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Principal Evaluation: New Directions for Improvement

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Together with parents and teachers, school principals play crucial roles in the effective education of America's children and youth. In recent years, researchers and policymakers have supported what parents and teachers have long known experientially—that the quality of leadership provided by school principals significantly influences the quality of schools (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Clinton, 1991; Duke, 1987, 1992; Greenfield, 1987; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Leithwood, 1988; Schmitt & Schechtman, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1987).

Consequently, systematic and careful evaluation of principal qualifications, competence, and performance is critically important to the success of America's elementary and secondary schools. The public interest is no less at risk from incompetent school principals than from incompetent doctors, lawyers, and accountants, and all such public servants should be carefully evaluated throughout their professional careers. Sound evaluations of the aptitudes, proficiencies, performance, and special achievements of principals not only protect the public from poor

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school leadership but also help competent and dedicated principals increasingly to improve school-based teaching and learning.

Systematic evaluation is needed throughout the careers of principals to examine whether (a) the applicant has the *aptitude* needed to succeed in a sound principal education program, (b) the graduate of a principal education program has developed sufficient *competence* to be certified for service as a principal, (c) the certified principal has the *special qualifications* necessary to succeed in a particular principalship, (d) the employed principal is fulfilling job *performance* requirements as well as can be expected, and (e) the principal has exhibited *highly meritorious service* that deserves special recognition and reinforcement.

Although principal evaluation is important and while about 38 of the states require principal evaluation (Peters & Bagenstos, 1988), the quality of principal evaluations has remained poor (Connecticut Principal's Academy, 1990; Ebmeier, 1991; Ginsberg & Berry, 1990; Marcoulides, 1990; Marcoulides & Heck, 1992; Tennessee State Board of Education, 1991). One commonly heard complaint is that the "old boys network" has unduly influenced (or constrained) the selection of persons to enter principal training programs. For example, "In many situations, the applicant pool for principalship vacancies is determined by the school board or by mentors of candidates who feel that it is 'time' for the applicant to begin his/her administrative experiences" (Schmitt & Schechtman, 1990). Also, certification often has guaranteed no more than that the applicant has "accumulated course work, often poorly sequenced, at one or more institutions . . ." without necessarily obtaining the recommendation of a higher education institution (Tennessee State Board of Education, 1991, p. i). Other commonly heard criticisms are that selections to principalships have frequently been quasi-retirement positions for coaches, counselors, band directors, classroom teachers, and others; that practicing principals have received little useful evaluative feedback for improving their performance; and, in general, that school districts' engagement of outstanding school principals has been largely a matter of chance.

The purpose of this article is to provide some direction for developing better principal evaluation systems. In the first part of the article we provide a theoretical framework that categorizes the important required evaluation tasks. In part two we review some recent developments in principal evaluation that coincide with the evaluation tasks identified in part one (especially including state and national efforts to clarify the role and associated evaluative criteria of the school principal, university-based programs for selecting principal education students, state performance-based certification, school district systems for evaluating the perfor-

mance of practicing school principals, and state and university systems for assessing and addressing the professional development needs of practicing principals). As a means to evaluating and improving developments, such as those identified in part two, in part three we review *The Personnel Evaluation Standards* and in part four offer suggestions for their application in assessing, selecting, and improving principal evaluation methods.

Part One: A Theoretical Framework for Principal Evaluation

Table 1 is adapted from current work being done by Carol Dwyer and Daniel Stufflebeam in the area of teacher evaluation (for a chapter in the forthcoming *Handbook of Educational Psychology*) and depicts principal evaluation as integral to the principal's career. This framework is designed to provide a conceptually comprehensive, coherent view of principal evaluation. The main horizontal dimension includes four career stages: *Preparation*, *Certification*, *Practice*, and *Professionalization*. The vertical dimension divides each career stage into *Entry* activities (e.g., selection of a candidate for entry into one of the four stages included on the main horizontal dimension, such as a principal preparation program), *Participation* (including completion of a principal preparation program or actually serving as a school principal), and *Exit* (e.g., advancement to the next career stage or termination). The second horizontal dimension denotes *Evaluations* and *Decisions* that are involved in the *Entry*, *Participation*, and *Exit* activities of each of the four principal career stages.

Overall, this matrix is constructed to encompass all the decisions and associated evaluations that occur from the beginning of a principal's preparation and throughout the principal's career. Its intended uses include guiding the search for and development of evaluation methods that are needed to fulfill the purposes of principal evaluation and identifying and assessing the extant or proposed approaches that might be combined to operationalize this scheme. The full range of evaluations shown in the matrix are important to help assure that America's schools are staffed with appropriately qualified and effective principals. It cannot be overstressed that the totality of principal evaluation requires concerted attention if schools are to receive the help they need from evaluation to engage principals who provide effective educational leadership. In the next section of this article, we use the matrix in Table 1 as a basis for identifying and commenting on some recent developments in principal evaluation.

Table 1
Types of Evaluations and Decisions Involved in Preparing, Licensing, Employing, and Professionalizing Educators

Activities in Each Career Stage		Stages in the Career of an Educator							
		Preparation		Licensing		Practice		Professionalization	
		Evaluations	Decisions	Evaluations	Decisions	Evaluations	Decisions	Evaluations	Decisions
Entry	Evaluations of supply & demand	Ranking & funding training programs	Approval to enter the certification process	Evaluation of staffing needs	Job definitions, job search	Examination of staff needs and institutional needs	Continuing education opportunities		
	Evaluations of recruitment programs	Redesign of the programs		Evaluation of recruitment program	Program redesign	Assessment of needs and achievements of educators	Approval of study leaves & special grants		
	Assessment of applicants	Selection of students		Evaluation of applicants	Selection of staff members	Assessment of basic qualifications for national certification	Participation in a national certification program		
Participation	Intake evaluations	Planning student programs	Provisional state license/certificate	Comparison of job requirements & competencies	Assignment	Intake evaluations	Designing individual education programs		
	Evaluations of students' mastery of course requirements	Grades Counseling Remediation	Partial qualification for a license/certificate	Performance review	End of probation Promotion Tenure Merit pay Staff development Honors	Examination of competence	Professional certification		
	Cumulative progress reviews	Counseling Revising student programs Termination		Investigation of charges	Rulings on grievances				

Table 1 continued

<i>Activities in Each Career Stage</i>		<i>Stages in the Career of an Educator</i>											
		<i>Preparation</i>			<i>Licensing</i>			<i>Practice</i>			<i>Professionalization</i>		
		<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Decisions</i>	<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Decisions</i>	<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Decisions</i>	<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Decisions</i>	<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Decisions</i>	<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Decisions</i>
Exit		Final evaluation of students' fulfillment of graduation requirements	Graduation	Review of success in a designated period	Permanent or long-term license	Comparison of resources, staff needs, & staff seniority	Reduction in force	Participant achievement in continuing education	Termination or sanctions	Performance review	Qualification for future leaves	Examination of competence & aptitude	New assignments
		Exit interviews	Program review & improvement										
		Follow-up survey	Program review & improvement										

Part Two: Promising Developments in Principal Evaluation

In spite of the dismal history of principal evaluation, there are a few recent developments of interest related to the career stages seen in Table 1. Across all the stages, new policies in Tennessee (West, 1991) and Connecticut (Chester & Pecheone, 1992) show two states' similar efforts to develop a comprehensive performance-based evaluation system for recruiting, selecting, preparing, certifying, and developing school principals. These systems are referenced below along with some other specific developments.

Developments Concerned With Entry to Professional Training

After conducting an exhaustive search for empirical research on selection of persons to enter principalship training or the principalship, Schmitt and Schechtman (1990) concluded that "little is known about the methods by which these individuals [principals] are chosen to assume their administrative duties, and less is known about the validity of these methods" (p. 231). However, based on what research was available they concluded that the assessment center (method that uses multiple assessors and multiple structured methods, including in-baskets, tests, and work samples) is the only selection method that is supported by empirical evidence. They found that "one can expect a correlation with subsequent job performance measures in the range of .25-.35," and that "validities from assessment centers are typically higher than the validities obtained from other selection techniques such as the personal interview or reference checks" (p. 237). They also pointed out, however, that since there is not strong evidence that schools make much use of assessment center results in selection, since assessment centers are very expensive, since schools are prone to use the interview approach, and since interviews when appropriately structured can be effective, it may be cost efficient to develop a rigorous, structured interview approach. However, the bottom line from their review is that there is a dire need for additional research and development into methods for selecting principals.

Among the specific examples of comprehensive programs for assessing candidates for principalship education is the Leaders Preparation Program (LPP) at Brigham Young University (Hite, 1991). This program sets a quota on the number of applicants to be selected, searches far and wide for candidates, then evaluates their qualifications by means of multiple methods. The measures include grade point average, achievement tests, a critical thinking test, self-assessment, assessments by pro-

fessional associates, interviews, simulation exercises, a writing sample, and a composite profile. Possibly the most significant feature of this program is that given a quota, given a wide search for applicants, and given a wide range of evaluation methods used, the educational administration faculty can thoughtfully consider a wide array of information about each of a large number of candidates and select what they jointly consider to be the best subset of the applicants. Without quotas, without a wide search, and without multiple measures of candidate characteristics, the selection process often admits too many candidates from a restricted pool and ends up with many students who are of marginal ability.

Also of relevance to selecting principal education students are efforts to clarify the knowledge and skill base they must master in order to perform effectively as a school principal. The federal government (Sashkin, 1987) and various states and LEAD centers have clarified the roles of principals and the proficiencies that practicing principals consider most important for success in their jobs. At this writing, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration was planning to publish, in 1992, a recommended knowledge and skill base for principals. These are useful, constructive steps and should help universities and prospective students to do a better job of structuring screening and selection techniques, deciding who should enter into school principal training programs, and assuring that principal preparation programs directly prepare students to carry out all the important parts of the principal's job.

Several states have clarified and strengthened their principal education requirements. For example, Alabama requires that principalship students study the following content knowledge fields (Roth, 1991):

1. *Curriculum*: curriculum sequence, technology in the curriculum.
2. *Supervision*: classroom observation and evaluation techniques.
3. *Staff Development*: adult learning, developing and implementing staff development programs.
4. *Student Services*: student health service, guidance and counseling programs.
5. *Leadership Skills*: vision and goal setting, group dynamics, ethical standards.
6. *School and Community Relations*: community diversity, political factors with impact on the school.
7. *School Management*: fiscal and personnel resource management, conflict and stress management.
8. *Law*: system and individual liability, due process, tenure and termination law. (p. 4)

These are clearly related to the role of the principal and thus provide an appropriate reality base for the content of principal training programs and for screening and selection of students who could and would be interested in succeeding in these areas. However, all such lists of requirements must be held under scrutiny and continuously updated to more validly reflect all important aspects of the principalship role. For example, the above list seems to be missing the important areas of student and program evaluation, areas that are especially crucial in principalships involved with site-based management.

Developments Concerned With Licensing Principals

One of the key state responsibilities is to assure that candidates for principalships in the state's schools are fully qualified to carry out the role of the principalship. In many states certification decisions have rested largely on whether the candidate completed an approved preparation program and satisfied some minimal experience requirements. Currently, some states and consortia are imposing considerably more demanding certification requirements (see Bartell, 1992; Chester & Pecheone, 1992; Roth, 1991; Tennessee State Board of Education, 1991; Thomson, 1991).

Bartell (1992), describing the two-tier administrative credential reform in California, reported that 27 states have similar provisions for levels for certification of school administrators. For example, Connecticut is mounting a joint university-state three-tiered certification program. It issues an initial certificate at the end of preservice preparation, issues a provisional certificate after 1 year of satisfactory service as a principal, issues a professional certificate after 3 to 5 years of satisfactory school service, and subsequently renews the professional certificate every 5 years if nine CEUs have been earned. This initiative focuses on the principal as instructional leader; promotes the growth of all students; supports the ongoing professional development of the principal; grounds certification decisions in performance assessment; includes the possibility that certification may not be renewed every 5 years; and makes the certification process a joint venture of the state, universities, and school districts. Weaknesses, that in our view are yet to be resolved in the Connecticut model, include overconcentration on the principal's style and traits rather than proficiency in implementing duties, too little attention to the job context, and overreliance on a superintendent's judgment for the summative evaluation. A similar certification system being developed in Tennessee merits attention for its special efforts to develop a competency test for principals and to employ a professional development plan, a performance contract, and a performance portfolio

for use in evaluating job performance. On balance, Connecticut, Tennessee, and a wide range of other states are exerting excellent leadership to bring higher education, school districts, and the state together in improving principal education and principal certification; these innovative programs should be of interest to other states and universities.

Developments Related to Performance Evaluations

In spite of the general criticism of the quality of evaluations of principals' performance, a number of noteworthy developments in this area are underway. While it is too early to provide in-depth evaluations of these efforts, they are worth mention and bear watching.

The Tennessee State Board of Education has adopted a straightforward and standardized approach to performance evaluation (Tennessee State Board of Education, 1991). Under the Tennessee approach the superintendent evaluates the principal's performance based upon a performance contract and a portfolio of achievements prepared by the principal. The results are then used to prepare the principal's annual professional development plan. The principal's performance is to be examined in five general areas: (a) student academic learning and social development, (b) learning environment in the school, (c) faculty and staff development and involvement, (d) parent and community involvement and satisfaction, and (e) financial and program management.

These assessment areas assure some standardization across principals in assessing performance of important core school administration responsibilities. However, they are too restrictive to cover all the important performance criteria for given principals, for example, a principal's leadership in goal setting, program planning, student and teacher assessment, program evaluation, and fund-raising. On the other hand, this approach does allow for customizing the evaluations of individual principals through performance contracts and self-assessment portfolios. A key point is that this approach emphasizes the use of evaluation findings in developing professional development plans.

Fundamental requirements of fair and valid performance evaluations are to develop valid job descriptions, keep them up-to-date, and use them as a basis for evaluating job performance (Joint Committee, 1988). While there is some important work going in this direction, this work is also problematic.

It is certainly important that state education departments, LEAD centers, and school districts are collaborating to clarify the role of the school principal and that researchers are developing instruments to better assess principals on variables related to their jobs. Studying the actual

jobs of principals and then developing grounded generic job descriptions is one important intermediate step toward improving individual job descriptions, but it must not be taken as the last step. Using generic job descriptions that fit all or most school principals generally but none specifically could lead to many locally invalid performance evaluations, that is, ones that do not take into account local content, idiosyncratic job assignments, or particular priorities of the school. Clearly, job descriptions that provide a valid basis for assessing principal performance must be customized to the particular principal's job and kept up-to-date.

Another useful but problematic development in evaluating principal performance relates to the conceptualization and operationalization of criteria for assessing principal performance. Researchers such as Hart (1992) and Marcoulides and Heck (1992) are working on the identification of best practice criteria for assessing principals' job performances. We see these criteria as potentially very useful in the study of groups of principals and think they could prove useful for designing principal preparation programs and for developing principal job descriptions. However, we also think their use in evaluating performance of individual principals would be problematic and possibly counterproductive. School districts might quickly seize on standardized instruments and use them as the measure of principal performance even though they are not sensitive to the particulars of a given principal's job in a given year.

Some of the current efforts to define criteria and develop instruments for measuring principal performance are making the serious error of selecting variables only because they correlate with student test scores. Let alone that student test scores are insufficient measures of school effectiveness and that the principal is only one of many complex contributors to student achievement, it is also unfair and invalid to choose performance measures only or mainly because they correlate with student test scores (or some other measure of principal effectiveness). The correlations are never close to perfect, and thus some principals who might measure poorly on the predictor variable might nevertheless perform excellently in the principal role. Also, an objective search for high correlations could result in choice of performance assessment variables that reflect personal characteristics, such as sex and race, and administrative style rather than fulfillment of assigned responsibilities. We predict that correlational research aimed at developing better principal performance evaluation instruments will not be of much assistance to school districts for evaluating the performance of school principals and think that the use of such instruments for evaluating performance of individual, rather than groups of principals, could prove to be unfair and counterproductive. This would be the case if the use of such instruments

diverted attention from fulfillment of certain assigned responsibilities because they were not measured and if the feedback given influenced principals to concentrate on improving leadership style rather than fulfillment of their particular and current responsibilities.

We do think that evaluations of the performance of principals can be improved by helping school districts improve their development and use of principal job descriptions. Some particularly useful work in this area is underway in Texas (Texas Education Agency in cooperation with Texas LEAD Center, 1989) in the context of a mandate to improve evaluations of the performance of all public school administrators in the state. The Texas collaborators have studied roles of different categories of school district and school administrators throughout the state and developed generic job descriptions. These provide school districts in Texas with models to guide the development of job descriptions for individual principals.

To illustrate the structural requirements of a sound job description and the contents that might be included in a particular principal's job description, we have used information from the Texas effort to develop an illustration of the contents of an appropriate job description. We organized it according to the format for sound position descriptions recommended by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1981): position qualifications, position responsibilities, and performance objectives.

Examples of principal position *qualifications* in the job description include:

- Master's degree plus 5 semester hours of graduate credit
- State license to serve as a principal
- Record of effective teaching
- Record of strong organizational and leadership abilities
- Record of honoring diversity
- Skills in planning, testing, and evaluation
- Skills in motivating, guiding, and coordinating individuals and groups
- Skills in public speaking and writing
- Skills in fiscal management and facilities management
- Skills in using technology to support educational processes
- Knowledge of laws relevant to the state's schools
- Knowledge of research on child growth and development
- Knowledge of curriculum and instruction literature
- Possession of a vision of the appropriate aims and processes of education

Categories for defining a principal's *responsibilities* and performance measures could include the following:

- Promotes and supports the *educational development of each student*
- Fosters a positive, supportive, and productive *school climate*
- Conceptualizes, leads, and evaluates *school improvement* efforts
- Monitors, evaluates, and provides direction for *improving instruction*
- *Personnel management*: recruits, selects, directs, evaluates, and mentors teachers and other school personnel
- *Administration and fiscal/facilities management*: schedules school activities; allocates school resources; maintains fiscal accountability; secures, controls, and maintains facilities; complies with pertinent rules, regulations, and laws
- *Student management*: communicates and enforces equitably school rules and discipline measures and fosters open communication and a positive school climate
- *School/community relations*: assesses and addresses school-related community needs; communicates with the community about school mission, needs, programs, and achievements; projects a positive school image to the community; and involves parents and other community members in school activities
- *Professional growth and development*: continuously examines and takes steps to improve one's skills and performance; contributes to the development of the educational administration profession

The preceding list is only one example of a principal's areas of qualifications and performance expectations. As the Joint Committee emphasizes, a supervisor, in communication with the employee, must periodically tailor the job description to the particular assignment. When delineated and kept up-to-date, a job description provides a useful and defensible basis for assessing the qualifications, competence, performance, and special achievements of the particular principal.

Developments Related to the Professional Development of the School Principal

Throughout the nation, there has been increased emphasis on the continuing professional development of school administrators, especially through state principal academies. For example, the Maine Academy of School Leaders is placing heavy emphasis on the professional development of principals through such means as internships with mentors, follow-through support from accomplished administrators, and regional networks (Quaglia, 1991).

Similarly, the Alabama LEAD Academy is collecting data to help

principals evaluate their job-related skill needs and to choose appropriate professional development activities (Short, 1991). To address the professional development needs, the Alabama Professional Development Program for Educational Leaders provides opportunities for advanced learning and skill development in a range of administrative responsibilities, for example, communication, leadership, and management. Bases for choosing learning experiences include the principal's assessed needs and interests, evaluations of job performance, and the local school system's priorities and desired program improvements.

Evaluations of Alabama's longstanding program of educator inservice education by the Western Michigan University Evaluation Center have shown them to be well conceived and effective. Particularly important have been the working relationships between the state education department, the universities, and the school districts in each university's service region. As the evaluations showed, inservice offerings were determined by regional boards whose majority of membership was from the public schools and based upon assessed professional development needs of the public school educators in the region. The participating university in the region then provided the inservice education as specified by the regional board. We can't overemphasize the importance of the key elements of this program: inservice provided in response to needs assessments, programs mandated by boards controlled by public school personnel, inservice provided by the area university in the specified topical and skill areas, and all the groups working collaboratively to upgrade the skills and performance of school personnel.

A development in the continuing medical education field seems particularly relevant to the continuing education of school principals. It is called practice-linked continuing medical education and has been analyzed and described by Manning and DeBakey (1987). Basically, their approach calls for individualized, problem-centered education of the professional. While various instructional and learning techniques may be used with this approach, basically it involves the following five steps:

1. *Identify needs* for professional development by assessing performance in key areas of the job (e.g., prescribing practice for physicians or teacher evaluation for principals).
2. Develop a *learning contract* to target and resolve particular job-related deficiencies or needs (e.g., learning objectives, selected readings and consultations, and portfolio development to demonstrate achievement).
3. Obtain and study pertinent *library materials* (e.g., research findings and exemplary practices).

4. *Network* with pertinent experts and peers to obtain advice and assistance (e.g., more experienced principals or a university expert in the area of study).
5. *Evaluate* the experience and provide evidence that the learning objectives were achieved (e.g., by developing a performance portfolio and presenting it to the coordinator of continuing education and one's supervisor).

As seen in the above continuing education example, evaluating the performance of a professional not only provides feedback for accountability but also can provide a useful basis for helping the principal to develop competence and thereby improve performance. Someday, special proficiency evaluations might also provide a basis for providing national recognition to outstanding principals as will soon be the case for teachers under the auspices of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The preceding analysis in this section illustrates the range of work that is being done and that needs to be done to improve principal evaluation. Next, we look at professional standards as a basis for both guiding and assessing such developments and we review the work of the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, which has been in progress since 1975.

Part Three: The Personnel Evaluation Standards

Principal evaluation, like any other professional field, requires standards to guide professional practice, hold the professionals accountable, and provide goals for upgrading the profession's services. Fortunately, superintendents and others who evaluate the qualifications, proficiencies, performance, and special achievements of principals do have access to a carefully developed, regularly monitored, and periodically updated set of standards for judging principal evaluation systems, plans, and reports. We strongly advocate that educators involved with principal evaluation obtain, study, and rigorously apply these standards in their efforts to plan, conduct, apply, evaluate, and improve principal evaluations.

The Joint Committee has defined personnel evaluation as "the systematic assessment of a person's performance and/or qualifications in relation to a professional role and some specified and defensible institutional purpose" (Joint Committee, 1988, pp. 7-8). It has also reiterated its previous definition of a standard as "a principal commonly agreed to by people engaged in the professional practice of evaluation for the measurement of the value or the quality of an evaluation" (p. 12).

Sustaining the position it adopted in its program evaluation standards, the Joint Committee grounded its development of *The Personnel Evaluation Standards* in a fundamental proposition. It is that all evaluations should have four basic attributes: *propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy*. On the basis of this proposition, the Joint Committee developed comprehensive sets of standards and practical guidelines that educators can use to examine the extent to which any personnel evaluation system possesses these four attributes or to develop new systems that would possess them.

In the Joint Committee's 1988 publication, the Standards are presented at the level of elaborated general principles, with a wide range of illustrations constructed to help users see how to apply the standards to the various types of personnel evaluations. The Committee emphasized that general principles are adequate for providing direction for improvement, but also provided practical suggestions on how to meet each standard.

Following are the Committee's definitions of the four basic attributes of a sound personnel evaluation, including a list of the topics of the specific standards in each of the four categories. It is beyond the scope of this article to review all the standards and the specific guidelines and illustrative cases, which can be found in the original publication of the Standards (Joint Committee, 1988).

Propriety

Propriety is aimed at ensuring that the rights of persons affected by an evaluation system will be protected, including students, teachers, professors, administrators, and evaluators. This aim reflects the fact that personnel evaluations may violate or fail to address certain ethical and legal principles. The primary principle is that schools exist to serve students; therefore, personnel evaluations should concentrate on determining whether educators are effectively meeting the needs of students. The five standards in this category are labeled Service Orientation, Formal Evaluation Guidelines, Conflict of Interest, Access to Personnel Evaluation Reports, and Interactions with Evaluatees. Overall, the Propriety standards require that evaluations be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of students, other clients, teachers, principals, and other educators.

It is interesting that the Joint Committee deliberately placed the Propriety standards first among the four sets of standards. They did so to emphasize that evaluations of teachers, principals, and other school personnel must, above all, help to ensure that students and other clients

of educational services are well served and that evaluation systems must provide for orderly dismissal of staff members who persist in providing poor service.

Utility

Utility is intended to guide evaluations so that they will be informative, timely, and influential. Especially, it requires that evaluations provide information useful to individuals and to groups of educators in improving their performance. Utility also requires that evaluations be focused on predetermined uses, such as informing selection and promotion decisions or providing direction for staff development, and that they be conducted by persons with appropriate expertise and credibility. The topics of the Utility standards are Constructive Orientation, Defined Uses, Evaluator Credibility, Functional Reporting, and Follow-Up and Impact. In general, personnel evaluation is viewed as an integral part of education's ongoing effort to recruit, educate, certify, engage, and recognize outstanding staff members, and, through timely and relevant evaluative feedback, to encourage and guide them increasingly to improve their competence and service.

Utility standards should be especially welcome to educators who see their institution's performance review system as only ritualistic and not helpful or, worse, demoralizing and counterproductive. By applying the Utility standards, an institution would be guided to clarify intended uses of its evaluation system and do whatever is required to ensure that the system addresses relevant questions, issues useful reports, and provides direction for improvement. The main point of the Utility standards is to insure that evaluations contribute constructively to helping educators develop competence and deliver excellent service and that they do this so well that the educators come to value systematic evaluation of their performance as an indispensable self-improvement tool.

Feasibility

Feasibility emphasizes the requirement that personnel evaluations are conducted in institutional settings that have limited resources and are influenced by a variety of social, political, and governmental forces. Accordingly, the Feasibility standards call for evaluation systems that are efficient, easy to use, adequately funded, and politically viable. The topics of the Feasibility standards are Practical Procedures, Political Viability, and Fiscal Viability.

Accuracy

Accuracy, the fourth requirement, emphasizes the need to determine whether an evaluation has produced dependable information about relevant qualifications or performance of an educator. This requires that the obtained information be technically defensible and that the conclusions be linked logically to the data. The position underlying the accuracy standards is that the variables must be derived from a valid description of the person's job. Simply showing that a personal characteristic—such as management style, quantitative aptitude, or race—is correlated with student achievement is not justification for using the characteristic to measure and judge an educator. As Scriven (1988) has argued, to do so not only risks prejudicial treatment of individuals, but, since the correlations are based on group data and are never perfect, such practice also produces invalid assessments of persons who rate low on the variable but do well on the job, or vice versa. The Joint Committee's field tests clearly indicated that many personnel evaluation systems need to be improved in how well they define jobs, how effectively they consider environmental influences, how validly they measure job qualifications and performance, and how effectively they control for various kinds of bias. The topics of the Accuracy standards are Defined Role, Work Environment, Documentation of Procedures, Valid Measurement, Reliable Measurement, Systematic Data Control, Bias Control, and Monitoring Evaluation Systems.

Part Four: Applying the Standards to Principal Evaluation

The Personnel Evaluation Standards provide a comprehensive and widely endorsed basis for assessing and improving principal evaluation systems. School districts, state departments of education, R & D centers, and other educational agencies could use them as a source of issues to be considered and guidelines to follow in improving their current evaluation systems or developing new systems. A systematic use of *The Personnel Evaluation Standards* could help improve the design of a principal evaluation system, its implementation, and its potential impact on the educational system.

The Joint Committee has suggested five steps as a systematic way to apply the standards to a particular personnel evaluation system. They include (a) studying the standards, (b) clarifying the purpose of the evaluation system, (c) describing the existing evaluation system, (d) applying the standards, and (e) deciding what to do about the results. These general steps can be applied in using *The Personnel Evaluation Standards* to improve principal evaluation as follows.

Step 1: Understanding the Standards

The purpose of this step is to become acquainted with the standards, so that they can be considered for adoption as a basic reference by which to examine and improve the quality of a principal evaluation system. It is important that all those involved in the improvement process will understand the underlying principles of the standards and become acquainted with the specific details of the various standards.

The standards are presented in nontechnical language, in a common format for ease of use, and with examples that show how they can be applied. A careful examination of *The Personnel Evaluation Standards* reveals that they are delineated in several layers of abstraction. Going from the more abstract to the more concrete, we see at the first layer the fundamental proposition that all evaluations should have four *basic attributes*: propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy. At the second layer are the 21 *Standards* that, if met, will assure that the evaluation has the above-mentioned four basic attributes. At the third layer we see the *guidelines* for each standard, which provide procedural suggestions intended to help meet the requirements of each standard, plus common errors to avoid. At the fourth layer are the *illustrative cases*, which show concrete examples of how each standard could actually be applied.

A good understanding of the standards, at their various levels of abstraction, is very important for a sound implementation of the next steps, intended to clarify the purposes of the evaluation, describe the system to be improved, and assess its quality.

Step 2: Clarifying the Purposes of the Principal Evaluation System to be Improved

This step requires a comprehensive understanding of the needs that the evaluation is intended to serve in the specific context in which it will be used. Such an understanding has to be obtained through direct interaction with all the stakeholders associated with the evaluation and with appropriate reference to the underlying principles and guidelines reflected by the standards. We advocate the engagement of an evaluation steering committee that is representative of the stakeholders, such as the one that was used by the Lincoln, Nebraska, Public Schools to examine and reform its teacher evaluation system (Reineke, Willeke, Walsh, & Sawin, 1988). Specifically, such a group would address the following questions:

- Whose work is to be evaluated?
- Why should the evaluations be done?
- Who will use the findings?

- What decisions and/or actions will be determined or affected by the evaluations?
- Should the evaluations focus on qualifications, competence, performance, effectiveness, and/or special achievements?
- What impact is the evaluation system intended to have?

Step 3: Describing the Existing Principal Evaluation System

After clarifying the purposes of the evaluation system, the evaluation steering committee or other group engaged in improving the evaluation system would assemble all relevant documents (e.g., personnel policies, negotiated agreements, job descriptions, letters of appointment, rating and reporting forms). On the basis of such documents and the direct interaction with those involved in conducting the evaluation, the evaluation steering committee (or other group) would develop a written description of the evaluation system. The description should include information regarding the staffing of the evaluations, the qualifications of the evaluators, the pertinent policies, the evaluation criteria and questions, the measurement variables and procedures, the procedures for organizing and analyzing data, the reporting format and schedule, the uses of findings, the management system, and the practices in monitoring and evaluating the evaluation system.

This step is concluded by a careful examination of the description and the supporting documents in order to determine whether they contain sufficient information to assess the system against the requirements of each of the 21 standards. If the delineation and documentation of the evaluation system are incomplete, then the evaluation steering committee must recycle and adequately complete this step before proceeding.

Step 4: Judging the Quality of the Existing Evaluation System

Using the system description and the supporting documents *The Personnel Standards* are next applied to judge the quality of the existing principal evaluation system. This can be done by the evaluation steering committee, by a trained panel of judges, by individual evaluators, or some combination of these. Each standard has to be applied separately to determine the extent to which it is met, partially met, or not met at all. We find it useful to review the contents of each standard, then to list strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation system in relation to the standard, and finally to reach a judgment of the extent to which the evaluation system meets the standard.

On the basis of the single judgments obtained for each of the 21 standards, an overall profile for the entire evaluation system can next be

developed, thus portraying its main strengths and weaknesses. For those standards receiving low ratings, the evaluation steering committee can then review its worksheets on the specific strengths and weaknesses previously found for the pertinent standards. These lists afford a helpful basis for determining what specific steps have to be taken to fix or reform the evaluation system.

Step 5: Improving the Evaluation System

Once the strengths and weaknesses of the existing evaluation system have been identified, the evaluation steering committee can develop recommendations and a plan for improving the evaluation system. As we mentioned earlier, each of the 21 Joint Committee standards includes a list of practical guidelines to be considered when planning the improvement of a personnel evaluation system. Thus, using the applicable guidelines for each of the standards where the system is deficient provides an agenda of possible steps to take in improving the principal evaluation system.

Since it might not be feasible to implement all the recommendations that were provided, it is necessary to develop a general plan to improve the evaluation system. The general plan would have to set priorities for improvement and develop a realistic timetable for implementing the process of improvement. Such priorities have to be determined within the educational and social contexts of the principal evaluation system, and on the basis of its specific needs, preferences, constraints, and available resources for evaluation.

The preceding outline of the process for using the standards to improve principal evaluation systems and other personnel evaluation systems has been found to be very workable in field testing the draft standards and in many other studies, among them the study by Glasman and Martens, included in this issue.

Closing

Principal evaluation is critically important to helping the American society assure that schools will be effectively administered by highly qualified school principals. Such evaluations are needed throughout the career of the principal and should include evaluations for selection of students in principal education programs, certification of graduates, selection of new principals for work in schools, oversight and improvement of principal performance, and recognition and reinforcement of outstanding individual contributions.

While noteworthy developments in each of these aspects of principal evaluation are underway, the developments also are problematic, for example, in focusing on group rather than individual measures, in focusing on narrow sets of indicators, and in measuring style rather than job performance. School districts, state education departments, and universities need to carefully evaluate such developments before adopting them for use in evaluating principals.

The *Personnel Evaluation Standards*, developed in 1988 by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, is a powerful tool for evaluating new principal evaluation approaches, procedures, and instruments, and for evaluating and providing direction for improving the systems that universities, state education departments, and school districts use to evaluate school principals. These standards provide direction for assuring that principal evaluations will be *ethical* and legal in their examination of an individual's aptitudes, competencies, performance, and special achievements; *useful* for decision making and obtaining direction for improvement; *feasible* for use within reasonable practical constraints; and *accurate* in the information they provide. We think that careful use of *The Personnel Evaluation Standards* to guide improvements in these areas can help educational institutions to avoid the serious mistakes and huge waste of funds that have been seen in efforts to advance teacher evaluation.

On a constructive note, the concluding section of this article presented a process by which principal evaluation improvement committees can use *The Personnel Evaluation Standards* to diagnose strengths and weaknesses in principal evaluation systems and obtain guidance for improving the systems.

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