

Differentiated Teacher Evaluation

The new evaluation system developed by the Calvert County, Maryland, schools has won wide acceptance by providing different levels of evaluation and observation.

The Calvert County, Maryland, school system has developed and implemented a differentiated teacher evaluation system that enables supervisors and school administrators to collaborate closely in both rating teachers and helping them improve their performance. The processes used in developing and implementing the system might be of value to similar districts.

Processes in Developing the System

While the previous teacher evaluation system was in many ways satisfactory, it was characterized by a few significant problems. First, it did not seem to distinguish sufficiently between the needs of beginning or marginal teachers and those of experienced, competent teachers. And it did not clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of principals and supervisors. Like

most Maryland school systems, Calvert is a large county system that emphasizes the role of central office supervisors in coordinating curriculum and improving professional performance. Under the previous teacher evaluation system, some central office supervisors and principals seemed unclear about their responsibilities in evaluating and supervising teachers, and at times they disagreed on particular assessment issues.

Superintendent Eugene Karol decided to implement a leadership training program with a threefold objective: to improve the teacher evaluation system; to clarify ways that principals and supervisors could collaboratively implement that system; and to improve the evaluating and supervising skills of all administrators and supervisors. Karol stressed that the new system had to be a "home-grown" model, responsive to the unique needs and resources of the Calvert County

Schools. He did not want to import some consultant's favorite model or another district's program. Karol also wanted the new system to maintain a professional climate through careful development, systematic evaluation, and significant teacher input. To accomplish these goals the entire district leadership team planned a series of training sessions, conducted by Glattthorn, which emphasized collaborative problem solving and skill development.

Staff Training

The first training sessions, conducted in the spring of 1985, involved the superintendent's staff, the school principals, and the supervisors. These initial sessions updated participants' knowledge of the research, helped them learn from each other by working together on shared problems, and laid out the basic assumptions and components of a differentiated system.

These sessions had two important outcomes. One was a firm agreement to distinguish among three related functions.

- Rating: a process of making assessments of teacher performance.
- Giving feedback: providing ongoing information about performance.
- Facilitating professional development: helping a teacher grow professionally.

As will be noted below, these three functions are accomplished through distinct processes.

The second important outcome was a clear analysis of the three components of the teacher's role and a specific plan for assessing each of them. The three components include the essen-



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tial skills of teaching, the support skills, and administrative responsibilities. The essential skills are generic, strongly supported by the research, and can be assessed through direct observation. The support skills (planning, testing, and grading) are also teaching skills supported by the research, but they cannot be observed directly and should instead be assessed through analysis and discussion in a conference. The administrative responsibilities (keeping accurate records, implementing official policies, being regular and punctual in attendance, and communicating appropriately with parents) are assessed by school administrators through continuing monitoring of performance and recorded in an anecdotal record.

After careful research, administrators, supervisors, and teachers listed the essential teaching and support skills. They then reviewed the grouping and wording of the skills to be sure that they were couched in clear and acceptable terms. This process also helped to develop the group's sense of ownership of the components. (The 1984 review by Berliner and the 1983 review by Rosenshine were especially useful in developing the initial list; the 1986 reviews by Brophy and Good and Rosenshine and Stevens were helpful in later refinements.)

A representative group of teachers reviewed the initial decisions and solicited input from their colleagues. As a result of teachers' input, several aspects of the proposed system were modified. During the summer of 1985, principals, vice-principals, supervisors, and representative teachers met together in a problem-solving session to review the proposals and to suggest modifications and refinements.

The second series of training sessions conducted during the 1985-86 school year emphasized skill development, while providing additional opportunities for collaborative problem solving. Participants continued to update their knowledge of teacher effectiveness and improve their skills in observing teachers, analyzing observational data, writing professional development plans, and conferring with teachers. The 1985-86 series also involved vice-principals, since Karol wanted them to develop their skills, so

that they could play an active role in implementing the new system. Throughout the training, participants worked collaboratively to identify problems and develop solutions. Again in the spring of 1986, teachers reviewed the work to date, suggesting refinements and improvements.

The third series of training sessions, now under way, is using coaching to improve teaching skills. Under Glatthorn's leadership, the team is developing "coaching protocols" for the essential skills of teaching. Each coaching protocol provides a rationale for the skill, explains the steps in detail, provides ways teachers can apply the skill, advises how to observe the skill, and suggests further background reading. The coaching protocols help the leaders understand and apply these skills in their work with teachers.

The first step in the process is to determine whether teachers will be involved in "intensive rating and professional development" or in "standard rating and professional development." The intensive system is provided for all probationary teachers and for any tenured teacher who in the previous school year was judged by the principal and the supervisor to be "unsatisfactory" in one or more of the essential skills of teaching. The intensive system provides for frequent observations, careful planning and assessment, and systematic coaching. The standard system, to be used for the rest of the teaching staff, places less emphasis on rating and more on professional growth. The following summary describes the intensive rating process, which represents the greatest departure from the existing system, and then briefly describes the standard rating process.

Intensive Rating

Throughout the school year principals, vice-principals, and supervisors make three kinds of observations.

Informal observation. These brief informal classroom visits lasting from 5 to 15 minutes serve two goals. They provide the administrator or supervisor with data about curriculum implementation and general instructional patterns, and they enable the observer to give the teacher more frequent nonevaluative feedback. Principals, vice-principals, and supervisors are

expected to make several informal observations throughout the school year. These observations typically are neither preceded nor followed by a conference. The emphasis is on *feedback*.

Rating observation. A systematic observation of instructional performance lasting at least 30 minutes provides the basis for performance evaluation. The observer uses a standard "rating observation" form that focuses on the essential skills of teaching. The emphasis is on *rating*.

Nonrating observation. A systematic observation of instructional performance covering a class period or a complete teaching activity gives the teacher diagnostic and developmental feedback. No observation form is used. The observer may make notes to facilitate the feedback process, but they do not become part of the official personnel record. The emphasis is on *professional development*.

The teachers appreciate these three distinctions. They know that a brief informal visit keeps the observer in touch with the teacher's work and provides an opportunity for feedback. For their part, observers are required to tell the teacher whether or not their visit is for rating purposes. And to ensure varied input, principals, vice-principals, and supervisors are all encouraged to make the three kinds of observations.

By 15 October of a given school year, the principal, the supervisor, and the teacher jointly develop a Professional Development Plan, using data from all three types of observations and conferences. The Professional Development Plan specifies which skills the teacher will develop and which strategies and resources will be used, with a projected completion date for each activity. Although the supervisor is primarily responsible for implementing the plan with the teacher, the teacher is an active, not a passive, participant, and the principal and vice-principal are also encouraged to become involved.

The supervisor works closely with the teacher in a coaching relationship, helping the teacher develop the skill outlined in the plan. The supervisor and the principal may also request the services of a "professional assistant," any member of the professional staff (including an experienced teacher)

who is competent to assist the teacher and who is not involved in the rating process.

At least three times each year—ordinarily in November, January, and March—the principal, supervisor, and teacher meet to assess progress and to modify the plan so that it can continue to facilitate the teacher's professional growth.

In March of each school year the principal and the supervisor discuss the teacher's final rating. Having worked closely on the same criteria together throughout the year, they should be able to agree on the final assessment. If they cannot agree, they may seek the advice of a member of the central office staff responsible to the superintendent, but the principal is accountable for the final rating.

Standard Rating

The standard rating process is provided for all tenured teachers not designated for intensive rating. Since these teachers' performance of essential skills has been judged to be satisfactory, the rating function is not as important as it is for those in the intensive mode. The principal and the supervisor hold one rating conference with the teacher at the end of the year. The same criteria and forms are used in order to ensure that all teachers are evaluated according to the same standards. However, for these experienced competent teachers, principals and supervisors are primarily concerned with facilitating their continued professional development, not with making summative ratings.

How the New System Is Working

As noted above, the implementation of the new system has been accompanied by extensive formative evaluation by principals, vice-principals, supervisors, and teachers. All representative groups were periodically surveyed, and administrators and supervisors identified problems throughout the training sessions. Glatthorn met privately with representative teachers to elicit their candid concerns and to involve them in improving the system.

Because the new system is still in the final stages of development, there has been no formal summative assessment. Preliminary evaluations, however, are encouraging. To begin with, the

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system has been designed to reflect the five recommendations made by Wise and his colleagues as an outcome of their (1984) study of effective teacher evaluation practices. In brief, they recommended that the development of teacher evaluation systems must: (1) suit the goals and values of the local district; (2) receive top-level commitment and resources; (3) begin with a district's commitment to its major purposes and thereafter match processes to purpose; (4) be reliable, valid, and cost-effective; and (5) involve and make teachers responsible for the system. Our own careful analysis of the Calvert system suggests that it reflects all five recommendations.

We are also encouraged by the responses of those who have been involved in implementing the system. Valerie Kund, secondary mathematics teacher, observes, "I feel that our new policy regarding observation and evaluation has improved attitudes toward the process, as well as improved communication among supervisory, administrative, and teaching staffs." Joan Jones, an elementary school teacher, stresses the practical value and positive impact of the new system, "The process is straightforward and clearly stated. By having a well-defined model, there is more trust between teacher and supervisor. Making the rating observation a legitimate part of the model frees teachers to invite supervisors to observe new or informal activities without concern about the risk in-

involved." Howard McIntyre, supervisor of instruction, perceives the new process in much the same way as teachers when he comments, "The model has been beneficial in improving teacher morale and implementing meaningful supervision." And J. H. Williams, a principal who has served in a number of Maryland school systems, observes, "Acceptance has been high because of the feeling of ownership by the groups affected." There is obviously widespread support for the new model and the process by which it has evolved.

Some problems remain. In a few of the schools, the vice-principals report that they are not as involved as they would like to be. A few of the principals and supervisors report that they are encountering difficulty in finding the time for all the conferences, observations, and coaching that are expected. And the school system now sees a need to place greater emphasis on renewal strategies for experienced and competent teachers. These concerns will provide a focus for the leadership training that will continue. □

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