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Over the past several years, our research team at Iowa State University has been implementing a new type of performance evaluation system for educational administrators in school districts across the United States. Working on-site, we develop performance evaluation tools and direct district evaluation teams. The administration evaluation system is usually created simultaneously with the launching of a new teacher performance evaluation system.

Presently we are directing the massive School Improvement Model (SIM) Project in Iowa and Minnesota.[1] A unique aspect of this total systems/outcomes-based approach to raising K–12 student achievement is the emphasis on performance evaluation of all administrators.

Administrator Performance Evaluation is based on an analysis or measurement of progress made toward accomplishment of predetermined objectives. Performance evaluation is oriented to process and asks the following:

- What do we expect each administrator to accomplish?
- How do we expect each administrator to perform?
- What changes in behavior do we want?
- How does his/her performance interrelate with that of others?

The major purpose of administrator performance evaluation is to improve district management and leadership. Early in the deliberations, the school organization must decide whether to emphasize performance or objectives attainment or both. The failure of many administrator evaluation systems can be traced to emphasizing performance but not objectives attainment.

The Process

A steering committee and subcommittees are selected and organized to guide the development of the system.

While the system is being developed, several segments are coordinated. The concurrent tasks performed by the steering committee and one of the subcommittees include identifying the needs of the district, establishing measures of

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Administrator Evaluation Tailored to Your District or Independent School

Project SIM uses a 5-step model incorporating both performance appraisal and management by objectives.

validity, defining the scope and sequence of the system, organizing lines of communication, and reaching a general agreement about methodology.

Specifically, subcommittees define the philosophic premises, performance areas and criteria, operational procedures, forms and records, and test and try procedures by answering a set of key questions:

1. *Philosophy and Objectives.* What are some important ingredients for effective administration? What are the major responsibilities of the chief executive officer? of the central office administrators? of the building administrators?

2. *Performance Areas and Criteria.* What performance areas count? What specific criteria are needed within these areas?

3. *Operational Procedures.* How should evaluation data be gathered? Who should handle the appraisal interview? How many formative conferences should be held during a cycle?

4. *Forms and Records.* Should different documents be used for formative and summative evaluation? Why or why not? What is meant by work samples?

5. *Test and Try.* Will an appropriate field test include everyone? Why or why not? Will the field test information be used to modify the system before the formal adoption? How?

After these and other questions are answered by the subcommittees, they provide feedback to the entire steering committee. The committee then focuses on:

1. Developing a philosophy of administration and evaluation
2. Updating job descriptions
3. Identifying and refining critical work activities (CWAs)
4. Developing a job improvement target worksheet
5. Developing, field-testing, and refining the prototype evaluation

instruments

6. Finalizing the handbook/instruments.

Each activity must flow sequentially as the system is developed so that, after the field-test and refinement, the system can be recommended to the Board of Education for adoption.

Components of the System

The model includes a district administrative philosophy, critical work activities, position description activities (performance factors), and job improvement targets. By accurately identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each role, the system helps improve the district's management and leadership.

Administrative Philosophy. The administrative philosophy must be general because it provides boundaries for generic decision making. The overall philosophy needs to be considered and applied in varying degrees. This phase of the system is intended to determine if each administrator's performance (style, values, and productivity) is consonant with that philosophy.

Usually an administrative philosophy can be categorized into three parts: environment created; policy, participation, and communication; program improvement. Each category contains several criteria that are used to describe the evaluatee's performance.

Performance Factors. This component of the system is based on the job description of an administrative position. Administrators are evaluated by their immediate superiors. The ratings identify strengths and weaknesses and suggest areas for growth. The performance responsibilities of each position description are distributed into categories:

1. Improving the educational process
2. Implementing district policies
3. Working with the community
4. Staff personnel
5. Managing operations.

Other categories may be used as they appear in the job description, and each category usually subsumes several descriptions.

Critical Work Activities (CWAs). This portion of the appraisal is intended to determine if the administrator's performance on CWAs is congruent with the priorities and needs of subordinates. CWAs are those tasks deemed most essential for the performance of the position. They are continuous, regular activities necessary to the day-to-day operation of the building or school organization.

A systems analysis is performed in order to concentrate on what is actually being done by administrators and who is doing what. This aspect of the system is a method of systematically planning, organizing, operating, and communicating within the administrative levels of the district.

Each administrator keeps a time log for at least one month (three months is ideal), and compiles a list of activities. This summary displays the key areas and the average number of hours spent on each task. From this information and the original job descriptions an analysis can be made as to the manner in which time is being used.

Job Improvement Targets. Job improvement targets are central to the evaluation system. This is the point at which the "rubber meets the road"— when evaluation is tied to improvement of performance. Writing job improvement targets requires time and careful analysis of each situation and usually occurs during or after the end-of-cycle conference. Customarily, three to five targets are developed by the evaluatee (with the help of the evaluator) for each evaluation cycle.

A worksheet is used to develop a goal and specific, realistic, manageable, and measurable targets. The methods, activities, processes, materials, and personnel that will be needed to achieve the specific objectives are identified.

Writing the activities to be undertaken during the year is fairly easy. However, the target should be written in terms of expected outcomes rather than as a simple activity. Instead of writing, "the principal will conduct a workshop on small group instructional techniques during the school year. . . .," the following format is preferable:

Given $200 for materials and media to conduct a workshop on small-group instruc-

Figure 1. Flow Chart of an Administrator Performance Evaluation Cycle.

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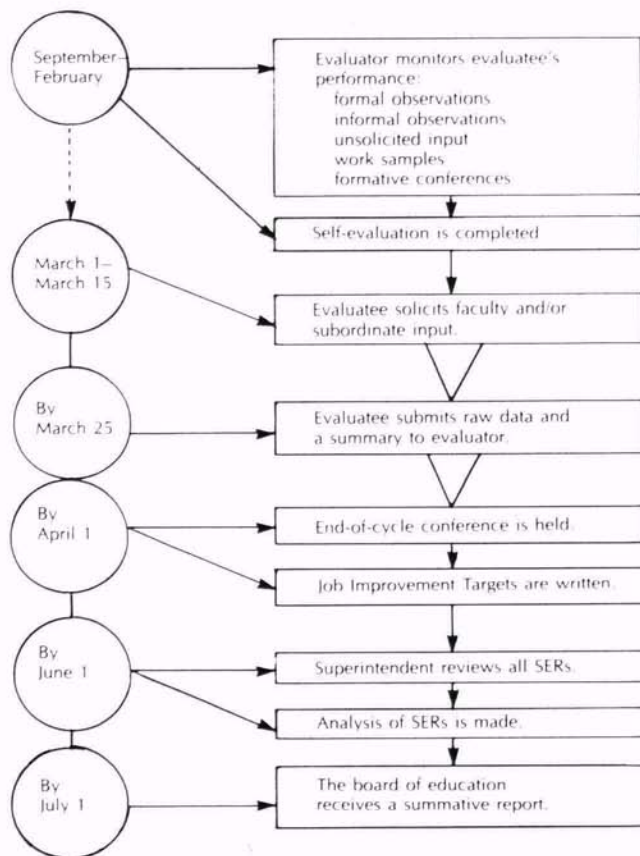
tional techniques, 60 percent of the faculty will use small group sessions to reinforce large group presentations. Within three months after the workshop experience, success will be measured by classroom observations, made by the evaluator, along with student feedback forms appraising their reaction to small-group discussions.

Field-Test. After these components have been developed, the prototypic instruments are field-tested. Part of this process is to gather baseline data about an administrator's performance. To accomplish this task the documents are completed by those who report to an administrator. At times student and parent input is used. The data are compiled and a feedback session is held with each administrator. This step has produced some very positive results. Administrators gain perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses and begin to make plans for improving their administrative skills.

Relative Emphasis

Performance appraisal without a management-by-objectives (MBO) approach or an MBO without stressing performance evaluation is ineffective. Simply put., school administrators should "do the right job" but also "do the job right." Figure 1 illustrates an administrator performance evaluation system that emphasizes performance while Figure 2, using a headmaster or superintendent as chief executive officer as an example, represents a blending of MBO and performance appraisal. Also critically important is the need to stress what outcomes the school organization exalts when dealing with principal performance appraisal. If instructional leadership is of paramount importance, say so! Principals historically have maintained a "loose-coupling" control over curriculum and instructional methods and a "tight-coupling" control over building management. If that relative emphasis is

to be changed, the school organization must opt for performance appraisal criteria for principals that have been identified by effective schools research. These would include:

1. The principal sets instructional strategies that emphasize student achievement.

2. The principal interprets the mission of the school to the teachers and helps them define appropriate goals and objectives for learners.

3. The principal sets high expectations for both teachers and pupils.

4. The principal provides an orderly atmosphere that enhances learning.

5. The principal provides a careful evaluation of student progress via norm and criterion-referenced testing and regularly relays this information to teachers.

6. The principal constantly monitors instruction to ensure that the functional

Figure 2. Chief Executive Officer Performance Evaluation Cycle.

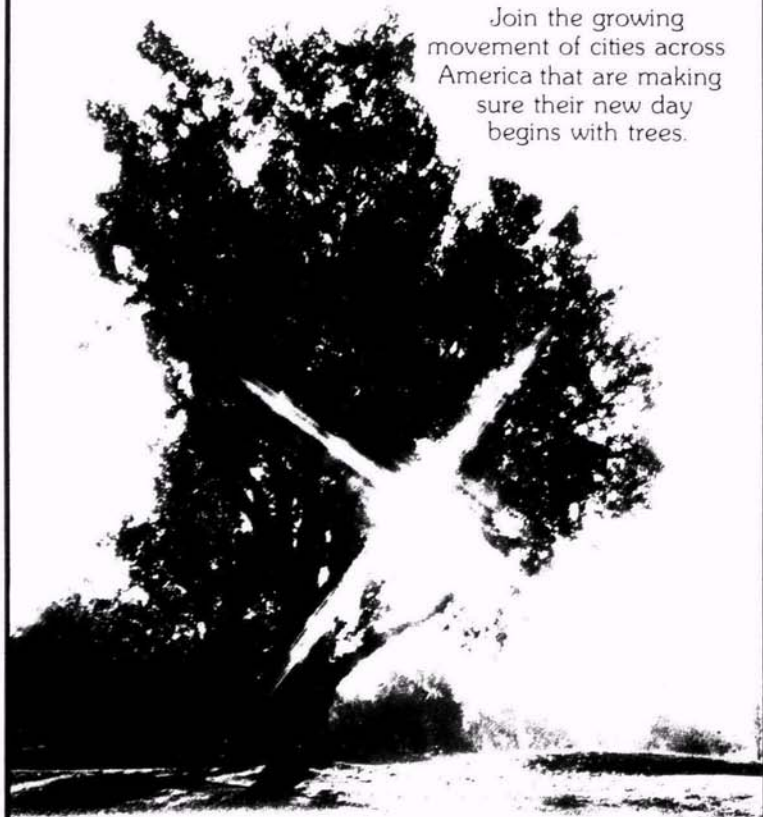classroom curriculum matches that which was planned.

Summary

An administrator performance evaluation system developed according to this process has proven to be effective in the improvement of district management and leadership. The time it takes to carry it out is beneficial both to the professional and the district. Inevitably after the field test, some revisions are made to meet the needs of the administrative team.

The components are intended to provide a systems approach to evaluation. Using feedback from subordinates sets a good example for teacher performance evaluation. In turn, administrator performance evaluation is strengthened if teacher performance is reflected in the principal's evaluation report!

Because this system requires participatory planning, the process reflects the realities of the district. With input from the professionals involved, it should meet their needs while ultimately improving their administrative skills.

The movement toward revision of existing evaluation procedures amounts to a tidal wave. The pressure for greater accountability in the delivery of educational services will only succeed where administrator evaluation becomes the key component. ∎

Note: To receive sample instruments or further information about this process write to: Richard P. Manatt, Director, School Improvement Model Project, Room N229 Quadrangle, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011.

[1]SIM is a model for the improvement of student achievement in public and independent K-12 schools. This five-year project to link administrator performance, teacher performance, student achievement, and staff development is a consortium endeavor of the Minneapolis Public Schools, Northfield Public Schools, Edina Public Schools, and Breck School (all in Minnesota), Spirit Lake (Iowa) Community Schools, and Iowa State University. The investigation is supported by the Northwest Area Foundation and the consortium members.