



Current Practices
of
Evaluating
Superintendents and Principals
in a
Standards-Based Environment

Technical Report 2002-05
Update

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INTRODUCTION

The technical report, *Current Practices of Evaluating Superintendents and Principals in a Standards-Based Environment 2002*, that the Idaho Association of School Administrators requested the Intermountain Center for Education Effectiveness to prepare, discussed administrators' evaluations currently in use. The report focused on evaluation practices, procedures, processes, and formats, and if these components had been altered to better align with the current standards-based, assessment-driven education system.

The research indicated the following points be considered in the formation of an administrator's evaluation; it should be noted the research did not indicate that such components were currently being utilized.

- Information collected should address pertinent concerns of the district
- Documentation should be accurate concerning the evaluation
- For the evaluation to be reliable, there is a need to analyze school/district data
- Purposes and procedures should be monitored and described in detail
- The areas of strength need to be identified
- The conclusion should be plainly justified
- The involvement of all stakeholders was necessary in the evaluation formation
- Use the *management by objectives* (MBO) type of evaluation to allow emphasis to be on results achieved and expected future growth
- Evaluate for a specified period of time so there is opportunity to measure real growth; one year is insufficient

In order for an administrator's evaluation to be effective with a standards-based education agenda, the evaluation needs to move beyond the traditional checklist and short

narrative format. A performance-based approach administrator evaluation ties in with student achievement and performance level of schools in a district. Whether superintendent or principal, the tie of administrator performance and student achievement exists in the current education environment. An accurate evaluation of the administrator's performance and progress of the school or district can be accomplished with a performance-based evaluation.

EVALUATION REVIEWS

In this update, three evaluation models are reviewed. They are: the checklist form, two approaches to the performance-based evaluations, and additional components of an effective evaluation.

Checklist Form

The checklist evaluation is currently the most widely used evaluation form (DiPaola and Stronge, 2001). Its strengths include clear job expectations, comprehensiveness, and ease of use. Some of its weaknesses are little stakeholder involvement, out-of-date or inadequate job requirements, constructs are too general, and lack of provision for professional development.

Performance-based Evaluations

In this update, two different approaches of developing an effective administrator's evaluation are examined. The first approach discussed focuses on portfolios. This approach can be used for superintendents or principals. The second approach discussed centers on a client-based evaluation. These two approaches are an addition to the sample evaluations provided in the initial technical report.

The Portfolio Approach: The first approach utilizes a portfolio approach. This is not a new method of evaluation, but in this case is fine tuned to reflect the standards-based education environment. It is an eight-step implementation process developed and used in Howell,

Michigan (Al-Rubiay, 1999). The school board and the superintendent formulated the evaluation. The following steps can be applied to produce an effective evaluation process for a superintendent or principal. For purposes of this update, application of the portfolio method will be specific to the position of superintendent.

1. After the board determines its goals, additional items are suggested for the superintendent's evaluation.
2. The portfolio is developed throughout the school year by gathering representative work samples, written narratives supporting each section of the portfolio, and continual reviewing of board goals and the school improvement plan to ensure progress is being made towards stated objectives.
3. Prior to the evaluation meeting, the superintendent provides each board member with a packet that contains a document clarifying expectations, a table of contents of the portfolio, a written narrative for each section of the portfolio, and a list of communication activities for the year.
4. The superintendent presents the portfolio at a regular board meeting with a brief overview that includes accomplishments and disappointments of the district over the past year.
5. Board members are given a two to three week period to review the portfolio.
6. The board president requests reaction from the board members prior to the next meeting.
7. The board president summarizes the information received from the board members.
8. The board president presents an overall rating (based on input from the members of the board) of the annual performance at the next board meeting.

Two aspects of leadership success can be demonstrated with the use of the portfolio: a) it illustrates the superintendent's accomplishment of the board's goals and b) there is a day-to-day activity evaluation. These aspects are accomplished due to the format of the portfolio itself. It is divided into 12 sections, each section having its own narrative. These are the sections: introduction, board goals; communication efforts; administrative style; financial monitoring; curriculum and instruction; promotion of the organization; organizational ability; staff development efforts; local, state and national services; facilities; and support material, all included at the superintendent's discretion. The portfolio approach facilitates the focus of the board and superintendent on priority goals and objectives. The continuous improvement of the district or building is documented. All stakeholders share the ultimate purpose of providing the best education possible for the district students in an enhanced, personal manner. A possible challenge at the beginning is finding the time to implement the process. Time needs to be allocated to collect the work samples, as well as to devise a management method for the information collected.

This evaluation approach can be adapted to be utilized for principals as well. The superintendent assumes the responsibilities of the board as delineated in the example provided. The principal responsibilities are the items the superintendent is charged with in the example. Modifications will need to be made relevant to the district and building leadership in each situation.

Client-based Approach: The main thrust of this approach is clearly articulating the evaluation system. The evaluation involves an ongoing process that focuses on growth and recognition, both of which are major components of the standards-based education agenda. This evaluation also

takes place over a twelve-month period, but is ongoing beyond that specified time span to allow a fair assessment of superintendent progress and how that reflects on the district.

This evaluation approach involves steps in an evaluation formulated by Dr. Don Senti and Linda Smith (1998). Dr. Senti, superintendent of a school district in Missouri, wanted to develop an evaluation instrument for superintendents that was productive. Linda Smith was serving as president of Dr. Senti's Board of Education when the evaluation was formed. Both of the authors had personal stakes in this evaluation development. This method of evaluation is applicable in a standards-based environment in spite of the fact it preceded No Child Left Behind legislation. The example is superintendent-specific. The four steps are:

1. Gather data (feedback) on the superintendent from the client groups in the district by means of a survey instrument. The survey questions are specific to the group surveyed. These groups are: board members, teachers, support staff, community leaders, and parents.
2. The superintendent provides a report to the board reviewing the past year's accomplishments and the observed areas of improvement. It updates the board as to the strengths, weaknesses, and emerging issues in the district. The surveys are reviewed at this time.
3. This board interprets the survey results. The board reviews the superintendent's recommended personal/professional goals; additional goals are also considered. The board then prepares a written report for the superintendent to which the superintendent responds in writing.
4. The mid-year review updates the board on the district progress as well as the superintendent's performance. It also provides a feedback opportunity to the

superintendent (modification: there should be quarterly reviews between the board and the administrator to be effective in a standards-based environment).

This process is designed to provide opportunity to not only identify existing problems, but potential problems as well. If implemented and used properly, this system can prevent problems from occurring (Senti & Smith, 1998). There is great public relations value as well due to the extensive stakeholder participation in the evaluation. It provides a role model for the other staff members when they are evaluated as well.

Additional Findings

It was recommended that state standards, professional standards, Board of Education goals, and administrator goals could be used as guides in the formulation of an evaluation tool (DiPaola and Stronge, 2001). In the evaluation development attention to the criteria and gradation are also essential (Andrade, 2000). The criteria should be ranked items contributed by the Board members and the administrator. These include all stakeholders' goals. These items are then reviewed and the redundancies are removed and omissions are added. The gradations should reflect and reveal problems. The rubrics developed should be specific and structured in detail.

Criteria essential to a quality evaluation include, but are not limited to:

- Constructs based on the job descriptions of the administrator
- Curriculum/planning development of the district
- Improvement strategies for student achievement
- An accurate measurement standard

Additional components that help to ensure an effective evaluation include combined contributions of the Board and the administrator to minimize misinterpretation of the evaluation constructs. It is recommended that board members receive training in evaluation methods to

maximize efficiency of the evaluation formulated. In addition, board members elected after the formation of the existing evaluation tool need to be oriented concerning the evaluation to avoid potential misinterpretation of the constructs.

Charlotte Danielson states in her book *Enhancing Professional Practice* (2002), an evaluation system should not only assess, but improve administrator performance. The well-constructed evaluation will allow superintendents the opportunity to reflect on their practice and skills according to Danielson's model. High expectations and respect for the individual are two components that go hand in hand in an effective evaluation. Although superintendents are not in the classroom, the premise that "anything important that happens with students is due to the work of the professional staff" (Danielson, 2002, p.65) specifies the impact of the administrator on student achievement.

Conclusion

These two approaches provide specifics of what can be accomplished with appropriate evaluation instruments. This specificity trend in evaluation formation is becoming increasingly necessary in today's education environment. Increasingly, state legislatures are linking superintendent and principal evaluations with contract conditions. In Virginia, one mandatory criterion for a superintendent's evaluation is improving student achievement (Dipaola & Stronge, 2001). This mandate serves to emphasize the superintendent's role in planning curriculum and its development, instructional leadership, and finally, student performance results. An accuracy standard should be included in the evaluation to ensure the data collected is valid, reliable, and systematic, free from bias.

Formation of superintendent and principal evaluations tailored to the specific needs of the district and building are effective. Development of specifics within evaluations enable all

stakeholders the opportunity to work towards their common goal: the best education environment they can provide for their students and staff.

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