Research Brief
Teacher Evaluation

Question: What are some guidelines for implementing an effective teacher evaluation system?

Summary of Findings:
The No Child Left Behind emphasis on teacher quality and its relationship to student achievement has made teacher evaluation an area of increased concern for today's high school principal. Numerous problems associated with the evaluation of teachers have been cited in the literature, including lack of agreement on what constitutes good teaching, an emphasis on accountability rather than improved performance, limited feedback, and low benefit to teachers as a means for improving instruction. In response, efforts have been made to better understand the characteristics of effective teacher evaluation systems and improve current practice.

A recent review of the literature on teacher evaluation (Bradshaw & Joyner, 2002) identified criteria that can be used to develop more effective evaluation systems. These criteria included things like linking evaluation to school goals, gathering and using data on teacher performance, establishing feedback mechanisms, and including ways to meaningfully involve teachers in the process. Efforts to improve the technical quality of evaluation systems over the past two decades have not produced evidence of improved teaching and increased student achievement. Thus, newer thinking treats teacher evaluation as an organizational problem that includes improving school climate, having the principal become an instructional leader, and building links between school improvement, professional development, teacher evaluation and student learning.

The following guidelines for principals are synthesized from the characteristics of effective evaluation systems identified in the literature.

- Start by identifying a common framework or model that defines good teaching. Involve teachers to ensure understanding and acceptance of the framework and standards for performance. Research conducted in Cincinnati, Baltimore, and Miami-Dade County school districts concluded that selecting a teacher competency model was the most important step in the process.

- Decide if the purpose will be to improve practice (formative evaluation), make decisions about retention, advancement, and dismissal (summative evaluation), or both. Effective evaluation systems align methods and procedures with the purpose

of the evaluation and may address accountability and development in different ways.

- Utilize multiple and variable sources of data on teacher performance. Researchers conclude that principal reports of teacher performance based on 1-2 classroom visits using a rating form or anecdotal record are inaccurate and unreliable. Walk-through techniques can produce more useful and valid data because they sample classroom behavior more reliably over time and are less intrusive on ongoing instruction. Effective evaluation systems use multiple and variable data such as lesson plans, samples of student work, assessment results, and portfolios, in addition to data from direct observation in classrooms.

- Determine how to meet the leadership responsibilities associated with effective teacher evaluation systems. Research shows that effective educational leaders play a strong, positive role in the evaluation process, collaborate with teachers, provide useful feedback, and facilitate teacher reflection on their work. Studies focused on teacher perceptions of evaluation found that effective feedback was the most important contributor to changes in teaching behavior. Feedback is particularly challenging at the secondary level because subject matter expertise is so critical. High school principals should consider a peer subject-matter component as part of teacher evaluation.

- Assess school culture and climate to ensure that the evaluation environment is supportive of ongoing professional learning. The literature cites school cultures that focus on teaching and learning for all students, collaboration among teachers, and teacher reflective practice as characteristics of supportive evaluation environments.

Online Resources:

- Teacher Evaluation: New Directions and Practices
  This website provides an array of resources, including an overview of practices to improve the evaluation role of principals, forms and procedures for using multiple data sources in teacher evaluation, guiding principles, essays, and a bibliography of teacher evaluation articles, books and documents.
  http://www.teacherevaluation.net/

- Answers.com™ Overview of Teacher Evaluation
  Access to a textbook-like description of the history, goals, trends, issues, and controversies related to teacher evaluation.
  http://www.answers.com/topic/overview-of-teacher-evaluation

- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

The NBPTS home page provides links to numerous resources including descriptions of the teaching standards and assessment processes used to certify teachers in various instructional areas, and access to an overview of research findings related to the National Board Certification process.
http://www.nbpts.org/

- A Blueprint for Teacher Evaluation
  This ASCD site provides public access to chapter 3 from the Danielson and McGreal book titled *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice*. The blueprint includes a general discussion of exemplary practice, the conditions that lead to good practice, and thoughts about the nature of professional learning. Charlotte Danielson's framework for professional practice is currently part of many teacher evaluation systems.
  http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.chapter/menuitem.83f4b2b5537730a98d7ea23161a001ca/?chapterMgmtId=def564597dcaff00VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD

- Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development
  Summary of a research study that outlines some of the reasons teacher evaluations may present an inaccurate view of performance. The findings reveal potential challenges faced by high school principals attempting to link evaluation practices with improved teacher learning.
  http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/news/coverStories/teacher_eval_and_prof_dev.php

- Teacher Self-Evaluation
  Various evaluation methods that allow teachers to assess their own instruction and prescribe ways to improve their teaching are explored in this article.
  http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/11/5a/44.pdf

- New Directions in Teacher Evaluation
  This article details a shift over the past decade from evaluation systems that focus on accountability to approaches that integrate teacher accountability with professional growth.
  http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/2a/2d/3a.pdf

- Designing Teacher Evaluation Systems That Support Professional Growth
  This publication details the differences between evaluation systems designed for teacher growth and those that focus on accountability, examines how to develop a formative system, and provides examples.
  http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/26/8f/71.pdf

- Using the Classroom Walk-Through as an Instructional Leadership Strategy
  The essential elements of an effective classroom walk-through as a tool for instructional supervision are described in this brief article.
  http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/TheCenter_NL_Feb07.pdf

- Evaluations That Ensure Growth: Teacher Portfolios
  This article describes the research and theory behind teaching portfolios, outlines how to select a model for use, and how to implement portfolios as part of a teacher evaluation system. Available to NASSP members only – login and enter "portfolios" as the search item.
  http://www.principals.org

- The Art of Evaluation and Professional Development
  The Boston Arts Academy is used to show how teachers and administrators link professional development activities with school-lwide and individual goals and the role that evaluation plays in the process. Available to NASSP members only – login and enter "teacher evaluation" as the search item.
  http://www.principals.org

- Standards-Based Teacher Evaluation as a Foundation for Knowledge and Skill-Based Pay
  A policy brief that describes research findings on links between teacher evaluations and student achievement, teacher and administrator reactions to the evaluation systems, and the impact on teacher practice. Guidelines are provided for designing and using a standards-based teacher evaluation system as the basis for teacher pay.
  http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/34/8e/3a.pdf

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http://www.educationpartnerships.org/