"The Anchorage Program"
achieves success in staff
development

Evaluation: One state's solution

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During the 1970s numerous state legislatures and State Departments of Education developed rules and regulations pertaining to the evaluation of professional employees. Alaska was one of these states. Every school district in Alaska was responsible for a yearly formal evaluation of each certified staff member (by the 1976-77 school year).

In 1974, the Anchorage School District established a Task Force to develop an evaluation system that would both fulfill the state requirements and provide a basis for Certificated Personnel professional development. It took the task force two years to develop the program described in this article. Two high school principals, Dee Durst and Bob McCormick provided the district leadership for the development of the certificated personnel evaluation program.

The evaluation plan was based on several operational principles. An evaluation program must (1) assist the professional educator to improve skills and knowledge related to an area of responsibility, (2) have evaluation standards and procedures mutually known and accepted by both evaluator and evaluatee, (3) be a continual process of assessment, diagnosis and prescription, (4) be a process whereby evaluator and evaluatee mutually work together toward elimination of the gap between "what is" and "what should be," and (5) have procedures applicable to all employees, regardless of the position.[1]

Job Descriptions

An initial task was the development of a job description for each district position except the exchool superintendent. This included job descriptions for teachers, librarians/media specialists, school nurses, principals, district consultants, school psychologists, and directors of special services. The teacher job description is included as an illustration of a job description.

Teacher Job Description

I. Instructional Competencies

Subject Matter

It is the responsibility of the teacher to maintain competency in areas of certification and assignment.

Assessment and Planning

It is the responsibility of the teacher to employ appropriate diagnostic methods, to identify student proficiency levels, and to subsequently plan short and long range programs designed to accommodate these identified needs.

Learning Environment

It is the responsibility of the teacher to establish a physical, emotional, and intellectual climate conducive to the teaching-learning process.

Classroom Management

It is the responsibility of the teacher to manage time, space and resources for the enhancement of the teaching-learning process.

Instructional

It is the responsibility of the teacher to utilize effective teaching methods for the achievement of desired objectives.

Motivational

It is the responsibility of the teacher to employ a variety of methods and materials which will motivate the student to learn and seek additional learning experiences.

Classroom Social Interaction

It is the responsibility of the teacher to provide leadership in the establishment of a positive relationship between student and teacher, and student and student.

Evaluation

It is the responsibility of the teacher to select, develop and employ appropriate evaluation techniques to assess student progress and instructional effectiveness.

Decorum

It is the responsibility of the teacher to use appropriate methods to assist students to accept and practice standards of good decorum.

II. Other Professional Expectations

Interpersonal Relationships

It is the responsibility of the teacher to strive for harmonious and cooperative relationships with staff, parents and community.

Non-Instructional Duties

It is the responsibility of the teacher to perform required reporting and record keeping functions.

Curricular and Non-Curricular Activities

It is the responsibility of the teacher to search for and perform in the roles of advising, supervising and sponsoring as the need arises and talents permit.

Professional Growth

It is the responsibility of the teacher to participate in the activities of educational committees and organizations for the benefits of personal growth and the general promotion of the profession.

Self-Evaluation

It is the responsibility of the teacher and unit administrators to develop the means of involving parents and students in their self-evaluation. The processes used and the manner in which the findings are utilized for the improvement of instruction will be noted on the evaluation document under Self-Evaluation.[2]

Competency Examples

To provide a better understanding of each competency and to provide assistance in the evaluation process, a number of examples of each competency were developed for distribution to both evaluator and evaluatee. Although each list of examples could not be exhaustive, it served as a tool for clarification of the competencies. Also, the list illustrated the broad dimensions of each competency. Finally, the list helped illustrate that not all techniques are equally important to all teachers. A partial list of examples for the Assessment and Planning competency from the teacher job description is included as an illustration.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to employ appropriate methods of assessment, to identify student proficiency levels, and to subsequently plan short and long range programs designed to accommodate these identified needs.

Suggested questions relative to the above competency:

1. What examples of diagnostic tools can be cited?
2. What recorded data are available as a result of the diagnosis completed for each student?
3. What is the evidence that students are working at different levels of difficulty?
4. What is the evidence of various levels of instructional materials present in the classroom?
5. What indications are present that the work being attempted is appropriate with respect to the capacities and abilities of students?
6. What are the classroom examples to indicate that the teacher provides opportunities for pupils to pursue significant and satisfying interests, individually and collectively to acquire basic tools and skills?
7. What are examples of short and long range plans which have been based on the interpretation of diagnostic data?
8. What are the examples of student participation in planning?
9. To what extent do lesson plans indicate planning as a result of assessment?
10. To what extent do students keep a record of their work?
11. To what extent does the teacher permit spontaneity as opportunities and interest suddenly present themselves?
12. What are the indications that the teacher is knowledgeable about the individual student's past achievement, test scores, behavior and accomplishments?
13. What are the indications that classroom work over an extended period of time is clearly directed toward identifiable goals?[3]

Format Development

Four basic principles were instrumental in the development of the evaluation format.

Principle One

One of the first requirements of a professional is to be continuously engaged in the improvement of competencies necessary to job performance.

Plan for Improvement	Continued Development Encouraged

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

The above principle was influential in the qualitative framework portion of the evaluation document. Regardless of the competency development of the evaluatee, improvement to some degree is always the objective. In some cases a "Plan for Improvement" is necessary, while in other cases, the evaluator may wish to cite only that "Continued Development is Encouraged." In either situation, there is never an indication that the opportunity for improvement has ceased.

Principle Two

Improvement of competencies requires time; it does not just happen. In most cases improvement is a developmental process through stages.

Short Range	Extended Time	

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

The school district evaluation document for certificated personnel has provided for the recognition of this time principle. Having determined that improvement is needed in a specific competency area, the evaluator and evaluatee will develop a plan that will lead to improvement. The next decision is the determination of the time required to achieve the desired goal. The proper column will be checked, "Extended Time" or "Short Range."

The insertion of the time factor into the evaluation

document should insure additional interaction, reevaluation, analysis, and planning between evaluator and evaluatee. Neither the evaluator nor evaluatee should assume that the improvement of competencies is something one does in a conference, nor is it the result of reading the marks recorded on an evaluation check list. It is at the work station where one learns through experience, refinement and adaptation.

Principle Three

Evaluation systems built on an extensive point rating scale provide little assistance or motivation for improvement.

Short Range	Extended Time	Proficient	Exceptional
☐	☐	☐	☐

The evaluation document has been designed to emphasize the improvement of instruction and to minimize time and energy being spent on debating the accuracy of a point on a scale. The "Proficient" and "Exceptional" columns do reflect some aspects of rating, but both are positive in nature, which should tend to reduce the tension that rating generally produces. When the exceptional column is checked, a written justification by the evaluator is required.

On the "Plan for Improvement" side, "point rating" has been replaced by the factors of time and extensiveness of the plan for improvement. The classifications "Short Range" and "Extended Time" **do not** rate the seriousness of extent of the skill deficiency. For example: a simple speech pattern that should be corrected may take months to alter, whereas the serious situation of a teacher's physical abuse of a student should cease immediately.

Principle Four

There is greater assurance for change and improvement if the evaluatee possesses a clear idea of expectations and goals.

Plan for Improvement		Continued Development Encouraged	
Short Range	Extended Time	Proficient	Exceptional
A. Knowledge of subject ☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Assessment and planning ☐	☐	☐	☐

The format of the school district evaluation document has been arranged in such a way that space is provided between each major competency. Whenever a "Plan for Improvement" is necessary, a written statement is required. The statement should include definition of the problem and a brief description of the plan.

Sample **Problem:** An excessive amount of time consumed changing from one classroom activity to another. With the completion of one assignment or activity, the teacher experiences considerable difficulty in the start up of the next module of work and study.

Plan: The teacher will detail the specific techniques and procedures for the smooth transition from one activity to another.

A written statement is also required for a positioning mark within the "Exceptional" column. The statement must include justification for this judgment of exceptional proficiency.

Exceptional: Students are eagerly seeking new projects. Display of student work indicates student interest has advanced beyond the normal tasks. Students are returning to class after school to continue work. Parent input indicates high student interest. Teacher is constantly looking for new and outside resources to meet the needs of students.

A mark in the "Proficient" column does not rule out the possibility of a written plan should the evaluatee so desire.

A brief narrative requirements of the evaluation document are the responsibility of the evaluator but should not be written unilaterally. Generally, both the evaluator and evaluatee will agree on a plan for improvement. If agreement cannot be reached, each party is responsible for his/her narrative comments.[4]

In practice, Principle Two was modified. Both evaluator and evaluatee had difficulty in determining the length of time needed to correct a deficiency. Also, since determining the time is secondary to that of developing procedures for competency improvement, the time differentiation has been dropped. Finally, until a plan of improvement is developed and tried, time is an unknown factor. For example, to correct the habit of saying "ok" to all student responses may be easy and sudden for some teachers while it may be near to impossible for other teachers.

Evaluation Form

The evaluation form was developed as a working document. Space for a written plan for improvement or an explanation of an exceptional rating was provided for on the form. The form included only the major conpetencies. This was done to provide both a focus and flexibility. The focus is provided by limiting the evaluation categories to those that are essential for performance of job. The flexibility is provided by the broad range of activities and skills within each competency. The inherent weakness of the form is that one of these, focus or flexibility, could be emphasized at the expense of the other. An example of the form is illustrated with the first page of the Teacher Evaluation form shown below.

Administration procedures

The administrative procedures for the Anchorage Evaluation Program are similar to other evaluation programs. The major feature is that all evaluations are based on the job descriptions. The job description provides a form and guidelines for professional development. It is recognized that in the process of evaluating for professional development, the evaluator may find it necessary to consider the possibility of non-retention for the evaluatee. When this is determined, the evaluatee is notified and a new set of procedures for non-retention are utilized. These procedures were developed to protect both the evaluatee and the evaluator as well as provide a system for dismissal when needed. Since this is another issue and a complex one, it will not be described in this article.

Also, the plan was not developed for reduction in force (RIF). Another plan was developed for this possibility.

The Anchorage district is contemplating a formal evaluation of the described plan. The Anchorage Program has been adopted by other districts and is working satisfactorily. It is assumed that the plan cannot be adopted as written but each district needs to develop a set of competencies and examples unique to its personnel evaluation needs.

Anchorage School District
Teacher Evaluation Form[5]

Teacher _____ School _____

Assignment _____ Tenure ____ Non-Tenure ____

Plan for Improvement		Continued Development Encouraged	
Short-Range	Extended Time	Proficient	Exceptional

I. Areas of Instructional Competency

A. Knowledge of Subject ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

B. Assessment and Planning ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

C. Learning Environment ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

D. Classroom Management ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

FOOTNOTES

1. "Handbook for Evaluation of Certificated Personnel," Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska 1976-77, p. 1.
2. Ibid., pp. 8-9.
3. Ibid., p. 6.
4. Ibid., pp. 4-7.
5. Ibid., p. 10.