

**DEVELOPING A
TEACHER PERFORMANCE
EVALUATION
SYSTEM**

A comprehensive three-year process for planning a system of accountability can ensure discriminating and valid results.

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School districts have discovered that performance evaluation is the essential building block of accountability. As members of an Iowa State University research team, we found that many districts across the United States have had a difficult time getting an accountability system off the ground, although others¹ have been successful.

A performance evaluation system should be reviewed, revised, or refined every three to five years because skills needed to operate a school effectively will change. Also, planning and participation by the involved professionals will help make the process more important to them.

To be successful, an evaluation system must be tailored to fit the needs of the school district, have prior approval and support of the board of education, and be congruent with the district's instructional goals and philosophy. The planning process for a teacher performance evaluation (TPE) system should include (1) the development of evaluation instruments for teachers; (2) the development of evaluators' skills for assessing teachers; and (3) ongoing staff development to improve instructional leadership. A performance appraisal system that is valid, reliable, and legally discriminating must also include measurement of progress toward accomplishment of predetermined objectives. These objectives become the "rules of the game" for teachers.

To ensure that all of these components are included in the plan, a steering committee of 10 to 20 people is chosen according to the contribution each member can make to the total committee. To secure broad representation, teachers from various departments or grade levels, administrators, citizens from the community, members of the board, and students from the secondary level are asked

to serve. Usually an equal number of teachers and administrators is chosen.

Once the steering committee has been selected and organized, its major tasks include (1) creating and managing the timeline; (2) informing and consulting with the superintendent and board; (3) determining the use of consultants; (4) determining the type of system to be developed (input-output vs. performance); and (5) informing and consulting with the staff. These tasks are performed throughout the developmental process.

The steering committee must consider four key questions: What are the criteria of effective teaching? How high are the district's standards? How do we monitor and report a teacher's progress? How do we help the teacher improve?

Usually, five subcommittees are designated to resolve these issues and to use the skills of the steering committee efficiently. The subcommittees propose, organize, and present solutions for the questions assigned to them. Then they set the specifications for the system by performing their tasks.

Philosophy and Objectives Subcommittee Tasks:

- Define the reasons for evaluating teachers.
- Decide how many evaluators to use.
- Define what good instruction means in the district.

Performance Areas and Criteria Subcommittee Tasks:

- Determine the performance areas to be considered.
- Decide what special areas to include in the evaluation.
- Define the specific criteria to use.

Operational Procedures Subcommittee Tasks:

- Establish how to use multiple evaluators.

- Decide what the cycle should be, what an observation is, and how to give feedback and help.

Forms and Records Subcommittee Tasks:

- Analyze the system, paperwork, and documents.
- Consider program evaluation.

Test-and-Try Subcommittee Tasks:

- Determine an appropriate test of the system; determine validity, reliability, and discrimination power of the criteria; and recommend starting time of the field test.
- Define the orientation and training of the evaluators.

As subcommittees meet and confer, they generate ideas that are discussed with the total group, reported back, and used to develop the prototypic instruments and procedures.

Philosophic premises appropriate for the district are developed from the input of the Philosophy and Objectives Subcommittee. Philosophies of education, instruction, and evaluation are defined, giving attention to the purposes of the school and its programs, the goal of evaluation, and the teacher's role and methodology.

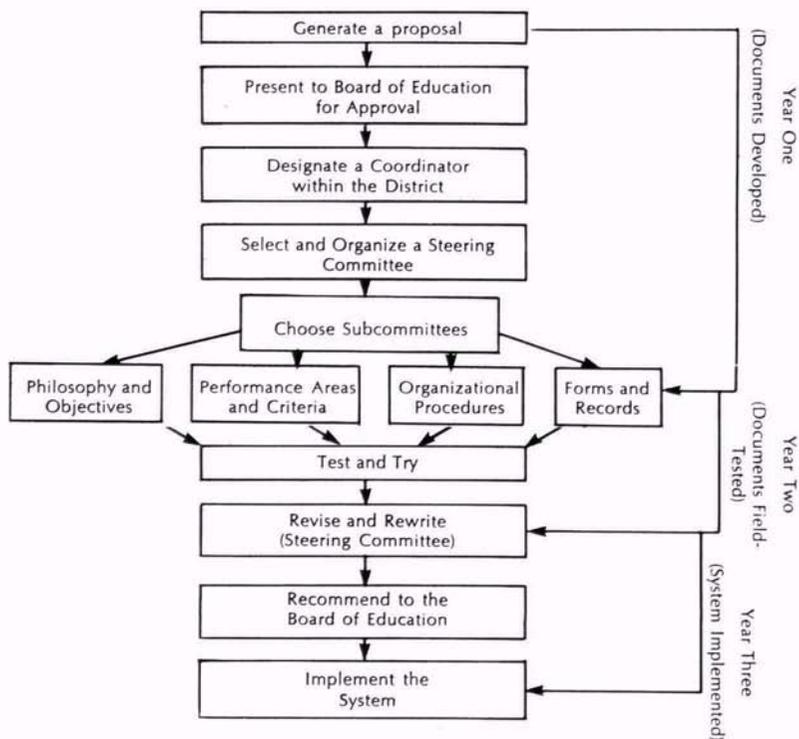
The Performance Areas and Criteria Subcommittee typically identifies techniques for productive teaching/learning within categories such as positive interpersonal relations, productive classroom management, intellectual stimulation, and out-of-class behavior. There are numerous subtopics within these categories.

The Operational Procedures Subcommittee defines the length of classroom observation, the frequency of observations, and different procedures to be used with tenured and non-tenured teachers. Most frequently, this subcommittee's input is used to establish a cycle that includes both formative and summative evaluation.

At least four documents must be developed from the recommendations of the Forms and Records Subcom-

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Figure 1. Time Frame for Developing a Performance Evaluation System



mittee. One document, the *pre-observation data sheet*, which provides the framework for the classroom observation, may be as detailed as the subcommittee desires. It can include the objectives for the lesson, material to be taught, teaching procedures to be used, unusual behaviors to be observed, statements that determine if the objectives have been met, and teaching behaviors to be monitored. Another document is the *formative evaluation report*. Data gathered during an observation is recorded on this "working copy" following the

observation. The evaluator uses a third form, the *summative evaluation report*, to make high inference judgments based on the classroom observation. The *summative report* describes progress made toward achieving objectives and standard expectancies. A fourth form, the *job improvement targets document*, allows the evaluatee to establish one or more goals from which targets are written. This form includes a section to define how targets will be accomplished and a comment section for both evaluatee and evaluator. Some

districts may want to include a *job targets status report* for monitoring progress.

Specifications for the system, which are defined by the Test-and-Try Subcommittee, include plans for field testing, the orientation and training needed for implementation, and keeping everyone informed. The field test allows a district to use the prototypic instruments or model knowing that changes can be made easily.

To plan the field test, factors such as the number of teachers on the staff need to be considered. When the

Figure 2. Flow Chart of a TPE Cycle

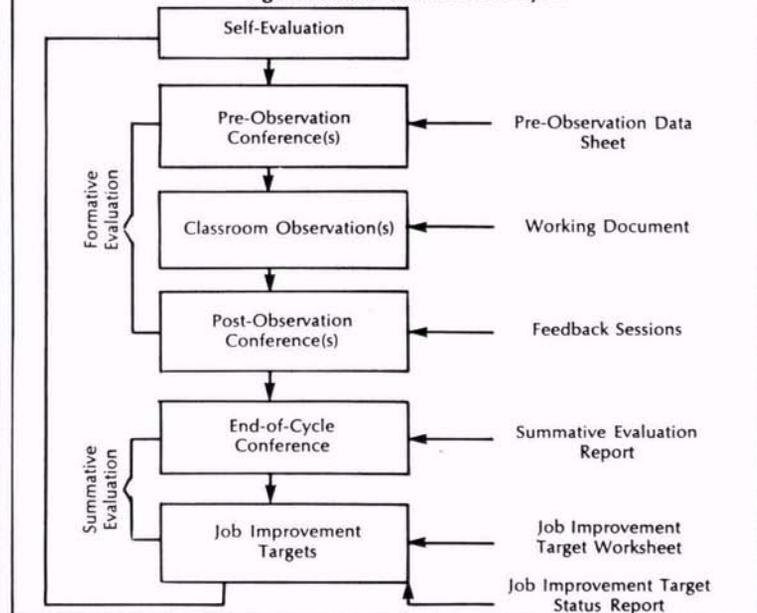
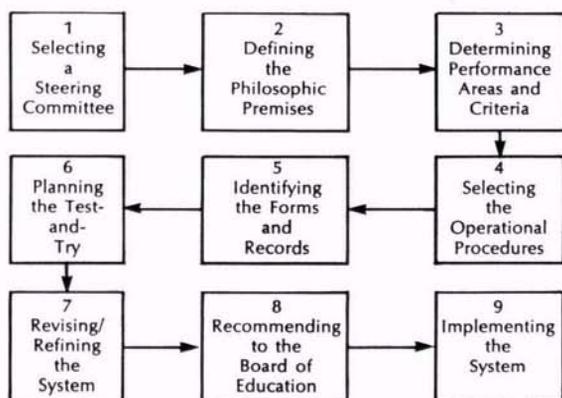


Figure 3. Sequential Steps for Developing a TPE System



numbers are high in proportion to those persons who will serve as evaluators, only a portion of the teachers—perhaps one-third—are randomly selected. Following the field test the data are reviewed and used to refine the system.

The developmental, preparational, and operational stages normally take place over a three-year period: in year one the documents are developed; in year two they are field-tested; and in year three the system is implemented. Figure 1 charts this chronological order.

The staff in the small rural community of Manning, Iowa, followed the process we have just described. Figure 2 shows the evaluation cycle they defined, which includes use of rating scales with refined criteria, an improved data gathering and conferencing process, job improvement targets, due process assurance for evaluatee and evaluator, and counseling techniques that use the clinical supervision approach. The benefits of this cycle soon became apparent to the staff.

Performance areas recommended by the subcommittee were productive

teaching techniques, positive interpersonal relations, productive classroom management, and intellectual stimulation. Many hours of discussion led to consensus about the performance areas and their respective criteria.

The Operational Procedures Subcommittee for this project recommended that classroom observations take place for at least 20 minutes three times during the cycle. A pre-observation conference, classroom observation, and a post-observation conference were included during the formative evaluation step. This allowed the teacher to provide the framework for the observation, be observed, and receive feedback relative to the teaching/learning process.²

The planners wanted to ensure that the system would be helpful to teachers. Three aspects of the system were stressed: it must assist teachers in improving their performance, data to be gathered must be meaningful to teachers, and, as a major component of the evaluation procedure, evaluators must confer with teachers. The planning and participation process used to make all decisions helped reflect realities within the school district.

Figure 3 presents in capsule format the steps described above.³ With careful planning and representative participation, other districts can use this process to meet their commitment to one of the basic principles of accountability—performance evaluation. ■

¹ Some of the districts that have developed teacher performance evaluation systems include Naperville, Illinois (1973); West Des Moines, Iowa (1974); Eldora, Iowa (1977); Mt. Prospect, Illinois (1978); Manning, Iowa (1979); and Polk County, Georgia (1979).

² A note of caution. At the point of final discussion and approval of the prototypic operational procedures, some members of the steering committee (reflecting concerns of their constituents) may attempt to stall, alter, or weaken the proposed input. The leaders of the developmental activities should press on, continuing to use a participative approach. The synergistic wisdom of the group will prevail and overcome the resistance.

³ To receive sample instruments or further information about the process, write to: Richard P. Manatt, Section Leader, Educational Administration, 230 Curtiss Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

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