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Preface

There is renewed interest in the role of teacher evaluation as a fundamental aspect of school improvement. To a large extent, this interest in teacher evaluation comes from the realization that any significant improvement in schooling must have the teacher at its heart. And, just as there is a rational connection between school improvement and teacher performance, there is a necessary and rational connection between teacher improvement and teacher evaluation.

This volume synthesizes current research and thinking about teacher evaluation and blends that research with practice. Each chapter is rich with illustrations and examples as we attempt to make a strong research-practice connection. In addition, a question and answer format is included in each chapter to enhance the utility of the book and its practical applications.

The book is organized into 13 chapters and three major sections. In the introductory chapter, “Teacher Evaluation and School Improvement,” I suggest that “a conceptually sound and properly implemented evaluation system for teachers is a vital component of successful reform efforts.” The chapter discusses key features of effective teacher evaluation systems and offers one model for designing a quality teacher evaluation system for school improvement and teacher growth.

Part I, *Designing a Teacher Evaluation System*, begins with a chapter by Patricia Wheeler and Michael Scriven, “Building the Foundation: Teacher Roles and Responsibilities,” in which they describe foundations for teacher evaluation and then focus on roles and responsibilities of the teacher as a desirable foundation. In Chapter 3, “Applying the Personnel Evaluation Standards to Teacher Evaluation,” Barbara Howard and James Sanders provide background and implications for using the Standards in teacher evaluation. Pamela Tucker and Marguerita DeSander discuss the legal context and parameters for designing and conducting teacher evaluations in Chapter 4, “Legal Considerations in Designing Teacher Evaluation Systems.”

Part II, *Assessing Teacher Performance*, provides a rationale and explores application issues for using multiple data sources in assessing teacher performance. In Chapter 5, “Classroom-Based Assessments of Teaching and Learning,” Sally Zepeda offers a call for going beyond teacher evaluation by using classroom-based observations for assessing teaching and learning through instructional supervision. In Chapter 6, Laura Ostrander and I offer guidance for using parent, student, and peer feedback in “Client Surveys in Teacher Evaluation.”

In Chapter 7, “Student Achievement and Teacher Evaluation,” Pamela Tucker and I discuss promising approaches to using student learning data in the evaluation of teachers’ work. Kenneth Wolf describes the benefits, liabilities, and applications of portfolios in Chapter 8, “Portfolios in Teacher Evaluation.” In Chapter 9, “Teacher Self-Evaluation,” Peter Airasian and Arlen Gullickson describe a process in which teachers make judgments about their own performance for the purpose of self-improvement. In the last chapter in Part II, Kenneth Peterson explains the data sources that can provide a more in-depth view of teacher quality.

Part III, *Implementing the Teacher Evaluation System*, explores often neglected but important issues in the successful application of an effective evaluation system. In Chapter 11, “Conducting a Successful Evaluation Conference,” Virginia Helm and Henry St. Maurice draw heavily from the business and professional literature to describe how evaluation conferences can serve as a key component in an ongoing communication and feedback cycle. Next, in Chapter 12, Mary Jo McGrath discusses factors that should be incorporated on a day-to-day basis in “Dealing Positively With the Nonproductive Teacher.” And finally, in Chapter 13, Stephen Gordon makes a case for the vital connection between teacher evaluation and professional development in the successful school process.

Taken collectively, *Evaluating Teaching: A Guide to Current Thinking and Best Practice* represents our attempt to provide a coherent and comprehensive approach to designing, implementing, and monitoring quality teacher evaluation systems. Our goal is to provide a framework for improvement—improvement of the teacher, improvement of the school, and, ultimately, improvement in student performance. We trust that our intended readers—school practitioners (principals, supervisors, staff development specialists, superintendents), graduate students, and researchers of teacher evaluation—find the text to be true to this purpose and of value in their work.

—James H. Stronge

Teacher Evaluation and School Improvement

1

Improving the Educational Landscape¹

James H. Stronge

So why does teacher evaluation matter? Because teaching matters: “Without capable, high quality teachers in America’s classrooms, no educational reform effort can possibly succeed” (Stronge & Tucker, 2003, p. 3). The core of education is teaching and learning, and the teaching-learning connection works best when we have effective teachers working with every student every day. While effectiveness can be defined in myriad ways (Cruickshank & Haeefe, 2001), the essential issue is that we have the most effective teachers possible guiding the learning of students. And, “without high quality evaluation systems, we cannot know if we have high quality teachers” (Stronge & Tucker, 2003, p. 3).

Teacher evaluation is, first, about documenting the quality of teacher performance; then, its focus shifts to helping teachers improve their performance as well as to holding them accountable for their work.

In recent years, as the field of education has moved toward a stronger focus on accountability and on careful analysis of variables affecting educational outcomes, the teacher has proven time and again to be the most influential school-related force in student achievement. (Stronge, 2002, p. viii)

Given the emphasis on teacher quality as expressed in No Child Left Behind, as well as legislation, public policy, and practice in every state (and, for that

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matter, many nations throughout the world), a premium must be placed on high quality teacher evaluation systems to a degree that didn't exist heretofore.

So why does teacher evaluation matter? Because regardless of how well a program is designed, it is only as effective as the people who implement it (Stronge, 1993). Thus, a conceptually sound, well-designed, and properly implemented evaluation system for teachers is an important—indeed, essential—component of an effective school. Despite the fact that proper assessment and evaluation² of teachers is fundamental to successful schools and schooling, this key element in school reform is too frequently neglected—due not to the absence of teacher evaluation, but rather to the implementation of poor evaluation systems and poor evaluation practices.

The basic needs in a quality teacher evaluation system are for a fair and effective evaluation based on performance and designed to encourage improvement in both the teacher being evaluated and the school. The purpose of this book is to explore key elements for constructing and implementing fair and effective teacher evaluation systems. This introductory chapter attempts to set the stage by discussing critical components for a quality teacher evaluation system and by identifying how effective teacher evaluation contributes to effective schools. Specifically, the chapter addresses the following questions:

- Why is there a need for quality teacher evaluation?
- What are the basic purposes of a teacher evaluation system?
- What are obstacles to quality teacher evaluation systems?
- What are key features of an effective teacher evaluation system?
- How can a teacher evaluation system be designed for school improvement and personal growth?
- How can self-reflection and feedback improve teaching?

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR QUALITY TEACHER EVALUATION?

Failures of Educational Reform

Too often, educational reform has produced disappointing results (Clark & Astuto, 1994) or outright failure (Pogrow, 1996). Fullan (1996) noted that one of the reasons for failure of systemic reforms is fragmentation: “Fragmentation occurs when the pressures—and even the opportunities—for reform work at cross purposes or seem disjointed and incoherent” (p. 420). Other reasons for the failure of systemic reforms are that reform efforts are implemented too quickly, from too many directions, and without regard to how the reform effort and the subsequent changes will affect teachers (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000). Thus, reform efforts fail.

One example of cross-purpose, disjointed, and incoherent reform that is played out in schools on a regular basis is as follows: (1) change school policy for

a given innovative teacher program, (2) provide some level of staff development on the prospective innovation, (3) ostensibly implement the innovative practice, and (4) continue to use existing evaluation practices. When reform efforts are disconnected from assessment, there is no way to measure success in the reform effort. Such a disconnect is a formula for failure.

A conceptually sound and properly implemented evaluation system for teachers (and, indeed, for all educators) is a vital component for successful reform efforts. “A rational relationship exists between personnel and programs: If program effectiveness is important and if personnel are necessary for effective programming, then a conceptually sound and properly implemented evaluation system for . . . education personnel is essential” (Stronge, 1993, p. 445).

Balancing the Needs of Teachers and the Needs of the Organization

A dynamic relationship between the teacher and the school exists in a healthy organization: What’s good for the organization must also be good for the teacher. This type of synergistic relationship enhances the ability of both the teacher and the school to achieve desired goals. Moreover, balancing individual needs with institutional expectations is essential for fostering productive work environments (March & Simon, 1967, 1993).

An organization’s beliefs about performance appraisal are inherent in the assumptions underlying the development of an appraisal system. Casterter (1996) explained that these assumptions “form a basis for achieving integration of individual and organizational interests” (p. 282). If the assumption is correct that individual and institutional goals are intertwined, then it is logical to consider teacher evaluation as a vehicle to facilitate and assess success for both the teacher (e.g., personal growth and performance improvement) and the school (e.g., goal accomplishment and accountability). Thus, teacher evaluation can and should be considered a vital part of the total improvement-restructuring efforts in education.

Improvement can take numerous forms, including

- improvement in performance of individual teachers, and other educators (administrators, support personnel);
- improvement of programs and services to students, parents, and community; and
- improvement of the school’s ability to accomplish its mission.

Fostering improvement in teacher evaluation systems means balancing individual and institutional demands. Little (1993) stated that “the language of reform underestimates the intricate ways in which individual and institutional lives are interwoven” (p. 147). As Fullan (1991) noted, “Combining individual and institutional development has its tensions, but the message . . . should be