

Appraisal: Peer-Centered and Administrator-Centered

Gerald Bryant and Frank Haack

Teachers can benefit, these authors hold, through supervisory practices that will help them to assess their own teaching, so as to grow and develop their own professional abilities.

Readers will recognize some familiar patterns of classroom supervision that go something like the following:

- "I can tell whether or not there is a good teacher in the classroom just by walking down the hall and listening to the classes in session."
- "I can tell what is going on in the classroom and whether there is good teaching just by poking my head in the door and looking around."
- "I know who my good teachers are because of the behavior of their students."

Most of us would agree that as supervisors we have all used some of the techniques implied above, along with uttering many statements parallel in content. A consequence of this pattern of supervision is that excellent teachers have been without benefit of specific counsel or advice for as much as 15 to 20 years.

The authors of this article contend that these teachers can also be the beneficiaries of supervisory practices that will enable them to receive

the necessary feedback and support that will assist them to continue to grow and develop their professional abilities. Contact with many teachers has revealed that they have never had an administrator or supervisor participate in any prolonged period of observation and give anything other than the general support and comments relating to this individual teacher's interaction with students and the learning process.

The subject area specialist and the building administrator can use and apply the techniques that will be described under the headings of Peer-Centered Systems of Evaluation and Administrator-Centered Systems of Evaluation. Both systems center on classroom visitation, the core element of the process. Both systems also focus on the actions of teachers working with students, and the techniques suggested will yield concrete, observable, verifiable data.

Research in the field of supervision has focused in the past on teacher characteristics, progress of students, and the development of classification systems for describing the interaction of students and teachers in the classroom. The last category appears to be producing data that are helpful in improving teacher competence and assisting teachers to see themselves in operation with their students in a variety of contexts.

Educators have known for many years that the climate surrounding personal interaction be-

tween and among staff members and the building administrator has positive or negative effects on effective supervision. The level of trust relationships must be very high in order for professionals to engage in educational dialogue that is constructive, positive, humanistic, and nonthreatening. Since the teaching tenure of professionals in the field is stabilizing, it is necessary for school district personnel to engage in practices that will enable positive teacher growth in competence so each teacher has the greatest possibility for attaining the maximum degree of competence in his or her respective field.

Peer-Centered Systems of Self-Evaluation

One of the greatest reservoirs for improvement of instruction exists in the competence of excellent teachers in every school building in this nation. The late Paul Mort envisioned a good school system as one where the best practices of the best teachers would become the property of all teachers. The best school systems would be those where the greatest degree of adaptability to new educational practice is present. In the course of his career, Mort encouraged the sharing of these

practices through the Associated Public School Systems and the Metropolitan School Study Council headquartered at Teachers College, Columbia University. Peer-centered means of self-evaluation enables this pooling and sharing to take place between and among faculty members. However, the process involves steps that go beyond conversations and faculty meetings where teachers talk about good practices. A number of peer-centered systems are now gaining popularity and use across the country. The most successful ones appear to have characteristics that lead to acceptance and growth on the part of teachers.

The success of any peer-centered system of self-evaluation is going to be dependent upon the ability to answer the following questions:

- What competencies should be improved?
- What are the criteria to be used in evaluating competencies?
- What common experiences and/or vocabulary needs to be developed?
- What basis will be supplied for enabling discussion between teachers and/or other resource personnel concerning the improvement of instruction?



Teachers engage in peer and self-evaluation as part of the IOTA program developed by the National IOTA Council at the Bureau of Research and Services, Arizona State University.



"No system can be expected to survive unless all participants have a voice in the method and the instruments that might be used in the process." Teachers above participate in the IOTA program setting up guidelines for appraisal.

- What training and objectivity will be required so observers and teachers can agree upon collected data?

- What assumptions undergird the total program?

- What training programs will be necessary for the staff development?

- What and how will plans of action be developed as the result of the evaluation process?

- What resources will be provided to enable a teacher to improve in a selected area?

The program of peer self-evaluation should begin with the definition of the competencies to be developed by teachers. These need to be studied intensively by staff members, and a period of time must be allowed for discussion of their meaning and acceptance or rejection. Some instrumentation needs to be provided so there is a means of measuring collected data against a criterion. The training program should develop objectivity skills and the ability to collect and categorize data based on what is seen or heard in the classroom. This training program should include not only fairly simple exercises of viewing and recording data, but should also move to more complex film-training models and should conclude with experiences in a live classroom setting for training purposes.

Teachers and administrators alike are encouraged by training programs that produce a

high degree of interrater reliability in the collection and categorization of data during the laboratory experiences. Feedback sessions of the data with teachers need to be conducted in a climate of shared responsibility that is free of value statements. Objective data appropriately summarized and categorized will speak authoritatively to the teacher. This is particularly true if the profile or levels of competence developed are analyzed with the teacher, in cooperation with the peer support group, making plans for improvement of areas selected by the teacher.

There are a number of systems in use in educational supervision today that focus on the specificity desired. These include micro-teaching programs, Flanders' interaction system, and particularly the IOTA program developed by the National IOTA Council at the Bureau of Research and Services, Arizona State University.

Administrative-Centered Teacher Appraisal

Supervision and teacher appraisal take many forms depending upon the philosophy of the school system or institution involved. For any appraisal system to be effective, several ingredients are necessary:

1. Both the person or persons responsible for making the appraisal and those who will be appraised must be involved in drawing up the

guidelines. No system can be expected to survive unless all participants have a voice in the method and the instruments that might be used in the process.

2. Appraisal, by its very nature, should have self-improvement as one of its objectives. Any appraisal plan that is designed purely to accomplish a rating or a continuance of employment cannot be justified by the time and effort involved. The underlying principles that all staff members are capable of improvement and that all are willing to attempt to improve must be one of the basic tenets involved in setting up any system of staff appraisal.

3. All means and methods of gathering data or recording and filing must be of such nature that the appraiser and the person being appraised have a mutual understanding and are capable of reading the same data and arriving at similar conclusions. The data must be stored in a place that is accessible to staff members. Staff members should at all times know what is placed in their personnel file.

4. The key, and probably the most important factor in school staff appraisal, is the eventual improvement of instruction. After all, we are all in the business of educating youngsters and our prime purpose in the appraisal system should be the improvement of instructional methods thereby benefiting the student.

Appraisal may be divided into two major categories: formative and summative. The formative segment is composed of all the data gathered together with the purpose being that of improving teacher competency. Summative appraisal deals with the problem of termination of employment. The summative appraisal by its very nature tends to have a negative connotation and, of course, comprises an extremely small percentage of the total appraisal process. However, much of the data that is gathered in formative appraisal could be used in a summative procedure should that data be negative. Summative appraisal is usually restrictive in nature. There are statutes in most states that provide for protection of individuals involved; therefore, summative evaluation follows rather rigid guidelines once it is put into motion. And again during the summative process that individual involved must and should be kept informed as to what is taking place.

Formative Evaluation or Appraisal

The formative process should be an ongoing one in which data are gathered as often as deemed necessary and as often as possible. As long as the data gatherer (observer) employs objective methods, he or she need not be particularly knowledgeable in the academic area to be observed. Most of these data will come from classroom observation, teacher-administrator conferences, supervisory observations. In many cases, they can also

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come out of formal written comments made by the administrator referring to actions that are commendable or those that differ from the everyday actions of a staff member. This point cannot be overemphasized when we talk about appraisal. Many times we confine our comments to the more formalized classroom visitation data-collecting procedure. However, there are many opportunities during the school year whereby formative data may be added to a teacher's personnel file that do not have to be so formal in nature. For example:

- The shop teacher who builds some item that is used throughout the school or by a department in the school
- The teacher who makes a special effort to meet some student/parent needs
- The staff member who collects for the United Way within the building
- Those who head the teacher courtesy committee. These types of actions should be recorded and placed on file, and notice should be sent to the teacher that it has been placed on file.

Some of the more formalized data collecting procedures center around classroom observation

techniques that allow the observer to make a periodic record of particular classroom activities. This might be the type of situation where the observer would be looking for certain kinds of student activity within the class session. Another might be charting the questions the teacher puts before the class and the types of responses that are elicited from students. Some other devices that focus on student movement within the classroom could be especially valuable in a laboratory situation or in elementary classrooms. Some examples:

1. At Work or At Task is a procedure in which the observer has a sheet that coincides with or is similar to the classroom seating chart. The observer takes a time interval and numbers those time intervals in each square that represents a seat in the room. Then during the class period, at designated intervals, the observer checks each person quickly and indicates opposite the number that represents that time segment what the student is doing. The observer might have a category "at task" represented by a check mark meaning the student was working, "T" if he/she was talking, "O" for out of seat, "D" for daydreaming, and "X" for other types of activities. The characters for these activities can be unique to each observer. However, after the class period, data can be drawn as to the percentage of students that were at task at any particular time. Another item that might be valuable for teacher use is the number of students who were out of their seats.

2. Verbal flow is a means of charting the oral activity within a classroom. There are many variations to this method. The observer might use arrows on a seating chart to indicate the verbal flow. An arrow pointing away from the teacher in the square might indicate that the teacher has asked the student a question. An arrow pointing toward the teacher would indicate a successful response or a desired response. An arrow with a slash through it could indicate that there was not a proper response. An arrow with a double mark from the student might be a question asked of the teacher. Arrows between students might indicate a casual conversation. The observer may also indicate discussion between and among students. This type of observation yields data indicating whether the teacher asks questions of many students or only people who give the proper re-

sponse. It shows whether some are ignored. The resulting chart will show how much the teacher does involve class members in class activity.

3. Classroom movement involves charting student and teacher movement within the classroom. Solid lines might indicate purposeful movement; dotted lines might indicate casual or nonrelated movement. The teacher movement can be charted from station to station and pupil to pupil. This method gives one some knowledge as to how many students are given help and how much the teacher does move throughout the room.

These are just a few of the observation techniques that can be used to gather objective usable data. They are simple to chart and easy to interpret. Most observers are able to devise their own particular instruments after they have had experience in collecting objective classroom data. One of the better publications that can be used to gain information in this area is Ronald Hyman's *School Administrator's Handbook of Teacher Supervision and Evaluation Methods* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975).

Once a bank of data is accumulated, the supervisor has the responsibility of providing a setting for feedback with the observed staff member. This session should provide both individuals with the opportunity to learn more about the person who has been observed. As teachers learn more about themselves they are able to grow professionally. When professionals work together toward the same goals, self-improvement is the logical result. *FL*



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