

The Training and Certifying of Teacher Appraisers

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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.

Reference

McIntire, R. G. *Project Model*. Springfield, Ill.: Prescription Learning, 1986.

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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'

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