

EVALUATING STUDENT TEACHER PERFORMANCE

By

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INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is a continuous process interwoven into the entire student's teaching experience. Preplanning the evaluation process is therefore very important. Without continuous planned evaluation from the co-operating teacher, the value of student teaching is greatly reduced. One of the main purposes of the student teaching experience is to allow the co-operating teacher to share his/her experience and to guide student teachers in evaluating their own progress.

Cooperating teachers are key persons in student teacher evaluation. They are in close, regular contact with the student teacher. In addition, they know and understand the students and subject matter with which the student teacher is working.

Cooperating teachers are asked to write a final evaluation of the student, a kind of summing-up, and this is often kept in the student's permanent folder, perhaps to be seen by future employers. Often the student teacher is also asked to evaluate his over-all performance in writing at the end of the student teaching period. The forms used for evaluation vary considerably from short checklist to long essay, and some combine aspects of each.

Student teachers are more concerned with their progress. They expect encouragement and advice when they perform well and when they need more work in certain areas. Some cooperating teachers look upon their evaluation as a painful process and seek to avoid it. We do not do student teachers a favor, by accepting poor teaching performance in the name of sparing someone's feelings. Constructive criticism should be based on a regular basis, only after assuming his/her performance for a long period and after being satisfied with it. In addition, it

should be combined with positive reinforcement. To the student teacher, it can mean the difference between professional growth and stagnation between competent teaching and haphazard time saving. Thus, evaluation involves more than a summary report or a grade.

Principles of Evaluation

Meaningful evaluation is based on certain principles. A cooperating teacher's understanding of the following principles should be revealed in a way on how the student teacher evaluation is conducted.

- Evaluation is a continuous process. One should schedule frequent, regular conferences throughout the student teaching experience.
- Evaluation is a cooperative process. Evaluation plans should be reviewed with the student teacher, and adapted or changed to meet his/her individual needs.
- Evaluation is an objective process. Checklists, rating scales, audiotapes, videotapes, etc., should be used during observation and recording of student teacher performance.
- Evaluation is a process that is based upon specific objectives. The objectives should be made public to all persons involved in the evaluation progress.
- Evaluation is best conducted as an open process. The student teacher's progress toward achieving objectives should be shared with all involved.
- Evaluation is a process designed to encourage self-evaluation. The skills and techniques essential for good teaching should be shared with the student teacher, and he/she should be assisted objectively in evaluating his/her own performance.

Role of Evaluating Instruments

Most cooperating teachers find that a written record of the student teacher's progress and achievements eases the process of evaluation. This may be in the form of an anecdotal record in which the cooperating teacher makes periodic entries. It may be completed in addition to the conference planning form. Information pertaining to interpersonal relations between the student teacher and the school students, the cooperating teacher, and related personnel is often included in anecdotal records.

While evaluation instruments or forms will never, by themselves, create an effective program of student teacher evaluation, their thoughtful and systematic use can increase the value of the total student teacher experience. A well-written evaluation instrument, that identifies the specific competencies which the cooperating teacher should be observing and recording and can sharpen and improve the evaluation process. It can also help to think in terms of objective, observable performance rather than vague, subjective feelings about the student teacher's work. During the evaluation conference, a completed instrument provides a reference which the student teacher can review to discuss performance and to plan future proficiency. In addition, student teachers can self-evaluate using the instruments to help gain realistic insights into themselves as teachers.

Evaluation instruments vary a great deal in format, applicability and usefulness. They can be short or long, detailed or generalized, appropriate for one subject or another. Perhaps all of them fall short in assessing the elusive qualities that go into making an effective teacher. Since there is no one best form, the cooperating teacher should be wise enough to inspect several and try out the ones that appear most useful.

In examining the instruments, criterias that are needed in the vocational service area and teaching setting are to be looked for. Because vocational teachers typically use a variety of teaching approaches, that might be necessary to find separate evaluation instruments specifically designed to rate a demonstration, a related

lesson, laboratory work, or general teacher characteristics.

There are a number of sources of student teacher rating instrument that might be helpful. Professional education texts frequently include a suggested form, as like articles on student teaching in the professional periodic literature. Such forms are often made a part of the student teaching manual of the college or university program.

Extremely valuable resources exist in the teacher performance assessment forms that are built into every performance-based teacher education and objective, and have been developed specifically for vocational teachers. Performance rating forms are available for most teacher activities in which the student teacher will participate.

The Cooperating Teacher Evaluation

The most important help comes from the constant evaluation of the cooperating teacher, since he/she is with the student teacher almost every time of teaching.

In each day's informal conference following the teaching, the cooperating teacher discusses with the student teacher about the strong points of his/her work, the ways it can be improved, and the implications for tomorrow's work.

The weekly conference is a time for thorough evaluation of the previous week and to make planning for the following week. The student teacher can assist the cooperating teacher to do better and to strengthen the daily and weekly evaluating conferences.

Some cooperating teachers keep "comment books" in which they write notes to the student teacher while he/she is teaching. The student teacher can make the most possible use out of it. Rereading the comments from the beginning of his/her teaching should help him/her to trace the pattern of his/her growth. Similarly, the notes, which the cooperating teacher may have been putting on his/her daily plans, should be indicative of his/her professional growth.

Anecdotal records of student teacher growth are occasionally kept by cooperating teachers. They may record anecdotes which indicate strengths, weaknesses,

or unusual contributions. The series of anecdotes, carefully dated, constitute a progress report of the student teaching assignment.

Some cooperating teachers tend to over rate their student teachers. This may be because the cooperating teacher has developed a close and friendly personal relationship with the student teacher that makes it difficult to be objective. Some cooperating teachers feel that they have a personal stake in the success of their protege and assume that a low rating of the student teacher reflects inadequacy on themselves. This kind of thinking tends to hinder effective evaluation.

In any case, giving high scores on all criteria to all student teachers uniformly and indiscriminately has to be improved. The "ceiling effect" comes into play, when student teachers have no area to work toward further progress or improvement. Top ratings can give student teachers an unrealistic impression of themselves as teachers and of what they can expect for the future. The cooperating teacher's difficult task, is to recognize outstanding areas of the student teacher's development, and to identify the ratings of those areas where the student teacher needs to make continued effort to achieve real proficiency.

Student Teacher Evaluation

A student teacher in his/her evaluation should identify and understand the competencies expected by him/her as student teacher, as well as the developmental tasks that he/she must perform in developing these competencies. The student teacher's evaluation should be dated in terms of meeting the needs of particular teaching situation. The student teacher has to look at himself/herself, in terms of general professional goals as well as his/her particular individual goals.

The general goals for teachers in service are frequently listed in terms of teaching competencies. The student teacher has six areas of responsibility:

- providing for learning of students
- counseling and guiding students wisely
- aiding students to understand and appreciate our cultural heritage

- participating actively in school activities
- assisting in maintaining good relations between the school and the rest of the community and
- working on a professional level

Each student teacher should have specific goals for student teaching depending upon the state of his development in mastering the listed tasks and responsibilities. Each student is unique by virtue of his personality, his abilities, his previous experiences, and his basic understandings. No two student teachers can start exactly at the same point on the path to teaching competence; therefore, each student has unique problems in becoming an effective teacher. Evaluation of the student teacher's strengths and identification of growth he/she needs to make will help to formulate the definite purposes that he/she hopes to attain during the remaining weeks of student teaching.

An Anecdote to Ponder

"I can heartily recommend Camille Maria Reyes for a teaching position in the third year level. Miss Reyes was a student teacher in my second year class for ten weeks during her senior year in college, and I found her to be a most interesting person, and much dedicated in her teaching career.

Her manner with students was excellent, and the students adored her. She always had time for them, and when it came to understand students and helping them with their problems, Miss Reyes was the most empathetic person I have ever known. I can honestly say that she helped two or three students whom I thought were beyond help. She showed an interest in their problems and their work, and as a result their achievement went up amazingly.

Miss Reyes was bursting with good ideas, and she was able to allure student's interest even in most routine activities. She was able to make bookkeeping drill seem like fun. She brought many extra materials and resources to our classroom; she tried some really ambitious projects that were on a high intellectual level, and always managed to make them understandable to the youngsters. She knew how to go after important concepts rather than rote facts, and I can honestly say

that I learnt at least as much from Miss Reyes' teaching as she did from mine.

Miss Reyes is not a conventional person and her dress can be described as somewhat unusual. At times, she seemed rather thrown together, and it would not be uncommon for her to have ripped seams, or hanging hems, and her stockings were seldom straight or without runs. Her hair, which she wore in rather an odd style, usually appeared to need combing. I mention all of this because a potential employer might be put off by her appearance.

Miss Reyes does not put much stock in having a spotless classroom with neat bulleting boards. In my classroom she had many activities going on, and the least of her emphasis was on cleaning up. However, she put so much effort into the real learning of the students, and into working with ideas, that i never minded the looks of the room.

If I were an administrator, I would not miss the chance of hiring Miss Reyes, despite her departure from what we

think of as the usual school teacher."

Summary

As a mature professional person, the student teacher should do his/her best to meet the responsibilities the society will delegate to him/her.

Only through honest, continuous evaluation he/she can realize to the utmost his/her potentialities as a teacher. Such evaluation is not always pleasant because, if it is accurate, needs are identified as well as successive. Those who counsel the student teacher do not enjoy the times when they have to point out weaknesses but they have professional responsibility, to do so. The student teacher should make the most of the evaluation to get help from all supervisory personnel. The resulting feelings of achievement and growth will overbalance the discomforts involved in the evaluation process.

Reference

- "Professional Role and Development of Professional Teacher Education", American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials, 1990.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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