the research & development committee
 - Representation from all grade levels & subject areas
 - Variety of comfort levels & experience with evaluation
- Met every two weeks for a few months
 - The Dean provided research articles & examples of eval documents, but committee members also did their own research
 - The Dean attended all meetings & shared a google doc for meeting notes, relevant links, and an agenda for the next meeting
 - Google doc was shared with the faculty at large so they could stay in the loop and give feedback there
 - Follow-up between Dean & Director each time to share progress and help set the agenda for upcoming meetings



Priorities

- All wanted peer observations & feedback from students yearly.
- Some felt strongly about having a checklist.
- Some felt strongly about the reflective essay.
- Able to incorporate everyone's wishes by having the Green cycle & White cycle.
- The “Green cycle” is the whole sha-bang. It's a lot without being overwhelming, but it's still a lot.
- We agreed that doing the whole process every 3-4 years was doable.



Pilot Program

- 6th grade teachers agreed to be the guinea pigs
- Piloted the entire process during spring semester & had conversations with the Director over summer
- Feedback from the pilot program allowed us to tweak our process & evaluation documents
- Started official Green & White cycles after the pilot was complete



Keeping it going

- The Dean tracks & shares who is on Green/White cycles each year & meets with Green cycle in the fall to review expectations
- The Dean takes requests via google form for peer observations, does all peer observation matchmaking, and informs faculty of their match-ups for the year
- The Dean provides class coverage to facilitate observations
- The Dean tracks all completed observations & student surveys
- The Dean sends reminder emails with links to all observation & growth documents and follows up with individuals as needed



Why this works for us

- Admin being open to feedback
- Administrators with classroom experience
- Head of School handles salaries
- A really organized Dean



Resources -- Example articles of interest to share with faculty

Trends in Teacher Evaluation: How states are measuring teacher performance

Teacher Evaluation: An Issue Overview

The Compositional Effect of Rigorous Teacher Evaluation on Workforce Quality

Building a Feedback-Rich Culture

Seeking Authentic Feedback to Improve Practice



Handouts from Athens Academy's Feedback & Growth System

Overview Chart of Observation & Evaluation Cycles at Athens Academy Middle

Peer Observation Form for ACAD MS faculty

Reflective Essay Prompts for ACAD MS feedback & growth

Teacher Self-evaluation Checklist for ACAD MS

Observation Cycle Rosters & Peer Evaluators (spreadsheet)

Observation/Observer Request Form (google form)

Thank You!

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