



UNIFORM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR TEACHERS

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Abstract

A quality teacher is one who has a positive effect on student learning and development through a combination of content mastery, command of a broad set of pedagogic skills, and communications/interpersonal skills. Quality teachers are life-long learners in their subject areas, teach with commitment, and are reflective upon their teaching practice. They transfer knowledge of their subject matter and the learning process through good communication, diagnostic skills, understanding of different learning styles and cultural influences, knowledge about child development, and the ability to marshal a broad array of techniques to meet student needs. They set high expectations and support students in achieving them. They establish an environment conducive to learning, and leverage available resources outside as well as inside the classroom. In this sense, the article focuses on Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers and its connection with the academic progress of the students.

Keywords - Teacher evaluation, teacher effectiveness, performance standards, teacher performance, academic progress, interim evaluation, summative evaluation

Introduction

Teacher evaluation matters because teaching matters. In fact, “the core of education is teaching and learning, and the teaching-learning connection works best when we have effective teachers working with every student every day.” Evaluation systems must be of high quality if we want our teachers are of high quality. The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. The role of a teacher requires a performance evaluation system that acknowledges the complexities of the job. Teachers have a challenging task in meeting the educational needs of an educationally diverse student population, and good evaluation is necessary to provide the teachers with the support, recognition, and guidance they need to sustain and improve their efforts.

Because teachers are so fundamentally important to school improvement and student success, improving the evaluation of teacher performance is particularly relevant as a means to recognize excellence in teaching and to advance teacher effectiveness. A meaningful evaluation focuses on instructional quality and professional standards, and through this focus and timely feedback, enables teachers and leaders to recognize, appreciate, value, and develop excellent teaching. The usage of the terminology is consistent with the professional



literature, but that “effective” is not intended to connote a particular technical definition. The benefits of a teacher evaluation system are numerous and well documented. The process of teacher evaluation can be valuable in several ways, including:

- assessing the effectiveness of classroom teachers;
- identifying areas in need of improvement;
- making professional development more individualized; and
- improving instruction school wide

Problems with Current Evaluation Systems

Unfortunately, even though a teacher’s effectiveness is recognized as the most important factor in improving student achievement, schools rarely measure, document, or use effectiveness ratings to inform decision-making. The result is that it is difficult to distinguish between poor, average, good, and excellent teachers. Sometimes termed the “Widget Effect,” schools tend to assume that teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom is the same from teacher to teacher and, thus, treat them as interchangeable parts.

The evaluation systems reinforce this indifference to the variations in teacher performance in several ways:

Excellence is not recognized. A rating scale that does not distinguish the truly outstanding performers from the average ones creates a situation where the exceptional teachers are not identified and cannot be recognized formally.

Professional development is inadequate. School divisions cannot identify the needs of teachers and provide professional development if their shortcomings are never identified.

Novice teachers do not receive special attention. When evaluation systems do not identify the specific developmental needs of new teachers (who are widely recognized as needing support to build and implement the most effective practices), they do not receive the assistance they need to correct their deficiencies.

Poor performance does not get addressed. Schools that provide teachers with inflated, unrealistic ratings rarely dismiss teachers for poor performance, even though they are recognized by other teachers and administrators as being ineffective.

Other flaws in the current teacher evaluation process include:

- problems with the evaluation instruments themselves (e.g., subjectivity, low validity);
- a tendency to focus on paperwork routines rather than improving instruction;
- an absence of standard protocols and practices in teacher practices;
- an absence of meaningful and timely feedback to teachers;
- inadequate administrator training; and lack of impact
- a lack of time to perform adequate evaluations; issues related to time and resources
- a lack of constructive criticism on the evaluation that can be used to improve professional practice and often are based on sparse evidence

Historically, the result is that little has been done to develop, support, and retain effective



teachers and most teachers, even the ineffective ones, become tenured or gain continuing contract status. In short, Evaluation systems fail to differentiate performance among teachers i.e. excellent teachers cannot be recognized or rewarded, chronically low-performing teachers languish, and the wide majority of teachers performing at moderate levels do not get the differentiated support and development they need to improve as professionals.

Purposes of Evaluation

The primary purposes of a quality teacher evaluation system are to:

- contribute to the successful achievement of the goals and objectives defined in the school division's educational plan;
- improve the quality of instruction by ensuring accountability for classroom performance and teacher effectiveness;
- implement a performance evaluation system that promotes a positive working environment and continuous communication between the teacher and the evaluator that promotes continuous professional growth and improved student outcomes;
- promote self-growth, instructional effectiveness, and improvement of overall professional performance; and, ultimately
- optimize student learning and growth

A high quality evaluation system includes the following distinguishing characteristics:

- benchmark behaviors for each of the teacher performance standards;
- a focus on the relationship between teacher performance and improved student learning and growth;
- a system for documenting teacher performance based on multiple data sources regarding teacher performance;
- the use of multiple data sources for documenting performance, including opportunities for teachers to present evidence of their own performance as well as student growth;
- a procedure for conducting performance reviews that stresses accountability, promotes professional improvement, and increases teacher involvement in the evaluation process; and
- a support system for providing assistance when needed

Uniform Performance Standards for Teachers

The uniform performance standards for teachers are used to collect and present data to document performance that is based on well-defined job expectations. They provide a balance between structure and flexibility and define common purposes and expectations, thereby guiding effective instructional practice. The performance standards also provide flexibility, encouraging creativity and individual teacher initiative. The goal is to support the

continuous growth and development of each teacher by monitoring, analyzing, and applying pertinent data compiled within a system of meaningful feedback.

Defining Teacher Performance Standards Clearly defined professional responsibilities constitute the foundation of the teacher performance standards. A fair and comprehensive evaluation system provides sufficient detail and accuracy so that both teachers and evaluators (i.e., principal, supervisor) reasonably understand the job expectations.

The expectations for professional performance are defined using a two-tiered approach.

➤ Performance Standards

Performance standards define the criteria expected when teachers perform their major duties. For all teachers, there are seven performance standards as shown in Figure 1

Table 1: *Performance Standards*

Performance Standard 1: Professional Knowledge <i>The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, and the developmental needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.</i>
Performance Standard 2: Instructional Planning <i>The teacher plans using the Performance Standards of Learning, the school's curriculum, effective strategies, resources, and data to meet the needs of all students.</i>
Performance Standard 3: Instructional Delivery <i>The teacher effectively engages students in learning by using a variety of instructional strategies in order to meet individual learning needs.</i>
Performance Standard 4: Assessment of and for Student Learning <i>The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses all relevant data to measure student academic progress, guide instructional content and delivery methods, and provide timely feedback to both students and parents throughout the school year.</i>
Performance Standard 5: Learning Environment <i>The teacher uses resources, routines, and procedures to provide a respectful, positive, safe, student-centered environment that is conducive to learning.</i>
Performance Standard 6: Professionalism <i>The teacher maintains a commitment to professional ethics, communicates effectively, and takes responsibility for and participates in professional growth that results in enhanced student learning.</i>
Performance Standard 7: Student Academic Progress <i>The work of the teacher results in acceptable, measurable, and appropriate student academic progress.</i>

➤ Documenting Teacher Performance

The role of a teacher requires a performance evaluation system that acknowledges the complexities of the job. Multiple data sources provide for a comprehensive and authentic “performance portrait” of the teacher’s work. The sources of information described in Figure 2 were selected to provide comprehensive and accurate feedback on teacher performance. These suggested documentation sources for teacher evaluation can be used for both probationary and continuing contract teachers.

Table 2: *Suggested Documentation Sources for Teacher Evaluation*

Data Source	Definition
Formal Observations	Observations are an important source of performance information. Formal observations focus directly on the seven teacher performance standards. Classroom observations also may include a review of teacher products or artifacts, and review of student data.
Informal Observations	Informal observations are intended to provide more frequent information on a wider variety of contributions made by the teacher. Evaluators are encouraged to conduct observations by visiting classrooms, observing instruction, and observing work in non-classroom settings.
Student Surveys	Student surveys provide information to the teacher about students' perceptions of how the professional is performing. The actual survey responses are seen <i>only</i> by the teacher who prepares a survey summary for inclusion in the portfolio.
Portfolios/ Document Logs	Portfolios/document logs provide documentation generated by the teacher for the seven performance standards.
Self-Evaluation	Self-evaluations reveal the teachers' perceptions of their job performance.

Connecting Teacher Performance to Student Academic Progress

Despite the preponderance of evidence that the most important school-related factor in students' education is the quality of their teachers, teacher evaluation frequently ignores the results of teaching – student learning. Using student academic progress (as a measure of student achievement) to inform teacher evaluation only makes sense because the most direct measure of teacher quality appears to be student achievement. Research strongly supports the argument that ineffective teachers negatively impact students' learning while effective teachers lead to higher student achievement growth. In addition, linking student academic progress with teacher evaluation offers significant potential because progress:

- provides an objective measure of teacher effectiveness and recognizes that students bring different levels of achievement to each classroom;
- can serve as meaningful feedback for instructional improvement;
- can serve as a barometer of success and a motivation tool; and
- is derived from student assessment and is an integral facet of instruction

Why to Connect Teacher Performance to Student Academic Progress?

There are many reasons for including student academic progress in achievement information as part of the teacher evaluation process.

- There is an abundant research base substantiating the claim that teacher quality is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement.
- Using measures of student learning in the evaluation process provides the “ultimate accountability” for educating students.

- The variance in student achievement gains explained by teacher effects is greater in low socio-economic status schools than in high socio-economic status schools.

Rating Teacher Performance

For an evaluation system to be meaningful, it must provide its users with relevant and timely feedback. To facilitate this, evaluators should conduct both interim and summative evaluations of teachers. While the site administrator has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the evaluation system is executed faithfully and effectively in the school, other administrators, such as assistant principals, may be designated by the evaluator to supervise, monitor, and assist with the multiple data source collection which will be used for these evaluations.

a) Interim Evaluation

Some teacher evaluation systems include an interim review, especially for probationary teachers, in order to provide systematic feedback prior to the completion of a summative evaluation. The multiple data sources discussed are used to compile a *Teacher Interim Performance Report* that indicates if a teacher has shown evidence of each of the performance standards. The evaluator should share her/his assessment of the teacher's performance by a given date (for example, the last school day before winter break each year for Probationary teachers). *Please note that the Teacher Interim Performance Report is used to document evidence of meeting the seven standards, but does not include a rating of performance.*

b) Summative Evaluation

Assessment of performance quality occurs only at the summative evaluation stage, which comes at the end of the evaluation cycle (i.e., one-year for probationary teachers, three years for Continuing Contract teachers). The ratings for each performance standard are based on multiple sources of information and are completed only after pertinent data from all sources are reviewed. The integration of data provides the evidence used to determine the performance ratings for the summative evaluations for all teachers.

There are two major considerations in assessing job performance during summative evaluation: 1) the actual teacher performance standards, and 2) how well they are performed. The performance standards and performance indicators provide a description of well-defined teacher expectations.

Definitions of Ratings

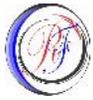
The rating scale provides a description of four levels of how well the standards (i.e., duties) are performed on a continuum from “exemplary” to “unacceptable.” The use of the scale enables evaluators to acknowledge effective performance (i.e., “exemplary” and “proficient”) and provides two levels of feedback for teachers not meeting expectations (i.e., “needs improvement” and “unacceptable”). The definitions in Figure 3 offer general descriptions of the ratings.

Table 3: *Definitions of Terms Used in Rating Scale*

Category	Description	Definition
Exemplary	The teacher performing at this level maintains performance, accomplishments, and behaviors that consistently and considerably surpass the established standard. This rating is reserved for performance that is truly exemplary and done in a manner that exemplifies the school's mission and goals.	Exceptional performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• consistently exhibits behaviors that have a strong positive impact on learners and the school climate• serves as a role model to others• sustains high performance over a period of time
Proficient	The teacher meets the standard in a manner that is consistent with the school's mission and goals.	Effective performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• meets the requirements contained in the job description as expressed in the evaluation criteria• demonstrates willingness to learn and apply new skills• exhibits behaviors that have a positive impact on learners and the school climate
Needs Improvement	The teacher often performs below the established standard or in a manner that is inconsistent with the school's mission and goals.	Ineffective performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• requires support in meeting the standards• results in less than quality work performance• leads to areas for teacher improvement being jointly identified and planned between the teacher and evaluator
Unacceptable	The teacher consistently performs below the established standard or in a manner that is inconsistent with the school's mission and goals.	Poor-quality performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• does not meet the requirements contained in the job description as expressed in the evaluation criteria• may result in the employee not being recommended for continued employment

Conclusion

Public concern with the preparedness and quality of the nation's teachers has generated a great deal of publicity recently. Ironically, most people, even if they express concern about teachers in general, report that they like and support their own children's teachers. But personal feeling aside, the nation has had no overarching means of assessing teachers until recently. States have tried various means of determining the quality of teaching, but these attempts have been localized and often criticized as inadequate. Local systems usually rely on an in-house administrator to evaluate teachers and make recommendations



about retention and tenure. Increasingly, however, school districts have included some form of peer review, which permits teachers to judge and learn from each other. In some cities, unions play a role in teacher assessment, though the public and many school boards are wary of union involvement in evaluation.

Many educators believe that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards addresses the problem of broader teacher assessment. The NBPTS now grants national teacher certification for seasoned professionals, based on complex performance assessments and examinations. Teachers must submit lesson plans and videos of their teaching, as well as lengthy and reflective journals about what they've done and why. The process of receiving national certification is rigorous, so limited numbers of teachers have undertaken it and not all teachers succeed on their first try. But many teachers have commented that they have become better teachers in the process. Truly this is the matter of priority concern.

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