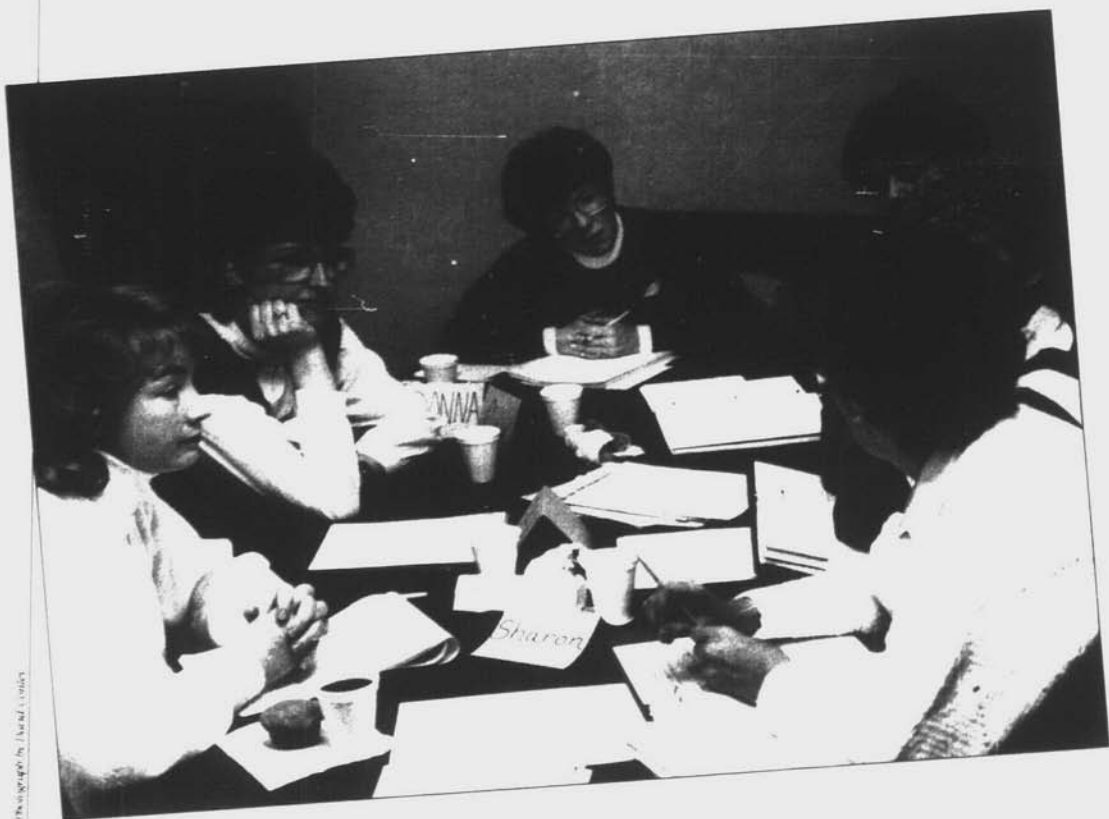


# Critical Attributes of Effective Evaluation Systems

Research studies reveal eight  
characteristics.



Photograph by David Conley

What are some of the key elements that will help an evaluation system address the often conflicting needs of organizational accountability and individual growth? This article considers the critical attributes of effective evaluation systems. It draws on studies by Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin and Bernstein (1984), as well as on McGreal's (1983) work and an analysis of the evaluation systems of all of Colorado's 177 school districts (Conley 1986). This latter analysis contrasts theories and plans with actual practices among districts in the state.

What emerged from these studies was a series of eight critical attributes of effective evaluation systems. These eight can serve as a convenient framework for evaluating growth and improvement as well as for accountability and personnel decisions. They are as follows:

1. *All participants accept the validity of the system.* Validity refers to an actual relationship between what is observed and the results of the investigation (Best 1977). The evaluator and evaluatee must believe that the methods and procedures employed will accurately reflect the evaluatee's performance. Concepts such as "fair" or "impartial" to describe an evaluation do not fully capture the idea of shared participation.

Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin and Bernstein (1984) note that the purposes of the system must match the values, goals, and culture of the organization and community. In addition, the overwhelming majority of participants in the process must feel that the system collects, analyzes, and feeds back information in a manner that accurately reflects their view of reality.

To increase validity administrators can enlarge the participation of all groups involved in developing the system. Often a mystique surrounds the evaluation process, as if it were so technical that only experts could understand it. In practice, nothing could be further from the truth. Effective systems hinge on the imprecise and imperfect interaction between two people, the evaluator and the evaluatee. Mutual trust and confidence enable this process to work effectively.

2. *All participants thoroughly understand the mechanics of the system.*

Evaluatee Performance	Focus of Evaluation Process
Master	Validation/Growth
Competent	Growth/Improvement
----- Minimum District Performance Standards -----	
Marginal	Improvement/Remediation
----- Minimum Professional Standards -----	
Incompetent	Remediation/Documentation

Fig. 1. Levels of Evaluation

Mechanics of the system include frequency of evaluation, forms, timelines, purpose of conferences, relation of process to personnel decisions, appeal and rebuttal procedures, and methods of data collection, such as script taping and checklists.

A system becomes less effective when an evaluator using script taping, for example, never explains the tech-

nique to the teacher being observed. Having an evaluator writing furiously throughout a lesson without anyone in the room knowing why this is occurring alters teacher and student behavior.

Teachers often complain that they do not know how the system operates. Often districts distribute a manual to all teachers, including new hires, that contains a cursory explanation of the

### Joint Committee to Develop Standards for Evaluation of Education Personnel

Since January 1985, ASCD and 13 other professional societies have been engaged in a project to develop standards to improve personnel evaluation in schools, universities, and other educational institutions. The ASCD representative to the 18-member joint committee is Philip L. Hosford.

The first draft of the standards, completed in fall 1985, has been reviewed by national and international review panels and by a blue-ribbon validation panel. Using the evaluations of the first draft, the committee developed a second draft, scheduled for hearings and field tests early in 1987, with publication expected in 1988.

The standards require that personnel evaluations be useful, feasible, ethical, and accurate. These general requirements are elaborated in 23 detailed standards. For example, the *Valuational Interpretation Standard* reads as follows:

The evaluation data about an educator should be interpreted in terms of clearly specified responsibilities, performance objectives, and qualifications so that judgments and decisions concerning such matters as selection, certification, counseling for improvement, promotion, and termination will be justified in terms of sound standards as well as high quality data.

Each specific requirement is followed by an explanation of its concepts, a rationale, guidelines to facilitate implementation, common errors to be avoided, and one or more illustrative cases.

A key purpose of the standards is to help convert the many intensive and sometimes frenzied efforts to expand and strengthen evaluations of teachers and other educators into a constructive force for improving education. The book provides practical advice for applying the standards to a wide range of institutions, roles, and personnel actions.

For information about the project, write to: Daniel L. Stufflebeam, Chair, Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-3899. Telephone: (616) 383-8166.

## The Training and Certifying of Teacher Appraisers

Ronald G. McIntire, Larry W. Hughes, and Judith A. Burry

The Arizona School Administrators Association and Wichita State University College of Education recently have established Centers for Appraiser Training and Certification. The mission of these centers is to provide uniform training programs and certification standards for teacher appraisers.

The centers serve four purposes. (1) They assist administrators in gaining the skills to assess and assist classroom teachers. (2) They determine the degree to which each administrator possesses these skills. (3) They certify persons who meet the Centers' stringent requirements. (4) They provide postcertification workshops for educators, so they can maintain, enhance, and increase their skills.

Both centers have developed time-efficient and effective training programs. The teacher-appraiser workshops required for certification are based on classroom observation and teacher conferences.

Each training program module is based on specific competencies. The teacher-directed instruction is supplemented by a video-based training program, which illustrates teachers using effective teaching techniques and teacher-coaches conducting effective conferences (McIntire 1986). As participants view videotape segments of classroom lessons, they practice obtaining a written record of classroom instruction and analyze cause-effect relationships in teaching and learning. Later, they watch teacher-coach videotapes to study other appraisers using effective conference skills.

When participants have completed the training workshops, they take a certification examination. The Wichita State Center examination consists of viewing a videotape of a teacher conducting instruction, taking extensive notes, and conducting a conference with the teacher. The conference is videotaped so that a team of three trained assessors can rate the participant's performance and appraise strengths and needs. The Arizona School Administrators Association administers a written examination for certification.

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**"[Research shows] eight attributes [that] can serve as a convenient framework for evaluating growth and improvement as well as accountability and personnel decisions."**

general process of evaluation. This does not help teachers really understand the process. And yet this evaluation process has a profound impact on teachers—both on their professional status and their self-image.

School officials should schedule at least one yearly meeting to review procedures and priorities for the coming year. In a preconference, they should provide teachers on that year's evaluation cycle with more detailed information about methods of data collection, expectations, and important performance criteria.

3. *Evaluators know that the performance criteria have a clear, consistent rationale.* The criteria are at the very heart of an effective system. Yet, in most cases it is unclear where the

criteria came from, why they are being used, which are more important, and against what standards they are being compared.

It is not necessary to derive all criteria from research on effective instruction, although this research is very useful for discussions.

What is more important is that teachers be significantly involved in the process of developing these criteria. In Colorado districts, experience has shown that teachers who have been involved generally ask more of themselves than criteria-minded administrators would.

This confirms the idea that the validity of the system must be accepted by all participants. If it is not, the most meticulously constructed system is bound to be ineffective.

The relative weight or emphasis given to each criterion also should be clear. Most districts have lists that contain 20 or more criteria. Clearly, the evaluator cannot accurately assess evaluatee performance on all 20. Hence, teachers need to know which criteria will be the most important, and what standards will be used to judge adequate performance. Otherwise, teachers feel free to set their own priorities without regard to district goals.

4. *Evaluators are properly trained in the procedural and substantive use of the system.* Evaluators must be aware of more than evaluation timelines. The purposes and goals of the system, the means for appeal or rebuttal, limitation on data sources, the nature of growth and improvement plans, the standards against which the evaluatee's performance is being judged—all of these must be known and acted upon consistently by district evaluators.

An evaluator's substantive skills refer to technical skills needed to conduct quality evaluations: data collection, methods of observation, data analysis, conferencing, goal-setting, report-writing, and teacher remediation techniques.

5. *Levels of evaluation are employed, each with a different goal.* Effective systems distinguish between evaluatees on the growth and improvement track and those on the remediation track, by telling the evaluatee where he or she stands. This differentiation decreases participants'

## Shared Governance of Staff Evaluation

Douglas E. Harris and Keith A. Pillsbury

The Essex Town, Vermont, School District has not only increased teacher involvement in staff evaluation but has actually included teachers in the governance of its staff evaluation system. A teacher-administrator committee produced the six-part staff evaluation system.

- The *vita* records each staff member's professional and educational background and serves as a baseline for formative appraisal.
- *Formative appraisal* involves most staff members two years out of three. During this phase, staff members identify needs or emphasis areas, set goals, and confer with supervisors on progress and assessment.
- The *summative evaluation*, conducted in the third year, focuses on instructional effectiveness and job performance. Based on a clinical supervision model, it includes preconference, guided observation, postconference, and summative evaluation.
- The *remedial contract*, for teachers not meeting the minimum standards, identifies deficits of the staff member and obligations of the supervisor and sets minimum performance criteria.
- An *intensive assistance plan* lists professional development activities and indicates which evaluation activities and measurements will ascertain if the staff member has met the minimum standards.
- The *review committee* ensures that the evaluation system operates efficiently and administrators and teachers share responsibility for its success.

### Role of the Review Committee

Administrators and teachers recognized that four factors are essential to the success of a collaborative evaluation process: (1) the system must be flexible to change; (2) purposeful change requires continual assessment; (3) the master contract, school policy, and the law necessarily constrain change; and (4) teachers and administrators must share responsibility and authority for implementing or changing the system.

**Membership.** The review committee is composed of two teachers per building, a counselor, a special educator, a subject-area coordinator or program director, a principal, and the assistant superintendent, who is a permanent member; other members serve staggered two-year terms.

**Functions.** The committee's six functions include: (1) gathering information from teachers and administrators for assessing the evaluation system; (2) recommending changes; (3) exploring and pilot-testing other innovative evaluation approaches; (4) introducing new staff members to the system; (5) sharing the system with other districts or agencies; and (6) conducting formative and summative reviews of the system. To protect employee rights and responsibilities and to decrease the likelihood of the committee's becoming politically volatile, the committee does not consider any grievance.

**Activities.** In its first year the committee implemented the *vita* process, spending considerable time discussing the forms with teachers and administrators, then editing and revising virtually all of them. It also dealt with the issue of inclusiveness and flexibility, addressing the concern that the system meet needs of support staff—counselors, learning center directors, school nurses. Although the committee also explored peer supervision and mentoring, we decided not to include them at that time.

During its second year, the committee is reviewing all documents, schedules, and processes and establishing a data base for the forthcoming summative evaluation of the system.

### Responsibility and Authority

Many educators recognize that grassroots participation in staff appraisal is essential, but fewer would agree that staff should also be involved in system governance. When administrators and teachers share responsibility and authority for successful evaluation, however, the dynamics of staff evaluation change. Everyone becomes more accountable and the system becomes more responsive to the needs of all constituents. As the link between evaluation and effective schools, the review committee becomes a powerful staff development tool. It plans and acts on decisions made by the professionals who are most directly affected by them.

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## "Effective [evaluation] systems distinguish between evaluatees on the growth and improvement track and those on the remediation track..."

anxiety and offers an opportunity to focus district resources on teachers needing the most help, and, alerts those who do not meet district standards. Evaluators often fail to tell evaluatees when they are deficient.

District performance standards that are clear, definable, and above minimal professional standards promote the development of levels of evaluation. This creates a "remediation zone" within which to attempt to improve the marginally performing individual before moving to the dismissal mode. The dismissal mode is reached only after effort has first been made to remediate the individual's performance.

6. *The evaluation distinguishes between the formative and summative dimensions.* This distinction may be absolute, taking the form of a "data curtain" between information collected during any formative activities and the contents of the summative evaluation report.

Especially when it is linked to a system with levels of evaluation, this distinction is valuable. An evaluatee in the growth/improvement mode, for example, would not need to be as concerned about the distinction between formative and summative as would the teacher in the remediation mode. For teachers in the validation/growth or growth/improvement modes, Glatthorn (1986) suggests that the summative portion of the evaluation process be conducted very early in the cycle so that the activities undertaken during the remainder of the cycle can be clearly formative.

Having the remedial teacher work with teams of other teachers, especially those familiar with peer coaching techniques, is one way to develop such a data curtain. The coaching teachers do not communicate with the

evaluator about the results of their interventions with the remedial teacher. The evaluator simply observes at a later date to determine if performance has improved to the point where it meets district standards.

7. *A variety of evaluation methods are used.* Although clinical supervision has gained in popularity during the '80s, there are other important methods of assessing performance.

Glatthorn (1984) suggests four methods: clinical supervision, cooperative professional development, self-directed development, and administrative monitoring. Effective systems might also include goal-setting techniques, an examination of the products of student learning (in forms other than standardized test scores), and efficient use of checklist data, such as that supplied by the Florida Performance Measurement System (1983). The artifact approach advanced by McGreal (1983) and others, which is also useful, requires the evaluatee to assemble artifacts that illustrate his or her accomplishments and areas of strength and achievement.

This multifaceted approach requires a high skill level from evaluators. But a commitment to a variety of evaluation methods with considerable individualization for each evaluatee results in a more efficient use of district resources. Not every teacher need be observed in the classroom for the same amount of time. Evaluatees not on the formal evaluation cycle during a particular year would still participate in professional growth activities. And, perhaps most important, the system would be modeling consistent values for teachers and students: valuing, respecting, and developing each individual's potential to the maximum degree.

8. *Evaluation is a district priority.* When half of the teachers in a building are notified on 1 April that they will all be evaluated within the next two weeks, they get a clear message about the importance of the process.

When evaluation reports contain phrases such as "loves kids," "very caring," "I'd love to have my child in this class," and little else, it is clear that the district is not concerned with achieving maximum growth of the professional staff.

**"Evaluation must be district priority. . . . When . . . teachers . . . are notified . . . that they all will be evaluated within . . . two weeks, they get a clear message about the importance of the process."**

When evaluators drop into classes in the middle of the lesson and leave before the lesson is completed, without prior agreement to do so, and this is the teacher's sole "formal" observation, teachers have difficulty accepting the validity or value of the evaluator's observations, conclusions, or recommendations (Little et al. 1984).

When evaluators have few discretionary funds available for staff development or for providing assistance to remedial teachers or growth opportunities to competent and master teachers, it is unrealistic to expect that a great deal of individual incentive will be encouraged or exploited.

District commitment needs to take several forms.

- Evaluators must have the time to accomplish the process. There is no way around the fact that performance appraisal is a time-consuming task.

- Adequate training opportunities must be provided for both evaluator and evaluatee. Training programs must provide agreement on a model of effective instruction, on some degree of common vocabulary, and on standards of measuring these elements.

- The evaluation process must tie into district goals, particularly goals related to the improvement of instruction. Evaluation must drive the improvement process, identifying strengths and weaknesses, focusing district inservice offerings, and guiding administrators in the improvement process.

- Top district personnel must have the same evaluation skills as building-level administrators. Administrative evaluation has been even less productive and effective than teacher evaluation in many districts. These systems must be as rigorous and rational as those proposed for teachers.

The evaluation process holds great potential as a means to push toward improvement of pedagogical skills and instruction in our schools. Its potential as a positive, growth-inducing process has long been overlooked. The eight critical attributes presented here offer a practical framework for determining if the evaluation system is meeting the dual needs of growth and accountability. □

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