



# ISSUES

## For Administrators Series

Monograph #9

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## Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation

### Introduction

As good as teachers are, how can they become better? This has been a question driving teacher growth and how it relates to evaluation over many decades. Another question concerning teacher evaluation relates to how the public education system can ensure accountability and professional growth. Prior to schools operating as collaborative learning systems, the issues of accountability and professional growth were thought to be dealt with through a process of clinical supervision and evaluation. In a hierarchical system, supervision and evaluation are top-down activities. Thus, the school superintendent supervises and evaluates the principal who in turn supervises and evaluates the teacher, the model holding each level accountable to the level above. It is assumed that the person at a higher level on the organizational chart can increase the quality of the performance at a lower level through inspection, supervision and evaluation.

This hierarchical system used in conjunction with the deficit model of teacher evaluation is designed to discover and point out problems and then prescribe ways of fixing them. It assumes that the person inspecting, supervising and evaluating knows more than the one being inspected. It is not based on a premise that certificated teachers being evaluated are competent; instead, it supports the idea that teaching quality can be ensured through inspection.

### Growth Plans

In contrast, Policy 2.1.5 *Teacher Growth and Supervision and Evaluation* is based on the premise that teachers are competent and that their professional growth is better addressed by a carefully devised annual plan than by routine, cyclical evaluations. Policy 2.1.5 requires teachers (under permanent or probationary contract) employed by a school authority or an ECS operator to complete an annual professional growth plan in which they assess their professional learning needs and identify areas in which they need to grow or improve. When devising their personal professional growth plan, teachers need to consider the educational plans of the school, the jurisdiction and the government. In doing so, teachers can relate their growth plan to established standards.

Even when professional growth plans are part of ongoing, long-term, multi-year plans, they still must be completed and submitted annually. A professional growth plan may also contain a program for supervising a student teacher or mentoring another teacher. In either case, both supervision and mentoring must be mentioned in the plan, must fit into the overall scheme of the plan and are subject to approval or review.

Teachers submit their completed plans to the principal, or to a representative body of teachers, such as a school professional-development committee delegated by the principal, if such a delegation is provided for by

school policy. The principal (or representative body) will approve or review the plan depending on the policy of the school authority.

Professional growth plans should involve at least two conversations with the principal; one at the beginning of the year to discuss the implementation of the plan, and another at the end of the year to review progress. At the second meeting, the principal (or delegated committee) decides if the teacher has successfully developed and implemented a professional growth plan consistent with government requirements.

## Supervision

Through supervision, the principal maintains an awareness of the teaching and learning taking place in the school. Policy 2.1.5 defines supervision as “the on-going process by which a principal carries out the duties in respect to teachers and teaching required under section 15 of the *School Act* and exercises educational leadership.” This includes:

1. providing support and guidance to teachers;
2. observing and receiving information from all sources about the quality of teaching a teacher provides to students; and,
3. identifying a teacher’s behavior or practice that for any reason may require an evaluation.

It is through the supervisory function that principals identify teacher behaviors and/or practices that may lead to an evaluation. Therefore, a principal should develop a repertoire of supervision and leadership strategies to assist in identifying potential concerns; the principal then deals with any concerns through the supervisory function. Immediate action by the principal is expected when there is a question of teacher competence or student safety. Evaluation, then, follows from the supervisory process and not from a school authority’s policy of cyclical and routine evaluation of permanently certificated staff.

## Evaluation

Evaluation means the formal process of gathering and recording information or evidence over a period of time and the application of reasoned judgment by a principal in determining whether an aspect of a teacher’s teaching exceeds, meets or fails to meet the teaching quality standard.

Evaluation policies should ensure that teachers’ actions, judgments and decisions are in the best educational interests of students and support optimal learning. Policies must provide for evaluations of any teacher whose teaching, based on the information

received by the principal through supervision, might not meet the standard.

Teachers holding an interim certificate and moving to a permanent certificate or those being offered a continuing contract will need a recommendation from an authorized person based on two or more evaluations. The evaluation process must include procedures that will result in a fair evaluation. Evaluations done over a short period of time do not provide an adequate picture of a teacher’s ability. Therefore, in the interest of fairness the evaluation process must be completed within a time frame that provides sufficient time in the school year for a remediation program to be completed if deemed necessary. All evaluation policies must observe the principles of natural justice. In addition, teachers must receive a copy of their evaluation.

## Evaluation Process

If a principal decides that an evaluation is warranted, before any such evaluation takes place the principal must explicitly tell the teacher:

1. the reasons and the purpose of the evaluation. Why has the decision been made to evaluate? (The purpose is generally to determine if the teaching quality standard is being met.)
2. the process. What strategies, observations and documents are going to be used to gather data needed to make a reasoned judgment regarding a teacher’s performance?
3. criteria and standard(s) to be used. What components of the teaching practice are to be judged? What is the standard that will be used to make judgments concerning the level of teaching quality?
4. the time lines that will be applied. What constitutes a reasonable time to conduct an evaluation?
5. the possible outcomes. Could this evaluation lead to a remediation plan? Could this evaluation result in a change of assignment or a change in growth plans, or a recommendation for transfer or termination?

The content of the teacher’s annual growth plan shall not be part of the teacher’s evaluation unless the teacher agrees. The principal could, however, identify behaviors or practices already contained in the growth plan that may require an evaluation provided the source of information is other than the growth plan. Under section 10(1)(c) the principal may conduct an evaluation of a teacher “for the purpose of assessing the growth of the teacher in specific areas of practice.” This section would be used to determine what is happening in a specific aspect of practice—a valuable

tool when conducting program reviews.

This does not mean that every concern that arises through the process of supervision will result in an evaluation. Many issues and concerns regarding teaching practice or behavior can be resolved through dialogue and conversations with the parties involved—students, parents and staff.

## **Remediation of Behavior or Practice**

If, through the process of evaluation, the need for a change in a teacher's behavior or practice is required, the principal will issue a notice of remediation. If a notice of remediation is issued, the principal may stipulate that the notice of remediation replace the teacher's individual professional growth plans. In the notice of remediation the principal will describe:

1. the behaviors or practices that do not meet the teaching quality standard, as well as the changes required;
2. the remediation strategies the teacher is advised to pursue; and
3. how the determination will be made that the required changes in behavior or practice have taken place, applicable time lines, and the consequences of not achieving the required changes including, but not limited to, termination of a teacher's contract of employment.

If a teacher's practice or actions violate established standards, the principal or superintendent shall take disciplinary or other action as appropriate.

## **Implications for Administrators**

### **School Culture**

A culture of trust needs to be developed throughout the school community. The school authority's policy must reflect the premise that teachers are competent and are able to direct their own professional growth. Principals must be trusted to be fair, competent supervisors who are aware of the teaching and learning occurring in the school. They need to be seen as problem solvers who can bring many resources together to ensure optimal learning.

### **Communication**

Along with trust comes the need for enhanced communication. In the supervision of the school staff, principals must maintain open lines of communication to be aware of rising concerns and they must be able to assist and support teachers in the implementation of their growth plans.

### **Risk**

Professional growth may involve taking risks. A

growth plan provides direction for increased skill development, new teaching strategies, new resource development and changes in teaching practice. Teachers might place themselves in unfamiliar teaching situations which may result in their not being as successful as in the past. They must be encouraged and supported in their attempts to try more effective strategies. Principals will need to develop coaching and support strategies among the staff and encourage a truly collegial atmosphere in which professional conversations take place

## **Power and Control**

Issues of power and control will inevitably arise and questions of personal versus professional goals will need to be answered. Principals will need to both challenge and support teachers in setting professional growth goals. Personal goals may well fit into a growth plan as strategies to use to reach a professional goal. If a teacher establishes a plan to develop effective classroom management skills, a personal goal, such as taking a course in mediation, may well fit in as a strategy to reach the goal.

Differences in perception between the teacher and principal regarding the need to evaluate the teacher's teaching practice could become a power and control issue. The principal is responsible for the evaluation of certificated staff and must follow clear guidelines in terms of procedures. It is the principal who decides if an evaluation is warranted. Principals may be placed in positions where single-issue groups call for the evaluation of a teacher or group of teachers. It is up to the principal to balance the needs of the school community with the need for fairness and natural justice. The use of evaluation as a means of reducing outside political pressure is inappropriate and is a misuse of the Policy.

## **Compliance**

Although some teachers may resist completing a growth plan, such plans are required by provincial policy. Indeed, the annual completion of a professional growth plan is mandatory and failure to implement a plan consistent with provincial requirements may make the teacher subject to disciplinary action.

## **Teaching Assignments**

Teachers may want to play it safe. They may develop goals within their plan that they have already achieved or that are required because of their teaching assignment. However, teachers must develop plans and goals that will provide them with increased skills, knowledge or attributes. They may need to be challenged, encouraged and supported in a risk-free

environment developed by the school community.

## Perceptions

The principal's perception of a teacher's professional-growth needs and the teacher's perception of these needs may be different. This may lead to power issues that will need to be resolved by dialogue and professional conversation. In order for the growth plan to succeed the teacher needs to have ownership of the plan. The principal and teacher may both need to compromise in order to reach some middle ground to resolve an issue.

## Conclusion

Implementation of local policy consistent with provincial policy is required by 1999 08 31. In the meantime local school board policy will need to be redrafted to reflect the changes in Policy 2.1.5. School districts will need to develop guidelines regarding time lines for submission of growth plans to principals, expectations regarding the meetings of principals and teachers, forms to be used and sign-off procedures for principals. Record keeping should be kept to a minimum. In order to manage the process, a one-page growth plan should be designed. The principal or representative body of teachers would then sign off that the teacher's plan has been submitted for review or approval (this should also be a one-page document.) The principal or group of teachers would then decide if the plan has been completed and has recognized the three required elements; identification of individualized professional learning needs, reflection of the teaching quality standard and consideration of school and district educational plans. Another one-page document would be required to do this. In summary, records would then consist of three pages—a one-page growth plan for each teacher, a one-page sign-off for the school staff and a one-page finding-sheet for the school staff. School staffs will need to decide what resources are needed to complete the growth plans and what ramifications these will have on the school budget or Professional Development funds. They will also need to develop school practices within the school board's policy in order to implement Policy 2.1.5.

## Questions for Administrators

1. How much input, if any, should the administrator have in teachers' growth plans?
2. How does the Growth Supervision and Evaluation policy fit with the school authority's policy on teacher evaluation?
3. What documentation is needed and how should

administrators manage the records of the new policy?

4. Do administrators need to document their supervision activities and can the data collected from the principal's supervision of staff be used in the evaluation process?
5. How do the school education plan and budget interact with the teacher professional growth plans?
6. How do schools and school districts plan to meet the budget requirements to implement the growth plans?
7. Is there an opportunity for the teacher to change the growth plan partway through the plan?
8. How does the *Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy Act* relate to the Policy in terms of supervision and evaluation? Do teachers have the right to access a principal's supervisory notes?

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## APPENDIX 1

MINISTERIAL ORDER(# 016/97)

TEACHING QUALITY STANDARD APPLICABLE TO THE

PROVISION OF BASIC EDUCATION IN ALBERTA

APPENDIX 2

TEACHER GROWTH SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION

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