

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 443

JC 940 256

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 TITLE Performance Review Aerobics Exercises Which Systemize the Process.
 PUB DATE Feb 94
 NOTE 22p.; Paper presented the International Conference for Community College Chairs, Deans, and Other Instructional Leaders (3rd, Phoenix, AZ, February 23-26, 1994).
 PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Responsibility; Administrator Role; Community Colleges; *Faculty Development; Formative Evaluation; Instructional Improvement; *Portfolios (Background Materials); Summative Evaluation; *Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Evaluation; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

Finding ways to accurately document and record faculty performance can be difficult and time-consuming for the department chair. However, if performance reviews are viewed as a system for improvement, they can provide constructive feedback to the faculty member and offer the opportunity for goal-setting and mutually-supported professional growth. The teaching portfolio offers an excellent model for integrating formative and summative evaluations. To assure the reliability of the portfolio as an evaluation, it should be prepared with collaboration from peers and the chair. With the portfolio, the chair and instructor must identify the goals of the evaluation, and carefully delineate the expectations for acceptable performance in the job description. Once these materials are prepared, a clear time table and the expected outcomes must be established. Finally, for chairs to effectively evaluate faculty, the following eight guidelines should be kept in mind and meshed with their particular institutional culture: (1) summative and formative evaluation must be viewed as parts of a whole; (2) evaluation should be based on a standard, college-wide form and follow uniform procedures; (3) goals must be viewed as evolving and allowed to change; (4) evaluations must be ongoing; (5) evaluation must depend on multiple sources; (6) information acquired from sources must be analyzed with an eye toward limitations and shortcomings; (7) a faculty member's career status should be factored into the evaluation; and (8) evaluators should be conversant with current literature on the basics of teaching and instructional improvement. Contains 25 references. (KP)

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PERFORMANCE REVIEW AEROBICS
EXERCISES WHICH SYSTEMIZE THE PROCESS

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Presented to
The Third International Conference of Community College
Chairs, Deans, & Other Instructional Leaders
Feb. 23-26, 1994

MC 940 256

Performance Review Aerobics - Exercises Which Systemize the Process

Although chairs enjoy working with faculty to improve and enhance instructional performance through classroom observation, syllabus or assignment review, etc., the performance review or annual appraisal all too often becomes a dreaded activity. Regardless of whether the review is with a long term colleague or a new probationary faculty member, finding ways to accurately document and record performance can be demanding on time and patience. Both the chair and the faculty member want the review to be a positive and formative experience, but all too often the experience becomes negative because the system dictates that activities need to be measured and summarized. When the faculty member's performance on the job is weak or when a chair sees a need to provide motivation, the process becomes even more complex and sometimes disheartening to both involved. This ambiguity and anxiety can be avoided if the review process is viewed as a system for improvement where both summative and formative data may be organized to provide constructive feedback to the faculty member. At the same time, the material can provide administrative documentation related to the instructional job description and additionally provide an opportunity for goal setting: plan for future professional growth supported by the chair and faculty member.

The teaching portfolio offers an excellent model for the integration of formative and summative evaluation. It provides a record of actual teaching activities that can be compared with an institution's and a department's own standards of teaching excellence, and it includes the very back-up evidence needed by persons making personnel decisions. In addition, the portfolio also demands critical self-analysis from faculty members, which requires reflection on a variety of types of data well beyond but including the traditional student ratings. This is done with an eye toward identifying not only teaching success but also the pinpointing of areas where the instructor would like to see improvement. As Peter Selden pointed out in The Teaching Portfolio (1991), "a teaching portfolio would enable faculty members to display their teaching accomplishments for examination by others. And in the process, it would contribute to sound personnel decisions and to the professional development of individual faculty members" (3).

Institutions that utilize the portfolio for both formative and summative evaluation generally must require the inclusion of certain mandated items (determined at both institutional and divisional/departmental levels as appropriate) but encourage personal selection of optional materials that allow instructors to individualize or

customize their portfolios. The latter is critical since one of the most important reasons for using the portfolio is to "empower" faculty members to "take charge" and declare a certain ownership of the evaluation process.

To assure the reliability of both the summative and formative features of the teaching portfolio within the evaluation process the faculty member should prepare the document in consultation with peers as well as in the course of discussions with the supervisor. This allows for some external (or "reality check") control over and corroboration of the evidence that is needed for making personnel decisions (such as tenure or promotion) as well as for identifying areas for improvement. The department or division chair's role is particularly important in establishing clear expectations in regard to teaching responsibilities, extracurricular duties/opportunities, and specific items that the portfolio must include. The periodic communication between faculty members as well as their peer mentors and supervisor as portfolio development proceeds assures that the document is created and reviewed in an environment of trust.

The reflective statement that serves as the heart of the teaching portfolio offers the best formative opportunity for the preparer. This self-analysis usually follows an opening statement of teaching and other responsibilities or objectives on which the evaluation will center. In the reflective statement, faculty often discuss teaching

philosophy, teaching strategies and goals, student rating results, perceived successes and failures in one identified course or all courses taught, professional development activities in which the preparer has participated, priorities for the future, and ideas for improvement. The most personal part of the portfolio, the reflective statement, allows, even forces faculty to consider what they are doing and why. Although instructors must address mandated items (such as student ratings or peer reviews in some cases) in this statement and include them in conjunction with the brief narrative or in an appendix, they also may incorporate other material on an optional basis that supports their self-analysis. This could include statements from colleagues, unsolicited letters from students, student work, letters of commendation, awards, and descriptions of special activities (perhaps for the purpose of teaching improvement) in which faculty have participated. Together, then, these elements allow a meaningful self-evaluation that facilitates professional development and serves as an important element in an evaluation process aimed at personnel decision-making.

Peter Seldin's books, The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/Tenure Decisions and Successful Use of Teaching Portfolios, not only explain the value of the teaching portfolio from a philosophical point of view but also provide step-by-step directions for developing a portfolio and numerous actual

examples of portfolios from a variety of disciplines. These studies reflect the fact that the portfolio movement has picked up considerable support in universities across the nation, where a number of internal and external forces have produced a need to identify and reward good teaching and establish a non-threatening process for improving teaching performance. Community colleges, where teaching has always stood at the center of institutional mission, likewise can benefit from the opportunity to incorporate the teaching portfolio into evaluation systems that seek both formative and summative results. With little or no disruption to most evaluation processes, institutions can integrate the teaching portfolio with other evaluative sources and in so doing, encourage greater faculty faith in the performance review system. Teaching improvement can only follow.

Once the portfolio is complete, the performance review interview process becomes both a summative and formative activity. Future goal setting, both short and long term, is an exercise completed by both the chair and the faculty member. The general approach to goal setting is based on the feedback from the outside sources collected through the portfolio process and would include the faculty member's individual reflection, the supervisor's perceptions, peer reviews, instructional materials, evidence of professional contributions, and additional relevant materials. Obviously, the documents are summative in nature and will also include some inherent goals such as completing a new

course proposal, taking a course, revising a particular instructional methodology, applying for a grant, and the list goes on.

The first step in bringing the material into a goal setting phase is for both the instructor and chair to identify these goals obviously present in the summative documentation and to assess the current value of these goals. For example, summative data may indicate that the instructor has worked to incorporate multi-media into the classroom instruction, and from the feedback data, the indication could be that this material has been a benefit to the classroom experience and the learning process. The fact that this method has been successfully adopted may reflect the completion of a previous goal; however, this could also be the stimulus for several secondary goals, each different depending on the perspective of the faculty member and the chair. The faculty member may be interested in designing a new multi-media program and the chair may be thinking about using the instructor as a training source for other faculty interested in multi-media applications. The goals are quite different and can easily become a conflict if the two involved are not seeking to develop a shared vision for the instructor's growth and development. Thus, the need for a clear commitment to a shared vision becomes evident. The instructor can easily be shown the importance of sharing strategies with colleagues and the chair can be cognizant of

a faculty member's need to continue to move forward: a joint effort brings success for both.

The second crucial area for the chair and the faculty member to address involves the basic job description. The job description should carefully identify the expectation for acceptable performance and that expectation will change with each individual faculty member. A probationary instructor who spends more time on outside committee work than classroom preparation will generally experience difficulty in the classroom while an experienced member of an institution may be expected to participate and offer insight to committee responsibilities. Whether this example holds true in all situations is not the point. What is important to realize is that the basic job description applies differently to each instructor and so the means for assessment must be adjusted accordingly without losing sight of the basic performance objectives. Goals agreed to by the chair and the instructor should address the job description accurately while also addressing the needs of the faculty member. Both must also agree as to how the success or failure of the goal, in terms of the job expectations, will be measured.

Finally, once the summative data has been reviewed and the goals have been identified, the process must set a clear time table, identify necessary support (budget, equipment, clerical, etc.), and define the expected outcome. The activity gives the parameters to the professional

development expectations as well as the overall assessment. If followed carefully and with sincere effort, the formative exercise is now directed to the future professional development of the instructor. As a responsible chair, it is important to make sure the expectations are realistic and that the faculty member is not given or allowed to accept additional responsibilities without adjusting the goal expectation to a realistic level. This commitment by the chair provides the necessary support to stimulate real growth and development that will be evidenced in future portfolios.

Combining summative and formative evaluation requires a clear system to be effective. If the performance appraisal system is not detailed and directed to professional development, then the chair cannot expect realistic growth. The portfolio movement has provided a real method for the assimilation of data relevant to both administrative decisions and professional development. The performance interview provides opportunities for realistic assessment of a faculty member's accomplishments and his/her goals for continued professional growth. By combining these elements into a healthy development program, the performance review process becomes a collegial activity directed to teaching improvement and the success of the institution's mission. With careful assessment and the attention to realistic expectations, the system can bring about effective change and professional responsibility.

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"Managers do not solve problems: they manage messes" (Schon, 16). When managers or chairpersons or assistant deans evaluate faculty, they face a potentially messy situation. These eight guidelines are offered here in the hope that they will help administrators avoid or, at least, minimize such possible messes. However, much depends on the administrator and his or her knowledge of the origin of messes.

Messes multiply in the gap between theory and organizational life. A knowledge of these opposite sides of the gap is fairly attainable, although one becomes an expert in these areas in almost entirely different ways. Comprehending the theory on the evaluation of faculty comes first from reading the research on its various aspects such as student evaluation of faculty, classroom observation, teaching portfolios, etc. After the information is analyzed and synthesized, guidelines can be formulated.

Comprehending the organizational life of a college, however, is a very different process. The person must become emersed in it, live it, and somehow get the feel for it. In The Reflective Practitioner, Donald Schon describes organizations as repositories of cumulative knowledge in the following areas: "principles and maxims of practice, images of mission and identity, facts about the task environment, techniques of operation, stories of past experience which serve as exemplars for future action" (Schon, 242). Schon's abstraction or organizational life becomes unique as soon as it takes shape in a

college. Most likely, members of a college do not see their college in Schon's categories, and certainly no college presents itself in this way. But, no one prospers in any organization unless he or she gets in sync with its rhythm.

The gap between the two, the messes, is where middle managers work and where researchers look for solutions. The current paradigm for dealing with these messes runs something like this. Researchers extract problems from the messes either by observing the administrator in action or listening to their descriptions; researchers, then, propose solutions. Middle managers, when they have the time, identify similar aspects of the messes as problems and turn to the research for solutions. When researchers and managers bring forward solutions, they must remember that theories (the one side of the gap) have to mesh with the organizational life (the other side of the gap). Woe betide the middle manager who forgets this part of the equation. Unless the managers adapt the theory to their feel for the organizational life of the college, they may well find themselves mired in an even deeper mess. Thus, in using these eight guidelines for evaluating faculty, much depends on the managers' abilities to mesh them with the organizational life of their colleges.

Guideline 1: Summative and formative evaluation must be viewed as parts of the whole, not as separate and distinct entities.

Every year administrators face the troublesome job of writing summative evaluations, a task made more difficult by the theorists' insistence on distinguishing summative evaluation from formative evaluation. This distinction runs as follows.

Summative evaluation pertains to personnel decisions such as contract renewals, tenure, and pay increases. Formative evaluation is used to improve teaching, professional development, and college service.

The basic problem is that the distinction, the separation between the two, does not hold up in practice or, to return to the first point, in the organizational life of a college. Suppose that an administrator concludes his summative evaluation of Professor X by rating him a B--very good but not excellent. One of the first questions the administrator will face from X is how can X improve? The best practice is for administrators to design formative evaluation practices into the summative process. Administrators should clearly state that faculty are responsible for an in control of the formative procedures. While both parties plan which procedures will be chosen at the beginning of the evaluation process--i.e., the goal-setting stage-- administrators should make it clear that faculty decide what results they will include in their self-evaluation, the end of the evaluation procedure.

Guideline 2: Evaluation should be based on a standard, college-wide form, and it should follow a uniform set of procedures.

By beginning with a set format and with uniform procedures, faculty will know what to expect, and messes should be minimized. Although making expectations explicit is common sense, it is apparently not common practice. In The New Faculty Member, Robert Boice found in his study of first-year faculty at a university that they were frustrated by the "generally

unspecified criteria" (37) of the university's tenure policy. Boice reports this failure to clarify expectations was the case at most of the universities where he has taught. Because of this lack of clear expectations, good faculty were lost. They worked less, not more. These kinds of policies, then, stand as an example of one of the bad aspects of organizational life.

Guideline 3: Goals, the starting point of any evaluation, must be viewed as evolving; consequently, goals should be allowed to change in view of input and feedback.

The goal-setting document should be a replica of the standard evaluation document with the obvious difference. The danger point occurs after goals are written. Unless goal-setting is viewed as continuing process, written goals become absolutes--breeding grounds for potential messes. Thus, to avoid or minimize the danger, the process should follow these steps.

1. After faculty write goals, administrators should review them, and if necessary, offer suggestions for revisions.
2. Faculty should submit three updates each semester (at the end of September, October, and November; at the end of February, March, and April).
3. Administrators should comment briefly on these updates and return them quickly.

The guiding principle for the process is flexibility. Faculty should adapt, revise, and refine their goals as they work and reflect on them. Such an approach yields better results and keeps faculty and administrators in contact with each other.

Guideline 4: Evaluation must be ongoing, not confined to an end of the year review.

If uniform procedures are adopted, a number of meetings and exchanges are already present: the goal-setting review, written updates on goals, review of students' rating forms, and the final evaluation.

Not following this guidelines is poor practice. No one knows what will or will not be discovered if the administrator waits until year's end to assemble the evaluation. If a major problem is discovered, everyone suffers.

Following this guideline may appear to be a burden or even an impossibility to some administrators. The best answer to these perceptions is task management. If the administrator keeps a running account of these interchanges on the evaluation document, the annual report should be much simpler.

Guideline 5: Evaluation must depend on multiple sources.

The reliability of the evaluation is increased when the view of the administrator is balanced by others. Typically, these include the students' rating forms, colleagues' evaluation, and self-evaluation. When considering multiple sources one of the basic criterion is consistency: if the sources agree, their reliability is enhanced.

The primary variable in implementing such a guideline is organizational life: what was done in the past, what roles were played by the dean and the president? The extent to which an

institution's ethos varies from this guideline is the extent of caution that must be used in implementing it.

Guideline 6: The information acquired from these sources must be analyzed with an eye toward their limitations and shortcomings.

STUDENT EVALUATION OF FACULTY

Research has proven that standard evaluations forms, such as the Kansas State's IDEA are reliable and valid. See John Centra, Reflective Faculty Evaluation (1993), for the most recent survey of research (47-79) and for a comprehensive description of the standard rating forms (179-204).

COLLEAGUE EVALUATION OF FACULTY

The soundness of these judgments depends on the ways colleagues are evaluated. Classroom observation is the least credible for two reasons: it is not frequent enough to be representative; evaluations carry built-in biases (Centra 116-123; Weimer, 1988). Cohen and McKeachie list 10 areas which colleagues are most competent to judge: most of them focus on course content and organization, teaching methodology and evaluation practices, enthusiasm for and commitment to student learning (148); Centra (118) reprints this list.

FACULTY SELF-EVALUATION

Centra's review of the research demonstrates that faculty tend to overestimate both their performance as teachers and the accomplishments of their students (94-114). But if these evaluations include examples and artifacts--the teaching portfolio, for example--and if they include reflective thinking--i.e., a faculty member's comments on why particular practices worked well or didn't--they can provide useful perspectives on overall performance.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Administrators who rely only on their own judgment are in a much weaker position, and will face more potential messes. If administrators draw information from a wide range of sources such as the three just discussed, their view of a faculty member's work is much more balanced and much less likely to be criticized.

Guideline 7: A faculty member's career status should be an important consideration in his/her evaluation.

Every faculty member should clearly note his or her years of experience and rank on the goal-setting statement. These factors should be important considerations in both the writing and the evaluation of an individual's goals. This forces faculty to become more circumspect. The goals should reflect an individual's experience or lack of it, an individual's expertise

or lack of it. What is often implicit--and thus ignored or taken for granted--becomes explicit. Once these factors are explicit, they function as criteria that administrators use to measure the quality of the goals.

Guideline 8: Evaluators should be conversant with the current literature both on the basics of good teaching and on how to improve teaching.

If evaluators are going to evaluate faculty, they must be prepared to offer sound advice on teaching. As argued in the first guideline, summative and formative evaluation must be viewed as parts of the whole, and this is one of the places where they come together.

In the best of all possible worlds, the college will have a faculty development expert who can work with faculty on improving teaching. Yet, whether or not there is a faculty development expert to assist, administrators need to be conversant with the literature. A working knowledge of the following six sources provide more than enough material to enable administrators to answer any question on teaching and to guide faculty in improving teaching.

- Tools for Teaching by Barbara Davis was published last October. Its succinct and clear summaries are complemented by well chosen bibliographies.

- Teaching Tips by Wilbert McKeachie, now in its eighth edition, is very useful.

- Kansas State's IDEA papers provide well written and balanced presentations on timely subjects.

- Maryellen Weimer's article, "Reading Your Way to Better Teaching," (1988) summarizes the ten best articles on teaching and the ten best articles on learning.

- Improving College Teaching by Maryellen Weimer is essential. Not only is it well written and even-handed but it is also loaded with good ideas.

- Reflective Faculty Evaluation by John Centra contains good advice and an up-to-date review of the latest research in all important areas.

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