



**Charleston
Federation
of Teachers**

AFT Local 2434
AFL-CIO

teacher evaluation

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M E M O R A N D U M

To: Ann Birdseye, Director of Staff Development

From: Karen Cabe, President

Re: TAP

Date: March 7, 1986

The Charleston Federation of Teachers has reviewed your draft of TAP, a proposed system for teacher evaluation. We would like to respond to the proposed program and offer our suggestions for improvements:

CFT Position on Teacher Evaluation

The Charleston Federation of Teachers and its members are committed to an equitable and educationally beneficial teacher evaluation process. Teachers are vitally interested in the improvement of instruction and the improvement of the quality of education in Charleston County and affirm that this is the fundamental function of any evaluation process. All educational personnel, students, classroom teachers, administrators, and pupil personnel service staff, must involve themselves in activities that will lead to improved educational performance on all levels.

The CFT includes as part of our policies that teachers be guaranteed the following rights in any teacher evaluation process or procedure:

1. The right to be evaluated in an open, fair, and helpful manner.
2. The right to at least an equal voice and participation in both the development and implementation of any teacher evaluation process.
3. The right to an adequate number of representative and comprehensive evaluations.
4. The right to be evaluated by competent and helpful evaluators.
5. The right to receive a written evaluation.
6. The right to expect the criticism will be constructive in nature.
7. The right to discuss the evaluation with evaluators.
8. The right to be presented with alternatives for improvement of that area considered to be in need of improvement.
9. The right to respond in writing to any and all evaluations.
10. The right to procedures by which inaccurate material may be removed from files.
11. The right to appeal any inaccurate or misleading evaluations.
12. The right to have any evaluation subject to the grievance procedure.
13. The right to expect the school district to honor its responsibilities in providing resources and opportunities for improvement of instruction and the quality of teaching.

"Democracy in Education . . . Education for Democracy"



The CFT asserts that these rights are a necessary component of any evaluation process because an evaluation process can be used or misused in a way that can materially affect a teacher's reputation and standing.

In addition to the above there are some general items the CFT feels should be included in any good evaluation program. They are as follows:

1. The purposes of the evaluation procedure are clearly stated in writing.
2. The evaluators and those to be evaluated must be familiar with the purposes of the evaluation program.
3. The policy and procedures of the evaluation program reflect knowledge of research on effective teaching and teacher evaluation.
4. Teachers know and understand the criteria used to evaluate them.
5. Teachers, supervisors and administrators must be involved in the planning, execution and evaluation of the evaluation program.
6. The evaluations are as valid as possible.
7. The evaluations are as reliable as possible.
8. The evaluation program allows for constructive feedback.
9. The evaluation program encourages teacher creativity.
10. The evaluations are more diagnostic than judgmental.
11. Self-evaluation is an important objective of the evaluation program.
12. The evaluation program enhances the professionalization of teaching.
13. Teacher evaluation is an integral part of the instructional leadership role of the principal.
14. Teacher evaluation is seen as an integral part of Staff Development.
15. All participants in the teacher evaluation program must keep in mind the wide ranges of factors that influence the learning process and their interrelationships.
16. Highly skilled and well-trained evaluators are necessary to obtain any meaningful degree of validity.
17. Formative evaluations which gather specific information about the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers for the purpose of improving individual performance is preferred over summative evaluations.
18. Teachers must find the evaluations useful and worthwhile.

Introduction

The debate over the effectiveness of public education seems to center on the area of teacher competence. Thus, for many years boards of education and school administrators have been devising teacher evaluation procedures and systems to supposedly measure the competence of teachers. Experience in CCSD has shown that these evaluation efforts have proved unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. There has been a lack of consensus on the goals of teacher evaluation that has led to increasing teacher insecurity and opposition to these evaluation procedures. The objectivity of the evaluation procedures has been justly called into question. The procedural aspects of the present system has not proved to be equitable. In addition to these factors, CCSD teachers have never accepted the present system as a valid test of teacher competency. According to the study of teacher evaluations released by the Rand Corporation in 1983, in order for an evaluation instrument to be successful, teachers must agree that the procedure to be used is a true measurement of competency.

CFT generally agrees that all evaluation instruments are imperfect, but that probably the best would be a competent evaluator, competent in the discipline area that he or she presumes to evaluate, armed with a blank piece of paper, and enough time and objectivity to ascertain, within the limits of human capabilities, what is going on in the classroom. With that "ideal" evaluation process in mind, we would like to react to TAP:

General Comments:

- * The strength of the evaluation seems to be multiple observers, consideration of a portfolio, the teacher's self-assessment components and the fact that most of the teacher behaviors seem fairly grounded in effective teaching research. There doesn't seem to be much evidence of misuse of this research although Item 12 is open to some questions.
- * There is a problem doing both formative and summative evaluations in the same instrument. They are almost incompatible goals in one instrument.
- * The distinction between minimum competencies and maximum competencies in this instrument is often unclear.
- * This process separates the role of principal and teacher observers. Do teacher observers conference with the teachers after the observation? Do teacher observers meet with the principal to explain the observation?
- * Who are the teacher observers going to be? How will they be selected, etc.?
- * There are 48 behaviors on the instrument (38 to be observed in the classroom). Is this not too many behaviors to be observed in two periods?
- * It is assumed in numerous items that teachers are familiar with Dr. M. Hunter's "Program for Effective Teaching." Will all teachers be exposed to this research before this instrument is used?

Questions And Comments Regarding Specific Items

Criterion 1 - Behavior 2: Many teachers do not have separate classroom rules from those already listed in the school's handbook and the "CCSD Code of Conduct." Why should teachers with a history of good classroom management have to write classroom rules? If that has not been necessary before, why should it be used to satisfy the evaluator? Perhaps a teacher who demonstrates poor classroom management skills could do this to help that weakness.

Criterion 1 - Behavior 3: Will teachers have to develop this grading policy for each class they teach? There needs to be some flexibility here so teachers will have the right to change their grading policy if they desire. This behavior violates a very important right of teachers--the right to make certain professional decisions for their classes. To require a teacher to follow a prescribed format for grades does not enhance the professionalization of teaching.

Criterion 2: What is the purpose in providing a key for the tests? Isn't this merely additional paper work for the teacher that will in no way be used by the evaluator? What about discussion tests? Will teachers be required to write the discussion answer in their own style, write an outline of items to be included in their answer, or leave those blank? Who's to decide whether or not enough time was allotted for a particular objective? Again, this is a professional judgment reserved to the teacher within the confines of the course.

Criterion 2 - Behavior 2: Who will determine what is "efficient and relevant" to the objective? Weekly and/or daily lesson plans should be beneficial only to the teacher who uses them. Again, professional judgment should be the rule concerning the necessity for such plans.

Criterion 2 - Behavior 3: Again, who will determine whether or not the number of items on the test are appropriate? Whether or not the items are clear and concise? Whether or not the items are too easy or too difficult? How many items to include on the test for each objective? These should be decisions made by the classroom teacher using his or her best professional judgment!

Criterion 3 - Behaviors 1 and 2: The "written" classroom rules could also include the school handbook (if there is one) and/or the "CCSD Code of Conduct." Parents can also be informed through the school handbook, at PTA meetings or by contacting the teacher. Let's return some of the responsibility for young people to their parents!

Criterion 12: TAP's definition of professionalism is open to question; i.e., dress code, follow school district policies, takes on extra duties (without compensation?) and handles school equipment reasonably. Are these the definition of professional? Why is participation in the teacher's union excluded?

Criterion 4 - Behavior 1: What happens if the teacher knows what to do, states it in a confident manner, and the students fail to respond? Is the teacher denied a rating of 3?

Criterion 5 - Behavior 3: Sometimes teachers have little control over aspects of the physical environment, i.e., sufficient numbers of comfortable, appropriate

desks and chairs, lighting, acoustics. It may be difficult and unfair to hold them accountable unless there is a guarantee that the district has supplied adequate space, equipment, and materials.

Summary

The Charleston Federation of Teachers believes that teachers should be evaluated as professionals, not as technicians. Overall we support the concept of this evaluation program. It appears solidly based on the research in effective teaching. There are multiple observers to protect against bias and favoritism and there is a built-in remediation process for teachers who do not measure up. There are some behavior expectations that concern the CFT because of their subjectivity. The door is left open on many items to the completely subjective whim of an evaluator. Evaluators and teachers alike should be exposed to the research your committee used in developing this instrument.

When you sent this instrument to us for our input we accepted the responsibility of offering you our opinions for serious consideration. The CFT hopes you will seriously consider our comments and suggestions. Also, I will volunteer to participate in the pilot study to determine if what happens in practice is different from the theory of TAP.