

Teacher Evaluation— Shared Power Working

The Pasco, Washington, schools will soon complete their fourth year using McGreal's model, which relates staff development to instructional improvement through goal setting.

At Pasco, Washington, School District, we were seeking an evaluation system that would energize teachers and give them ownership in their own improvement. We wanted a system that would contribute to our effective schools effort and drive our staff development system. We found that vehicle in Thomas McGreal's (1983) goal-based appraisal process. Not only did it meet our criteria, but it promoted "teacher talk" about instruction and learning, and fostered a principal-teacher collegial relationship.

Under this appraisal system, principals and teachers work together to set one or two instructional goals that really make a difference in the classroom. The system is designed to:

1. help teachers design and develop appropriate goals in a supportive setting;
2. promote comfortable observations by supervisors;
3. provide a formative process

for teachers and principals, including feedback mechanisms and conferences;

4. produce a final document that recognizes growth and outlines future steps; and



The appraisal process begins when the principal and a teacher sit down together to choose goals that will contribute to professional growth and instructional improvement.

Photograph by Deanna Pridemore



In the McGreal process teachers give top priority to goals that bring about greatest student learning.

5. establish minimum expectations for teachers as agreed upon by teachers and administrators across the district.

Minimum expectations for teachers are not a part of the appraisal system, but a part of daily supervision. They include coming to work on time, providing a safe environment, upholding school rules, and following district policy. Failure to comply with minimum expectations is dealt with outside the appraisal process in an established straightforward fashion agreed upon by the union and the district.

And what about the "failing" teacher? How does our plan deal with teacher probation and nonrenewal of contract? Tom McGreal says, and we agree, that only a few teachers, perhaps only about 2 percent, fit into the "failing" category. So why develop

massive systems to deal with such a small percent? Rather, let's identify those folks who do not improve or must be fired, and deal with them differently. We use the old, established legal document trails for the few teaching failures and adopt a professional development process for the 98 percent that we keep in our classrooms.

Change Process

Making the change to a new system of evaluation was easier said than done. Our old evaluation process was part of the teacher association contract and contained a standard set of components as prescribed by state law. Figure 1 provides a chronology of events from 1979 to 1987 involved in turning our old seven-area rating scale into a personalized goal-setting process.

In the initial planning stage, a team of one teacher and three administra-

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1979-82	Administrative concern about teacher evaluation system, training in ITIP, clinical supervision, and so on.
1983 (summer)	Teacher and three administrators attend a three-day workshop on "appraising teacher effectiveness." Agreement with education association to form a joint problem-solving committee focused on teacher evaluation.
1983-84 (school year)	Problem-solving committee works all year. Recommends goal-setting teacher evaluation model to teacher association and school board. (School board and association are kept informed about the committee process throughout the 1983-84 school year.) High school principal "bootlegs" process, becoming an advocate before formal sanction.
1984 (summer)	Agreement between teacher association and school board to pilot new system during the 1984-85 school year.
1984-85 (school year)	Pilot functions at five schools: three elementary, one junior high, and one high school. Principals in nonpilot buildings agree to try the process with two teachers. Committee continues meeting.
1985 (summer)	Agreement between association and district for entire district pilot.
1985-87	Districtwide pilot.
1987 (summer)	Anticipate final plan to institutionalize goal-setting teacher evaluation system.

Fig. 1. Change Process Chronology

tors researched, problem-solved, selected, and developed the joint project. That ownership gave rise to both teacher and principal champions of the process. When the time came to pilot the model, almost half of the district building principals volunteered. Other principals agreed to try it out with two of their best teachers. The teacher association and the administrators sanctioned that pilot and helped develop training plans to ensure successful implementation.

Goal-Based Evaluation

Specifically, how does the model work? The principal divides teachers into three groups (see fig. 2):

- Track A—Goal-Setting Model (satisfactory teachers),
- Track B—Minimal Evaluation (satisfactory teachers), and
- Track C—Initial or Remedial Process (new or questionable teachers).

The first year the principal works intensively for quality appraisal with approximately half the staff who are in the goal-setting group (Track A); together they focus on improving in-

struction. Teachers on Track B meet minimal requirements and are assumed to be satisfactory for that year. The next year Tracks A and B change places, the original goal-setting group gets reduced attention, and teachers in the minimal evaluation group work intensively with the principal.

Track C teachers, who are new or have been identified as probably not "savable," are not included in the goal-setting model. New teachers are given a traditional check list review their first year to allow the teacher and principal a chance to review the entire range of teaching skills. Marginal teachers are dealt with in the most efficient way to process them legally for discipline, probation, or non-renewal. If Track C teachers demonstrate successful teaching, they move to Track A or B.

Results

McGreal's philosophy has given Pasco Schools an appraisal process that has had multiple positive effects. In January 1986 administrators, participating in a structured feedback session, sug-

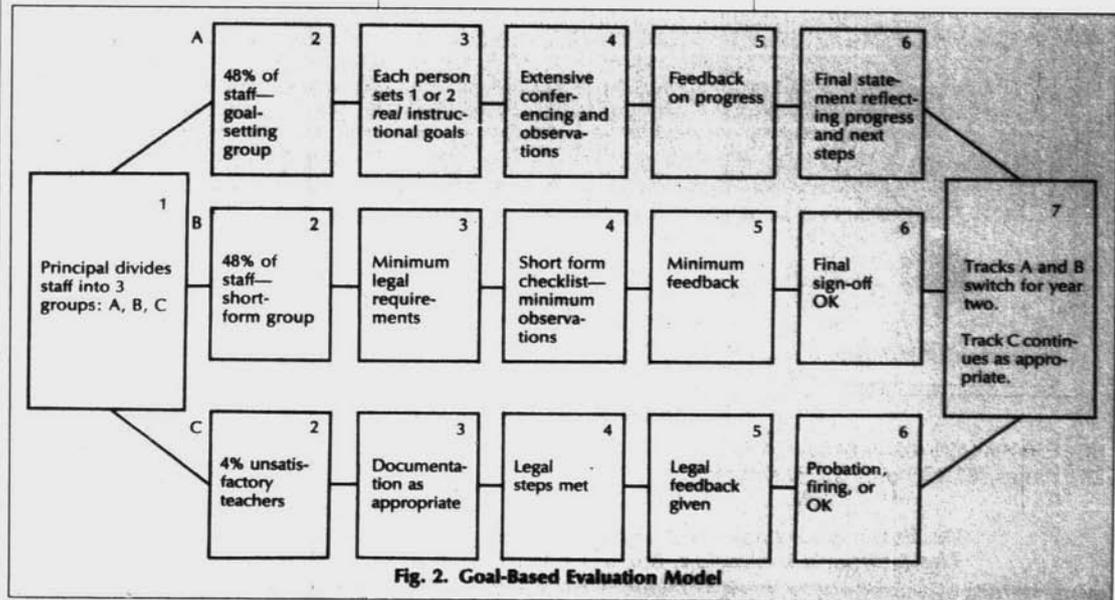


Teachers discuss their observations in each other's classrooms with particular attention to ways priority goals are changing teaching and learning.

gested, among other helpful ideas, a plan to provide more guidance in goal setting for first-year teachers. Teachers

also responded positively and asked for thorough training in the use of the new evaluation model.

During the first fall of the full pilot, we arranged for an outside consultant to train staff in the goal-setting and



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evaluation process. At the last minute the consultant became ill and could not come. Along with three administrators, one being the superintendent, a strong teacher shared her experience with the process. The ownership she felt was powerful. She achieved the goal that she had worked toward: she had power in the process.

Improved Instruction

The goals in the McGreal process are a powerful tool in improving instruction. Rather than devote time to improving the organization or program, the process first emphasizes top-priority goals that affect what the teacher does to bring about greater student learning. Principals work with teachers to develop these important goals.

A strong staff development plan multiplies the power of this personalized instruction model for teachers and administrators. Programs such as Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA), Power Writing, and Instructional Theory Into Practice (ITIP) lend themselves to teacher goal development. If a district offers an

energized, consistent, teacher-sanctioned staff development plan, then a change process can move through a building and district with unusual strength. The goal setting, teacher improvement, and staff development become cyclical and drive each other.

We will soon complete our fourth year working with this process. We got what we wanted: a teacher evaluation system that invigorates teachers and gives them ownership in and responsibility for their own improvement. We agree with Tom McGreal—if you are going to keep a teacher, you work with him or her to improve, and in the process you all improve. □

Reference

McGreal, Thomas I. *Successful Teacher Evaluation*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1983.

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