

San Diego:

Accountability Under the Stull Bill

ROBERT A. BENNETT*

Say neither . . . "It is deadly magic and accursed," nor, "It is blest," but only "It is here."

Stephen Vincent Benét

ACCOUNTABILITY is alive (if not entirely well) in California, and teacher and administrator evaluation is *here*. Unlike Scarlett O'Hara, certificated personnel in California schools can't wait to think about *that* tomorrow. Under the provisions of the California state legislature's Stull Bill, the performance of *all* certificated personnel shall be evaluated every two years under a uniform, objective system of assessment developed by each school district.

The San Diego Unified School District, like all other school districts in the state, is now in its third year of implementation of the Stull Bill. The first year was devoted to developing the guidelines for this evaluation process. These guidelines were recommended to the district's Board of Education for adoption by a Joint Study Committee composed of members from district administration and the Certificated Employee Negotiating Council. During the second year approximately one-half of the district's cer-

In its third year of implementation of the state-legislated Stull Bill, the San Diego Unified School District reports this experience in accountability as a valuable one. Central office staff members have felt a sense of pride in achieving objectives identified and recognized by their colleagues.

tificated staff participated in the evaluation process, and in the 1973-74 school year the process will be completed for all certificated personnel. In subsequent years, unless the legislative mandate is changed, each teacher and administrator will be evaluated every other year.

As a first step in this evaluation process, the guidelines call for setting performance objectives and standards as well as the means of assessing their achievement. This approach is quite different from former procedures which concentrated on checklists or rating scales of teaching methodology and personality traits. The guidelines emphasize

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that to be successful, a system of evaluation based on performance objectives must ensure that the person evaluated and the person evaluating agree on the objective, the means of evaluation, and the level of performance expected.

The guidelines also specify that a minimum of three performance objectives be selected. These objectives in no way encompass all of a staff member's responsibility, but rather serve as a basis for an in-depth evaluation of just three phases of the person's assignment. The statement of each objective includes a description of the standards that will be used as a basis for determining to what degree the objective has been achieved.

Following the statement of the objective and standards, the evaluator and evaluatee describe the assessment techniques that will be used. In the case of support personnel, it was decided that at least one of the objectives would be measured in part by responses from the staff members served. Finally, the pre-evaluation agreement includes a list of support requirements. The purpose of this list is to identify in advance any constraints or factors that might hinder the achievement of the stated objective.

All of these items are agreed upon, written on an evaluation worksheet for each objective, and signed by both the evaluator and the evaluatee within the first two months of the school year. During the next five months, the assessment techniques described are followed, and the evaluator and the evaluatee meet for a conference again in early March (probationary staff) or in April

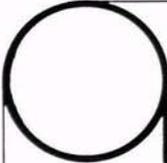
(permanent staff). Both record on the evaluation worksheet their individual assessment of the degree of achievement in reaching the objective and again sign the worksheet.

The evaluator then prepares a summary evaluation report that becomes a part of the staff member's personnel file. On this report sheet, the evaluator summarizes the achievement of the stated objectives and rates the employee as "unsatisfactory," "requires improvement," or "effective." The report is discussed with the person being evaluated who is given an opportunity to record reactions to the evaluation. The report is then signed by both parties and forwarded to the evaluator's supervisor for review and subsequently to the personnel department for filing.

Early in the school year all members of the district's Programs Division attended a workshop in which division goals were formulated. One of the six goals is listed below as an example:

To evaluate, select, purchase, or create materials and equipment in cooperation with other district personnel to implement or supplement district instructional programs and to make them available to teachers and students.

Later, in a conference with the language arts specialist, each of the ten members of the Language Arts and Early Childhood resource team formulated three objectives that contributed to the attainment of one of these six goals. For example, one resource teacher selected the following objective and standards for evaluation:



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Objective: To assist teachers in evaluating and recommending new basic and supplementary texts for the senior high school English program.

Standards: (a) Teachers will receive appropriate materials submitted by publishers.

(b) Teachers will be given assistance in organizing the many books submitted to match the variety of elective courses offered.

(c) Teachers will be provided resource assistance in determining reading difficulty and appropriateness of material to the diverse needs and interests of students throughout the district.

(d) Teachers will have available a variety of instructional materials from which to choose that will provide a base for effective instruction in their individual classrooms.

As another example, an elementary consultant formulated the following objective and standards:

Objective: To identify teachers who have developed effective techniques of individualizing instruction in a continuous progress program in reading and language arts and to assist them to videotape demonstration lessons to be used in the district's in-service education program.

Standards: (a) Teachers will be helped to organize a demonstration lesson that will make an effective videotape program.

(b) Teachers will be provided the materials they need for an effective demonstration lesson.

(c) Teachers will be helped to feel natural and comfortable as their lesson is videotaped.

The assessment technique used to evaluate this objective was a questionnaire sent to each of the teachers who received this service. All responses to the questionnaire were returned to the evaluator who summarized the degree of achievement after studying the comments by the teachers. The evaluator commented as follows: "Each of the standards for achievement of the objective has been successfully met. Teachers responding to the questionnaire all appreciated the help provided by the consultant. They especially noted the moral support she gave them while they were under the pressure of 'performing' before a television camera. The work of the consultant in planning and producing this series of videotapes

contributes significantly to the district program of individualizing instruction."

As a final example, a consultant in early childhood education prepared the following objective and standards:

Objective: To provide consultant services requested by individual principals and teachers in the area of early childhood education.

Standards: (a) Requests are met courteously and effectively within a reasonable time.

(b) Services provided are judged by the individual making the request to be of value and appropriate to the expressed need.

The assessment techniques consisted of a log of all requests and a summary of the services provided, which were reviewed by the evaluator. Also utilized was a feedback questionnaire, which was sent by the evaluator to a random sampling of those individuals requesting consultant services.

The cost to the district in terms of hours spent in agreeing upon goals, formulating objectives and standards, applying the assessment techniques, reviewing and interpreting the results, and writing and discussing the reports is extremely high. It is difficult at this time to judge the cost effectiveness of this approach to evaluation of central office staff. In the case of this particular language arts resource team, it should be noted, however, that the program was a factor in raising staff morale of the participants.

Although the evaluation was imposed from the outside by the state legislature and was entered into with understandable concerns, the experience, in retrospect, was a valuable one. The program forced busy people to take time in their crowded schedules to sit down and discuss with each other what they wanted to achieve, how they were going to go about it, and how they could evaluate their progress. The program also provided them an opportunity to get feedback both from the teachers they serve and the administrators to whom they report. Each of them came to the conclusion that the time was well spent and that the end of the school year brought, as never before, a sense of accomplishment and pride in the achievement of objectives recognized by colleagues. □

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