

Tried and True: Exceptional Leaders Use, and Strong Evidence Supports Tripod Effectiveness

Tripod's 7Cs framework of effective teaching captures essential elements of instructional practice, so that teachers and educational leaders can easily monitor progress and access actionable feedback.

Strong Evidence for Instructional Improvement

The research provides Tier 1, strong evidence – supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented randomized control experimental studies – to demonstrate that better survey results on the 7Cs components predict higher student achievement, engagement and motivation (Kane & Cantrell, 2010; Kane & Staiger, 2012; Kane et al., 2013; Stuit, Ferguson, & Phillips, 2013; Raudenbush & Jean, 2014). Moreover, strategic use of Tripod surveys together with the 7Cs framework supports reflection, goal-setting, professional learning, and instructional improvement.

About Tripod 7Cs

Tripod's national surveys were developed by Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson of Harvard University. And, over the past dozen years, many research studies have highlighted the reliability and validity of the Tripod data including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation through the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project. The MET project was a multi-year study across more than 3,000 teachers, dozens of organizations and academic institutions, within districts in North Carolina, Texas, Colorado, Florida, Tennessee, and New York to better understand approaches to measuring effective teaching.

Evidence-based Reliability

After randomly assigning teachers to different classrooms, MET researchers found that classroom observations conducted by trained observers and surveys of students in the classroom were both positively and significantly correlated with student achievement. Moreover composite measures of effectiveness – including both observations and student surveys – identified teachers who produce higher achievement among their students. In fact, because the reliability of student feedback was higher than the other measures in the Gates study, incorporating student feedback generally raised reliability (and lowered volatility) when it was included in a combined measure. Moreover, in examining the stability of the 7Cs composite across time, Rowley et al. (2019) found the 7Cs composite score to be as reliable or more reliable than classroom observations and value-added test score models.

Associated with Higher Levels of Student Learning

In addition, studies also indicate that the specific measures of the 7Cs – care, confer, captivate, clarify, consolidate, challenge, and classroom management – are associated with higher levels of student learning, higher levels of student happiness and college aspirations (Ferguson et al., 2015), and higher levels of efficacy and effort (Ferguson et al., 2015). Ferguson et al. (2015) found elements of clarify (i.e., lucid explanations and clearing explanations) most associated with student efficacy and elements of challenge (i.e., requiring persistence) most associated with student effort. Similarly, another study found that a positive, one standard deviation difference in how challenging a teacher is – essentially a teacher having higher expectations – as measured by the Tripod 7Cs survey “challenge” – is associated with 31% higher annual student learning (Bjorklund-Young et al., 2017). Researchers have also examined students’ perceptions of teachers who create and maintain safe and supportive learning environments; despite varying school contexts, they found that students provided consistent reports that effective classroom managers meet students’ needs by developing caring relationships and controlling the classroom environment while developing student responsibility and engaging students in their learning – dimensions measured by the 7Cs (Egeberg et al., 2017). And, a study examining the relationship between student perceptions of classroom climate and student growth found a statistically significant relationships between student perceptions of caring and reading student Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) gain scores, as well as student perceptions of conferring and captivating and student math TVAAS gain scores (Fleenor, 2015).



Taken together there is strong evidence for the 7Cs as a measure of teaching quality. The research shows that teacher effectiveness is not only reliably measured by the Tripod 7Cs student survey, and that it strengthens the reliability of other measures, but that its unique dimensions – the results of which are available at the classroom level – also align with higher levels of student learning, engagement, and motivation.

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