

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

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Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation

The *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5* reflects a major change in philosophy about supervision and evaluation. It now reflects a professional model based on teacher growth rather than teacher deficiency. The policy takes seriously the professionalization of teaching, where all teachers are responsible for students' learning within a model of collegial, collaborative work to share teaching practices in professional learning communities.

The basic thrust of the policy is as follows:

- Teacher competence is assumed.
- Professional growth is a major focus and, as part of this, annual professional growth plans are required of all teachers.
- Principals are required to supervise all teachers and, when there is a concern about a teacher's practice in relation to the *Teaching Quality Standard*, to conduct an evaluation.
- Teachers who do not hold a continuing contract or permanent certificate are annually evaluated.
- Supervision is a fundamental component of the policy and is pivotal to its success.

Growth

Teacher professional growth is the career-long learning process whereby a teacher annually develops and implements a plan to achieve professional learning objectives or goals that are consistent with Ministerial Order 016/97, the *Teaching Quality Standard*.

Teachers employed under probationary or continuing contracts are required to develop an annual professional growth plan, and the plan is submitted for review or approval, in accordance with board policy. At the end of the year, the completed plan is once again reviewed. The professional growth plan is returned to the teacher. Responsibility for reviewing professional growth plans may be delegated to a body of teachers. Unless a teacher agrees, the content of an annual professional growth plan shall not be a part of the evaluation process of a teacher. A principal or superintendent may identify behaviours or practices that require an evaluation provided that the information is based on a source other than the professional growth plan.

Supervision

Supervision is the ongoing process by which a principal or superintendent carries out duties, under Section 20 of the *School Act*, with respect to teachers and teaching quality and exercises instructional leadership. A fundamental component of this policy is ongoing supervision of teachers by the principal or superintendent, which includes providing support and guidance to teachers, observing and receiving information from a variety of sources about the quality of education a teacher provides to students, and identifying behaviours or practices of a teacher that are not in keeping with the

***In everyone's
life, at some
time, our inner
fire goes out.
It is then burst
into flame by
an encounter
with another
human being.
We should all
be thankful for
those people
who rekindle
the inner
spirit.***

—Albert Schweitzer



Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation

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Teaching Quality Standard. When a principal has reason to believe that a teacher's teaching may not meet the standard, the principal may work with that teacher directly, through supervision, to provide assistance to change behaviours or practices, or the principal may initiate an evaluation.

Through ongoing supervision, the principal or superintendent ensures that a teacher's teaching meets the requirements of the *Teaching Quality Standard*. An important role of the principal is to provide guidance and support to improve the teacher's quality of instruction, and teachers should be willing to receive collegial advice and assistance. Throughout supervision the principal must share relevant information with the teacher. Anonymous questionnaires or interviews are not an acceptable part of a fair and ethical evaluation process and may violate the Alberta Teachers' Association Code of Professional Conduct.

How Do You Move from Supervision to Evaluation?

The provincial policy reflects the position that the supervision and evaluation functions are separate. In reality, principals and superintendents know that the two may frequently appear to be part of a continuum, and often any divisions

between them can become blurred. This may be particularly true in cases involving first- and second-year teachers for whom a principal has both supervisory and evaluative responsibilities, but it can also happen when administrators decide to proceed to evaluation as a result of what they have learned about a teacher's performance through their regular supervision activities. The challenge, then, for administrators is to ensure that the ensuing evaluation is based on observations and other appropriate data gathered ethically and fairly, within a defined time frame, and with the informed participation of the teacher who is the subject of the evaluation.

Reasons for initiating an evaluation of a teacher on a continuing contract can be quite diverse, but they should not be frivolous, petty or vindictive. In short, they must first be professionally defensible. A single complaint about a teacher should not, as a matter of course, start an evaluation. A series of complaints or a complaint accompanied by other concerns may be sufficient.

The criterion by which teacher performance in Alberta must be assessed is, in effect, the *Teaching Quality Standard*, to which a board may add criteria consistent with the provincial standard and 11 descriptors and the board's mission. If through regular supervision an administrator becomes concerned that a teacher may not meet the *Teaching Quality Standard*, several steps will follow, as outlined in the next section.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the formal process of gathering information or evidence over a period of time and the application of reasoned professional judgment by a principal in determining whether one or more aspects of the teaching of a teacher exceed, meet or do not meet the *Teaching Quality Standard*. The evaluation of a teacher by a principal or superintendent may be conducted (1) upon the written request of a teacher; (2) for the purpose of gathering information related to an employment decision; (3) for the purpose of assessing the growth of the teacher in specific areas of practice; or (4) when, on the basis of information received through supervision, the principal has reason to believe that the teacher's practice may not meet the standard.

On initiating an evaluation, the principal or superintendent shall communicate explicitly to the teacher the reasons for and purposes of the evaluation; the process, criteria and standards to be used; the timelines to be applied; and possible outcomes of the evaluation as per Policy 2.1.5. When an evaluation determines that the teacher's practice does not meet the standard, a notice of remediation is issued to the teacher. The notice of remediation describes the required change in behaviour or practice that does not meet the *Teaching Quality Standard*, strategies the teacher is expected to pursue, how it will be determined that the required changes have been made, applicable timelines

For further information, visit www.teachers.ab.ca or contact Member Services at the Alberta Teachers' Association, 447-9400 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (from elsewhere in Alberta).

and the consequences of not achieving the required changes.

Following the notice of remediation, the following steps are recommended. A program of assistance is offered to the teacher with reasonable timelines. If the teacher's teaching exceeds or meets the standard, the evaluation ceases. If the teacher's teaching does not meet the standard at the end of the timeline specified in the notice of remediation, and considering the best interest of the students, teacher, profession and the jurisdiction, then it may be appropriate to

- offer an additional period of remediation,
- give the teacher a change of assignment,
- offer a combination of the above two or
- recommend that the board terminate the teacher's contract of employment.

At any time in the process, the principal and the teacher may seek assistance from the Alberta Teachers' Association.

To learn more, book a workshop on Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation. Visit the Association website at www.teachers.ab.ca and click on Workshops, Courses and Presentations, or call Michael Podlosky in Professional Development at (780) 447-9466 or Konni DeGoeij in Member Services at (780) 447-9472 (toll free in Alberta 1-800-232-7208). Watch for an Issues in Education Monograph on Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation to be published in the spring.

CONNECTING LEADERS

April 11–13, 2007

The Canadian Association of Principals
Annual Conference



CONNECTING LEADERS

Connecting Leaders will be held in Vancouver April 11–13, 2007, at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver. The annual conference of the Canadian Association of Principals features speakers such as Stephen Lewis, Steve Donahue, Linda Kaser, Judy Halbert, Tom Hierck, Kim Schonert-Reichl, Steve Dotto and Faye Brownlie. Program details, pre-conference information, and links to online conference and hotel registration are available at www.cdnprincipals.org.

You are invited to attend:

Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Workshop

March 15 at Barnett House in Edmonton

If you are interested in attending, please e-mail Marilyn Terlaan in Member Services at marilyn.terlaan@ata.ab.ca.

Current Readings on School Administration

ATA members can now access current readings on school administration through the Association website. Elaine Atwood, ATA librarian, has developed an annotated bibliography for the Draft Principal Quality Practice Standard and the seven leadership dimensions. Under each leadership dimension is a selection of 10–15 current readings relating to relevant leadership topics and strategies. The full text of these articles can be accessed and downloaded through the Association's licensing agreement. School administrators will find these articles useful as they reflect on their leadership practice and research personal professional development goals. The readings on school administration can be found on the Association website at www.teachers.ab.ca/Resources+For/School-Based+Administrators/.

Teaching Quality Descriptors

1. Teachers' application of pedagogical knowledge and abilities is based in their ongoing analysis of contextual variables.
2. Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work.
3. Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach.
4. Teachers know there are many approaches to teaching and learning.
5. Teachers engage in a range of planning activities.
6. Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.
7. Teachers translate curriculum content and objectives into meaningful learning activities.
8. Teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' learning needs.
9. Teachers gather and use information about students' learning needs and progress.
10. Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools.
11. Teachers are career-long learners.

—See Ministerial Order 016/97