

# Executive Director's Notepad . . .

## Guiding Principles for Quality Teacher Supervision and Evaluation



*From the desk of  
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There is an abundance of teacher supervision and evaluation models offered as solutions to your school's improvement needs. The fact that so many models exist indicate that despite the importance of supervision and evaluation no one model has yet provided the perfect solution to assuring quality schools.

Supervision and evaluation has seen a host of these models come and go over the years, yet we still struggle to identify that "perfect" model. Perhaps this is because we focus too much on the minutiae of descriptors, indicators and scoring while ignoring the underlying ingredients necessary in creating the foundation for a truly reformatory supervision process that assures quality while encouraging continuous improvement.

Our focus on mechanical details of an evaluation system, e.g. how many visits, of what duration, which forms to use and how to score, as well as our misguided efforts to equate "fairness" with "sameness," have clouded and obscured some of the underlying, guiding principles which are essential if any model is to succeed. What follows is my effort to identify some of those principles.

**Existence of a Mutual Trust.** Without trust any model is doomed to failure. A principal who displays no trust in his teaching staff will never have the trust of the staff -- for trust to be established it must be exchanged. Trust cannot exist in a system whose emphasis is punitive in nature. Teachers must see a model that focuses upon continuous school improvement rather than employment

threats. It must be viewed as a support system rather than a stick held above their heads. The key to this rests with the trust staff have in their principal.

**Emphasis on Strengths as well as Needs.** While identifying areas for improvement is essential in a successful supervision model, identifying strengths is equally

important. Human learning and growth requires the use of strengths to overcome deficiencies. When addressing both strengths and needs the emphasis should be upon methods to help the students grow and flourish rather than individual personal "flaws" of the instructor. Focusing upon actions that will enhance student learning ultimately changes behavior and thus corrects our individual human flaws without

destroying mutual trust and respect.

**Reasonable Safe Guards for Employees which require Knowledgeable Leadership.** All supervision/evaluation systems

depend on the knowledge of the evaluator for success. Recently some state, national, district and school officials have promoted the idea of making the dismissal of school employees "easier." Claims have been made that tenure and/or requiring reasonable profession-related proof of an employee's unsatisfactory performance hinder a school district's ability to dismiss poor teachers. On the contrary, this requirement actually assures that quality and pedagogy is respected within our schools. It requires that leaders are knowledgeable related to effective practices and can verify the need for dismissal by citing continued areas of



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unsatisfactory performance. Systems without the safeguards are easily corrupted and replace the decisions of knowledgeable leadership with political or whimsical decisions to discharge. There is a reason states require supervisory training and have tenure laws -- so that facts and knowledge are used in decision-making rather than opinion.

**Three C's – Clear, Collaborative, Continuous.** All effective supervision/evaluation models contain the three C's. They **clearly** indicate what is expected, they **encourage** a **collaborative process** between the principal and teacher -- the very best structure collaboration among teachers and teacher teams -- and they **build skills and techniques**

**continually** over the years -- each improvement built upon previous improvements. Simplicity leads to clarity, promotes collaboration and creativity and assures continued progress toward improvement. Complexity creates a lack of focus, adherence to mechanical processes and lack of continuity.

If I were designing a supervision/evaluation model I would probably chuck the rubrics, visitation rules and forms and build it around four simple questions: **1)** What is it we want students to learn?; **2)** How will we know if students are learning it?; **3)** How will we respond when some of our students do not learn it?; and **4)** How can we enrich the learning for those who already know? (*Richard and Rebecca Dufour*)



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