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.** 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 technique 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
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