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Preface

So why bother with evaluating teacher effectiveness? Because teachers matter inordinately to student learning. As I have written in other places, *teacher effectiveness = student success*. “Without capable, high quality teachers in America’s classrooms, no educational reform effort can possibly succeed” (Stronge & Tucker, 2003a, p. 3). Moreover, “without high quality evaluation systems, we cannot know if we have high quality teachers” (p. 3).

In an editorial in *Education Week*, Hiebert, Gallimore, and Stigler (2003) expressed a sentiment that I fully endorse:

To improve teaching, many say, the profession must find better teachers. Celebrity teachers, such as Jaime Escalante, are held up as models of what’s possible and are hailed as heroes of the profession. The trouble is that most students do not have Jaime Escalante as a teacher, and more Escalantes are hard to find.

Identifying a few excellent teachers and hoping others will copy their methods has not improved teaching in the average American classroom. Teaching, as most students experience it, has not changed for decades. Why? Because the average classroom is not affected much by what the few celebrity teachers do. To make a dent in the learning experiences for most students, educators must find a way to improve the quality of instruction in the average classroom. Even slight improvements in the average classroom, accumulated over time, would have a more profound effect on students around the country than recruiting a hundred more Escalantes into the classroom. (p. 1)

The primary purpose of *Evaluating What Good Teachers Do: Eight Research-Based Standards for Assessing Teacher Effectiveness* is to help both teachers and their evaluators collect more comprehensive and accurate assessment data for judging teacher effectiveness. The only way I know that schools can improve student achievement is to improve teacher effectiveness. If we can succeed in recruiting, supporting, assessing, and keeping capable teachers, we will go a great distance in improving our schools and, in turn, substantially embellishing the learning opportunities of students.

1

How to Assess Teacher Quality

School reform doesn't happen in Washington, Ottawa, London, or, for that matter, any other capital. It doesn't occur at the school board level or even at the school, for the most part. *Evaluating What Good Teachers Do: Eight Research-Based Standards for Assessing Teacher Excellence* is built on the foundation that the classroom—not the school—is the place on which we must focus for improved student performance. When one teacher improves her or his capacity to help students learn, then, and only then, does school improvement occur. And the reason is quite simple: *teacher success = student success*.

Evaluating What Good Teachers Do: Eight Research-Based Standards for Assessing Teacher Excellence focuses on providing a research-based framework for teacher assessment. This introductory chapter provides the foundation for defining, designing, and applying teacher performance standards. Specifically, this chapter addresses the following foundational issues:

- ◆ What are teacher performance standards and how are they used?
- ◆ What are quality indicators and how are they used?
- ◆ How can teacher performance standards be documented?
- ◆ How can teacher performance standards be rated?
- ◆ Why are performance standards important for ensuring teacher quality?

What Are Teacher Performance Standards and How Are They Used?

Importance of Defining the Job of the Teacher

Tēach'ēr, n. 1. One who teaches or instructs.¹

Although it is common practice to develop job descriptions for an array of educational positions, interestingly, the job of the teacher often is neglected. Perhaps because we believe that we so readily understand what it means to be a teacher, or perhaps because it is such a complex and encompassing job, we just don't go to the trouble of providing an operational definition. Yet, without a clear, objective, and accurate description of the required job responsibilities, it isn't feasible to provide an effective evaluation of performance. If *actual* performance is to be compared with *expected* performance, then

there must be an alignment between job requirements and job evaluation. In fact, the foundation of a quality teacher evaluation system is the use of clearly described and well-documented job performance standards for all educators—in other words, the job responsibilities.

Overview of Performance Standards²

For teacher performance evaluation to be fair and comprehensive, it is necessary to describe the performance standards of teachers with sufficient detail and accuracy so that both teachers and their supervisors can reasonably understand the job expectations. In essence, a set of performance standards is a detailed job description.

The expectations for teacher performance are defined using a two-tiered approach (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1. Model for Teacher Performance Standards and Quality Indicators



Source: Adapted from J.H. Stronge's *Goals and Roles Evaluation Model*. It is used here with permission from the author.

Performance standards are the major units (i.e., major job responsibilities) of the teacher's job, whereas quality indicators are the specific, observable, measurable aspects of these major job responsibilities. Performance standards and quality indicators will be explained, in turn.

Suggested Teacher Performance Standards

Performance standards are the job responsibilities or duties performed by a teacher. Consequently, the performance standards represent the major job responsibilities that a teacher fulfills. The performance standards form the basis for the development of job descriptions and, thus, should also form the basis for a job evaluation. Additionally, the teacher performance standards are intended to provide specification of role expectations. In other words, they provide clarity on the precise nature of the key aspects of the teacher's job. Figure 1.2 is a set of suggested teacher performance standards.

Figure 1.2. Suggested Teacher Performance Standards**Suggested Teacher Performance Standards**

1. Professional Knowledge
The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, and the developmental needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.
2. Data-Driven Planning
The teacher's planning uses appropriate curricula, instructional strategies, and resources to address the needs of all students.
3. Instructional Delivery
The teacher promotes student learning by addressing individual learning differences and by using effective instructional strategies.
4. Assessment of Learning
The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses data to measure student progress, guide instruction, and provide timely feedback.
5. Learning Environment
The teacher provides a well-managed, safe, student-centered environment that is academically challenging and respectful.
6. Communication and Advocacy
The teacher communicates effectively with students, school personnel, families, and the community.
7. Professionalism
The teacher maintains a professional demeanor, participates in professional growth opportunities, and contributes to the profession.
8. Student Progress
The work of the teacher results in acceptable, measurable progress based on established standards.

Alignment of Teacher Performance Standards with Qualities of Effective Teachers

The eight teacher performance standards described in Figure 1.2 form the foundation for the teacher performance assessment system detailed throughout *Evaluating What Good Teachers Do*. In fact, until the key work of the teacher—the teacher performance standards—are understood and agreed upon, all other aspects of a comprehensive evaluation system are superfluous. We observe and collect other relevant evidence, not in the abstract, but based on a given set of performance expectations—the perfor-

mance standards. Furthermore, we evaluate based on how well a teacher's performance matches the prescribed work; again, the performance standards.

If the selection of a teacher's performance standards is so fundamentally important to the overall assessment of the teacher's work, then it is incumbent that these standards have a solid grounding in the research of what makes teachers effective.

Chapters 2 through 9 explore the research base upon which each of the eight respective teacher performance standards is grounded.

What Are Quality Indicators and How Are They Used?

Overview of Quality Indicators

The assumption upon which a system of teacher performance standards is built is that teachers—regardless of what their particular assignments might be—are far more alike than they are different. Nonetheless, although the use of a common set of instructional performance standards tends to work very well for most teachers, preK-12, the actual work of a high school teacher, for example, a chemistry teacher, differs markedly from that of a fourth grade teacher. Likewise, the role of a chemistry teacher is different from those of other high school teachers, for example, a Spanish teacher or a biology teacher. Practically speaking, however, it would be virtually impossible to create and implement a teacher evaluation system with separate sets of performance standards for every grade level, subject matter, or other job distinctions that exist in a school or school system. Yet, if we don't account for important differences in teacher roles and responsibilities, the evaluation process becomes far too generic and, thus, completely irrelevant. So how do we adjust for these important differences in teacher work? It is through the customization of the quality indicators—the second level used in defining and describing the work of the teacher (see the visual provided in Figure 1.1, page 4).

Although performance standards describe the essence of the job, a more specific unit of performance—quality indicators—is needed for actual documentation of the accomplishments of the teacher. Performance standards constitute the basic units of the job, as described above. However, performance standards do not lend themselves readily to direct classroom observation or other types of documentation or measurement.

How Quality Indicators Are Used

Quality indicators are used in the teacher evaluation system to do just what the term implies: *indicate* in observable behaviors, the types and quality of performance associated with performance standards. Thus, a quality indicator is a tangible behavior that can be observed or documented to determine the degree to which a teacher is fulfilling a given performance standard.

Evaluators and teachers are encouraged to review the lists of quality indicators provided in the book, and to customize them—supplementing, modifying, or reducing as appropriate—for a particular teacher work assignment or situation. Figure 1.3 illustrates quality indicators for the *Student Progress* performance standard.

Figure 1.3. Sample Set of Teacher Quality Indicators

Performance Standard 8: Student Progress

The work of the teacher results in acceptable, measurable progress based on established performance expectations.

Sample Quality Indicators

The teacher

- ♦ sets measurable and appropriate achievement goals for student progress.
- ♦ gathers and analyzes data on student academic achievement through standardized test results and other student performance sources.
- ♦ uses formative assessment to regularly monitor student progress and modify instruction as needed.
- ♦ provides evidence that achievement goals have been met.
- ♦ communicates/collaborates with colleagues in order to improve students' performance.

Quality indicators are provided to help teachers and their evaluators clarify and document performance standards (i.e., job responsibilities). All quality indicators, however, may not be applicable for a particular teaching assignment. In fact, some teaching positions may need to identify specialized quality indicators. Special education teachers, for example, are required to participate in individualized education program (IEP) meetings and maintain appropriate documentation regarding student performance. Another example is that science teachers may need to add a quality indicator regarding lab safety for *Standard 5: Learning Environment*.

It is important to note that quality indicators are merely *examples* of behaviors. Although sample lists of quality indicators are provided for each teacher standard throughout the book, these lists of quality indicators are not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, they are merely *examples* of typical behaviors that may serve as evidence that a teacher meets the given standard. Additionally, any set of quality indicators should have the features described in Figure 1.4 on page 8.