TEACHING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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GUIDELINES FOR ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS INCLUDING SCHOOL-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

PREFACE

THE NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION and the UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS are committed to attracting and retaining the most competent teaching staff for the New York City public schools.

Toward this end, *Teaching for the 21st Century* provides the framework for a new performance review and professional development plan as outlined in the 1993-95 Agreement between the Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Item 12: Evaluation and Observation System). To accomplish this, the Teacher Evaluation/Observation Committee, consisting of representatives from the Board of Education and the Union, undertook a one-year study to develop and design a high quality prescriptive evaluation and professional growth system that would give each staff member choices and a role in his or her professional growth. This book is the result of the committee's work and has been incorporated into the Board of Education/United Federation of Teachers agreement.

In accordance with New York State Education Regulation 100.2(o), this plan was reviewed by the Chancellor's Performance Review Committee, consisting of representatives from various central board divisions, the United Federation of Teachers, the Council of Supervisors and Administrators, community school district and high school superintendencies, parent organizations, community school boards, and educational advocate groups.

As described in this publication, the plan gives staff members a role in their own professional growth, and also enables staff to assist in the professional development of less experienced colleagues. Both the Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers believe that these guidelines will open up new opportunities for ongoing professional growth for the many talented and dedicated teachers in the New York City public schools.

Finally, this new plan expresses a commitment by both the Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers to nurturing excellence in teaching for New York City's one million school-children.

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INTRODUCTION

EFORM INITIATIVES taking place in school districts of the New York City Board of Education, as in other school districts, encompass many aspects of school change—new forms of governance, innovative instructional strategies, alternative forms of student assessment, greater parental involvement, and more effective pedagogical practices. However, at the heart of these initiatives is a commitment to provide the highest quality teaching and education for all children.

Within this framework for school reform, a high priority shared by the entire educational community is the development and implementation of a high quality professional development and prescriptive evaluation program for all employees, especially school-based staff, since teachers and other school personnel have the most direct impact on student learning, and deserve the greatest amount of support and assistance. The goals of this effort include:

■ improving the quality of school-based services to school children

■ providing for the recognition of excellence and diversity in staff skills and experience

■ recognizing and supporting the professional qualities of the staff as well as promoting personal and professional growth for all of the school system's employees

■ allowing for assessment, assistance, and follow-up for those whose competence is in question

WHAT IS GOOD TEACHING?

Teaching is a complex activity. Given the diversity of the New York City public school system—i.e., nearly 1,000 school buildings, more than 995,000 students, and over 120,000 teachers, supervisors, and school support personnel—"good teaching" in one school or classroom may look different from "good teaching" in another school setting or for a different group of students. For example, students working together on a cooperative learning

assignment may discuss how to solve a particular problem. In a computer lab, students may individually interact with computer software programs. In other classrooms, students may participate in a developmental lesson given by their teacher. Students in all these different settings are experiencing a variety of approaches to classroom teaching, all of which may be appropriate and each of which needs to be assessed appropriately.

Recognizing that teachers as professionals bring a broad range of skills and expertise to the classroom in order to meet their students' diverse educational needs, developing an effective professional development and teacher evaluation program is essential. Doing this requires a multifaceted approach in order to obtain a well-rounded and accurate picture of how teachers are performing and also to determine how best to support teachers' ongoing professional growth.

The vast majority of teachers in the New York City public schools provide high quality educational experiences for their students. While all teachers benefit from opportunities to grow as professionals—including experimenting with new instructional strategies and sharing ideas with peers—teachers vary in terms of their level of experience and expertise. Therefore, professional development and teacher evaluation activities need to be appropriate for each teacher. For example:

■ New teachers need support and assistance from supervisors, mentors, and other colleagues in order to develop a strong foundation for further professional growth.

■ Experienced, tenured teachers need to be able to stay current with new instructional strategies and continue to develop as professionals.

■ For the small percentage of teachers whose teaching competence may require more in-depth review, various forms of assistance can provide an opportunity to improve within an appropriate time frame.

WHAT ARE PERFORMANCE REVIEWS?

Annual performance reviews are mandated for all school-based personnel, according to the New York State Education Commissioner's Regulations, Part 100.2(o), and are intended to help teachers accomplish their educational goals with their students. Toward this end, New York State's *A New Compact for Learning*[1] encourages a broad range of teaching and learning strategies to meet student needs and ensure that students meet desired learning outcomes.

Performance reviews are based on assessment and evaluation procedures which identify and recognize the range of abilities and experience of the teaching staff. They also provide a linkage among a teacher's performance, a school's educational goals, and related professional development activities. Where appropriate, the performance review process must include clear and specific recommendations for ongoing professional growth based on the New York City Board of Education's framework of Characteristics of Good Teaching described on pages 18-21. All aspects of a teacher's annual performance review are confidential personnel information.

TEACHER EVALUATION AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

To enable teachers to most effectively contribute to realizing a school's educational goals for its students, performance reviews should provide teachers and supervisors with opportunities to identify areas for individual and group professional development. Traditionally, formal classroom observations by a teacher's principal or supervisor have been the most common method for evaluating a teacher's classroom performance. However, many teachers and principals find this approach limiting in many respects. For tenured teachers who have been repeatedly observed by their supervisors, formal observations are frequently viewed as a pro forma requirement rather than a learning experience. Still others have experienced observations as restrictive when only one type of lesson is evaluated rather than a range of instructional strategies.

[1] The University of the State of New York/The State Education Department. *A New Compact for Learning: Improved Public Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Education Results in the 1990s* (Albany, NY: The University of the State of New York/The State Education Department, 1991).

While traditional classroom observations, when done in a supportive and collegial manner, can provide constructive suggestions and feedback, other approaches are also being collaboratively developed by teachers and supervisors. These new methods provide opportunities to develop a well-rounded picture of a teacher's abilities and skills as well as ongoing support for a teacher's professional growth. Toward this end, classroom visits by supervisors and colleagues to discuss issues such as students' needs, classroom teaching strategies, or professional development interests are encouraged.

DEVELOPING A NEW PERFORMANCE REVIEW PLAN

Creating a professional development and teacher evaluation plan "that gives each staff member choices and a role in his or her own professional growth and enables staff to assist in the professional development of less experienced colleagues" is a component of the Board of Education-United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Agreement. To accomplish this, a working Teacher Evaluation/Observation Committee, comprised of staff representatives of both the New York City Board of Education and the UFT, conducted a year-long study of innovative teacher evaluation and observation practices in New York City public school districts and other school districts throughout the United States, as well as an extensive review of the research literature on this topic.

New York State regulations also require the chancellor to develop formal procedures for annual performance reviews in consultation with teachers, administrators, and other school service personnel. Toward this end, the Chancellor's Performance Review Committee, representing both parents and school-based constituents, reviewed proposed recommendations. Performance review procedures are also a mandatory subject of collective bargaining, and details of such procedures were discussed with appropriate unions.

Both committees sponsored numerous focus group discussions with teachers, principals, parents, community school district board members, educational advocate groups, and superintendents in order to develop broad-based consensus on the question, What are the characteristics of good teaching? and to learn more about different constituents' priorities and concerns regarding teacher evaluation and professional development.

The ten characteristics described in Chapter 2 reflect the consensus of these focus group discussions. How each characteristic would translate into good teaching practices would, of course, vary with different school settings and student populations as well as with teachers at different levels of experience and expertise.

Current research on staff development indicates that "when teachers observe and discuss what they have learned with each other, they're more likely to use new approaches effectively than teachers who work in isolation."[2] Teachers benefit from being able to share ideas and experiences with colleagues. Approaches to professional development that support ongoing supervisor-teacher and teacher-teacher interaction are more likely to result in meaningful and productive performance reviews and ongoing professional growth. However, these effective practices require collegiality, time for informal and formal professional development activities, flexibility in terms of scheduling and approach, as well as support from district and central offices. School-Based Management/Shared Decision Making (SBM/SDM) and school-based planning committees offer schools a framework to support this type of interaction.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW MODEL

Recognizing the importance of effective professional development and teacher evaluation practices to promote quality classroom instruction, the New York City Board of Education has developed a model for teacher performance reviews that is designed to

[2] Board of Education of the City of New York. *Making Staff Development Pay Off in the Classroom.* Research Brief #4, April 1991, p. 3.

(1) encourage ongoing professional growth, and (2) take into account the varied levels of experience and/or expertise that teachers bring to their classrooms. This model consists of the following components:

A. Annual Performance Option

B. Formal Observation

Component A offers a teacher a broad range of annual performance options and an opportunity to set his or her own goals and objectives in conjunction with the supervisor, in order to demonstrate the teacher's professional growth.

Component B is the traditional classroom observation by a principal or supervisor which must include a pre-observation discussion and a post-observation conference along with written feedback and/or comments.

CHOOSING COMPONENT A OR B

A satisfactory, tenured teacher, in consultation with his of her principal or supervisor, may choose either Component A or B, or both, as the basis for an annual performance review. For example, a teacher may want to combine these components if the teacher's goal is to implement a new instructional strategy (Component A) and assess implementation via a classroom observation (Component B).

Component B, the formal observation, is required for new and probationary teachers, tenured teachers in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory rating, and tenured teachers who were rated unsatisfactory the prior year. These teachers may also utilize Component A as part of their performance review, at their principal's discretion. Tenured teachers who are new to a school will have a formal observation by their principal near the beginning of the term; after a satisfactory observation, they may then choose Component A or B, or both.

IMPLEMENTING THE MODEL

Each component, or combination, should be implemented in a way that promotes the Characteristics of Good Teaching outlined in Chapter 2 and furthers a school's educational goals and objectives as developed collaboratively by school staff and parents.

Procedural guidelines for teacher performance reviews are discussed in Chapter 3; within these guidelines, teachers may work with each of the previously discussed components in a manner that is appropriate to their particular school setting.

This performance review model provides broad latitude for teachers and supervisors to incorporate a wide range of approaches to professional development and teacher evaluation. Just as the school system is developing new performance-based assessment tools for its students, encouraging new approaches to teacher assessment is important. As noted earlier, teachers benefit from being able to share ideas, work collegially to develop and implement new instructional strategies, and assist in the professional development of less experienced colleagues. To this end, more and more schools are beginning to utilize such approaches as team teaching, peer coaching, and peer assessment. Likewise, some individual teachers are choosing to experiment with such professional development and teacher evaluation options as individual needs assessment, reflective teaching practices, classroom intervisitations, clinical supervision, conferences and workshops, student and parent feedback, teacher portfolios, and voluntary videotaping, among others.

Teachers continue to be accountable for maintaining a satisfactory level of teaching. As the school's official rating officer, the principal has the final responsibility for rating a teacher's performance. For the small percentage of teachers who are in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory rating or who received an unsatisfactory rating during the prior year, the school principal must make formal classroom observations, including pre- and post-observation conferences. Where appropriate, the supervisor must work with a teacher to implement an intervention plan in order to improve the teacher's classroom performance within an appropriate time frame.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Facilitating opportunities for staff to participate in appropriate professional development activities requires both time and resources. Professional development resources currently available for individual teachers, teams of staff members, and/or entire school faculties include: faculty and departmental conference time, preparation periods (where contractually permitted), regularly scheduled professional development days, district sponsored professional development activities, reimbursable professional development staff and activities, SBM staff development activities, currently-funded special projects, approved conferences, linkages with institutes of higher education, and graduate course work.

These resources may be restructured as needed to include and address specifically the needs of staff participating in various performance review models. Toward this end, different schools are utilizing a wide range of strategies. These include:

■ restructured school day schedules

■ collaborative approaches for teachers and supervisors

■ organizational designs that facilitate formal and informal school-based professional development

■ innovative approaches to teacher performance reviews

Examples of how a wide range of New York City public schools are utilizing such approaches in ways that are appropriate for their school settings are described in Appendix B, Getting Started: Introducing Alternative Approaches to Teacher Performance Reviews and Related Professional Development Activities.

The implementation of a systemwide professional development program to support the new model for performance reviews will occur in two phases. Specifically:

■ Phase I will introduce, identify, and define the new performance review model.

■ Phase II will focus on specific professional development needs of individual teachers as the new performance review model is phased in throughout the school system.

The following chapter describes how each of these phases will be implemented to facilitate the professional development and performance review activities described in this publication.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

While an individual teacher's performance review is confidential and cannot be shared with others, parent involvement and input regarding their children's schooling is a high priority for the New York City Board of Education. Parent involvement is an integral part of a school's effectiveness in educating students and parents play an important role in developing school policy. With respect to a school's overall performance review process, this includes the following:

■ As per New York State's *A New Compact for Learning*, parents have input into determining a school's educational goals and objectives as part of the SBM/SDM or other school-based

planning council. Teachers' goals must be aligned with their school's educational objectives.

■ Parents must be made aware of the New York City Board of Education's framework of Characteristics of Good Teaching (described in Chapter 2) as well as the school's procedures for evaluating teachers.

■ The citywide framework of Characteristics of Good Teaching includes Encourages Parent Involvement. This entails having teachers reach out to communicate with parents, encourage participation in school activities, and show sensitivity to parents' native languages, cultures, and family circumstances. This effort, of course, requires the support of administrators and districts as well.

Each school must also provide vehicles for parents to communicate both positive outcomes and concerns about a child's educational experience to the school's administration for appropriate follow-up.

IMPLEMENTING NEW APPROACHES

Some public schools in New York City have already begun to initiate innovative approaches to professional development and teacher evaluation. For many schools, moving in this direction will be a new experience—one that needs to take place over a period of time with sufficient piloting and experimentation of new methods to assure that supervisors and teachers are familiar with different methods of classroom assessment. Obviously, making this transition requires a major shift in how school staff view their roles, how a school encourages ongoing professional growth for teachers, and how responsibility for good teaching is realized. At the same time, this new performance review model provides schools with new tools that enhance the quality of classroom teaching and continuously promote professional growth for their teaching staff.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PREPARING FOR TEACHING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Developing effective alternative approaches to teacher performance reviews and related professional development activities requires input and planning by both teachers and supervisors. In addition, professional development to prepare staff to carry out new options for performance reviews needs to entail a multifaceted approach utilizing all available resources. Toward this end, the implementation of a professional development program to support the new performance review model will occur in two phases.

PHASE I - AWARENESS: WHAT IS PERFORMANCE REVIEW?

Implementating a high quality professional development and teacher evaluation program requires that all staff and members of the school community be aware of and involved in all aspects of this systemic initiative. In addition to teachers and supervisors, professional development must also include superintendents, school board members, UFT district representatives, CSA (Council of Supervisors and Administrators) district representatives, parents, and other related groups.

Phase I will identify and define new approaches to performance review for all of these constituencies. Since the dissemination of information to the school community and to the public at large is essential to the success of this initiative, the activities described in Phase I will be ongoing in order to address the needs of participating staff as they enter the initiative through a multi-year phase-in plan.

To accomplish this, the Division of Instruction and Professional Development (DIPD) will coordinate a comprehensive collaboration among central divisions and offices, superintendencies, the UFT, the CSA, and other interested organizations such as the Center for Educational Leadership, the Fund for New York City Public Education, and colleges and universities. Phase I activities will include the following:

1. Chancellor's Implementing Circular

A Chancellor's Circular, prepared in consultation with superintendents, the UFT, the CSA and others, will describe the initial implementation guidelines and time frame for this new initiative, and be distributed to all New York City public schools.

2. Performance Review Resource Handbook

This publication, *Teaching for the 21st Century* (the new teacher performance review resource handbook), will be distributed in a three-ring binder to every New York City public school teacher and supervisor. This document includes procedural guidelines along with frequently asked questions and answers and examples of alternative approaches to teacher performance reviews and school-based professional development activities taking place in a wide range of New York City public schools. In addition, staff will be able to insert additional material (e.g., research literature, resource directory for professional development activities) to the original document as it becomes available.

3. Boroughwide Conferences

Five boroughwide conferences will be held to initially acquaint teachers, supervisors, superintendents, and others in the New York City public schools with the new teacher performance review model. DIPD will plan and coordinate each conference in collaboration with the UFT, the CSA, Teachers Centers, district superintendencies, central board divisions and offices, and other organizations.

4. Parents' Brochure

A brochure for parents describing the new citywide Characteristics of Good Teaching and new teacher performance review procedures will be published in five different languages and disseminated to parents throughout the New York City public schools system.

5. Videotape on Teacher Performance Review

DIPD will develop and distribute a videotape highlighting alternative approaches to teacher performance reviews and school-based professional development activities.

6. Technical Assistance

In collaboration with district and school staff and other organizations, DIPD will provide ongoing technical assistance to train both administrators and teachers on new performance review procedures. To provide as broad an outreach as possible, training may be incorporated into existing workshop sessions, teacher networking activities across schools, professional institutes, citywide and borough conferences, as well as individual school meetings.

These sessions will be designed to provide a maximum of flexibility for school-based staff participation systemwide. Topics to be discussed will include performance review models, establishing collaborative relationships, goal-setting, using adult learning approaches, and cognitive coaching.

**PHASE II:
SUPPORTING
PERFORMANCE REVIEW
WITH PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Once information about the new performance review process has been disseminated, it is the goal of DIPD to support staff in the successful implementation of the initiative. Phase II will provide professional development activities for individual teachers as they identify specific goals and objectives and/or areas for improvement. Components of this phase will include:

1. Professional Development Needs Assessment Survey

In consultation with the UFT, the CSA, superintendents, and others, DIPD and the Office of Educational Research will conduct a systemwide survey of professional development needs, activities, and resources on both a school building and district level. The results of this survey will help schools and districts do their own school-based planning and provide information to review existing central professional development activities.

2. Professional Development Capacity Building

DIPD will work with districts and schools to identify and build local capacity for professional development. This will include technical assistance to:

■ identify, refocus, and support expertise that exists in individual schools so that it can be shared with other schools and districts

■ provide existing school- and district-based staff with targeted training in staff development, effective presentations, cognitive/peer coaching, and facilitation skills

■ assist instructional and professional development staff in the preparation of district comprehensive plans to ensure that they reflect the needs of staff and schools

3. Re-examination of Existing Resources

DIPD will also review central resources such as Quality Improvement Program Plan (QUIPP), Professional Development Laboratory, Mentor Teacher Internship Program (MTIP), Comprehensive Instructional Management Systems (CIMS),

After School In Service Program, Impact II, Supervisory Institute Program, Science Technical Assistance Centers, Computer Technical Assistance Centers, Math Resource Centers, and New Teacher and Paraprofessional Staff Development to ensure that these serve as effective vehicles for training in current instructional strategies. Each central initiative will include accessibility for a teacher to meet his or her specific goals and objectives and/or areas for improvement.

In addition, DIPD will collaborate with SBM/SDM facilitators as well as representatives from Teacher Centers, the Special Educator Support Program, and other teacher networks to expand professional development opportunities. DIPD will also provide technical assistance to districts and schools regarding the use of faculty conferences, district-sponsored activities, and preparation periods (where contractually permissable) to support professional development and performance review activities.

4. Professional Development Resource Bank

Within the first six months of the initiative, DIPD, in collaboration with superintendents, the UFT, the CSA, and others, will survey current professional development services. The resulting resource bank will identify appropriate contact persons and describe the areas of expertise and the capacity of each participating organization.

DIPD will assist schools in identifying and utilizing professional development resources available to them. The purpose of this information will be to provide access for schools and staff members and make it possible to link schools to appropriate providers. These would include such programs and organizations as:

- New York City Board of Education's Division of Instruction and Professional Development

- The Fund for New York City Public Education

- Effective Teaching Program

- The New York City Teacher Centers Consortium

- Center for Collaborative Education

- The Special Educator Support Program

- The Special Education Training and Resource Center

- Peer Intervention Program

- SuperCenter

- SBM/SDM facilitators

- Colleges and universities (e.g., schools of education as well as liberal arts and sciences departments)

- Educational associations (e.g., New York City Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, borough reading associations, etc.)

5. Ongoing School-based Implementation

The full implementation of this new performance review plan is based on more effective use of existing professional development resources. For schools interested in implementing the annual performance review option (Component A) which do not already have a professional development planning committee, a limited number of one-time planning grants will be available.

A multi-year phase-in approach will occur for schools interested in providing school-based professional development activities to support Component A. To this end, a wide range of materials and technical assistance will be ongoingly available through DIPD for teachers and supervisors. These include:

- Performance review resource handbook
- Videotape about teacher performance review
- Parents brochure
- Staff development activities
- Technical assistance
- Professional development resource bank

Ongoing documentation and evaluation of effective performance review and professional development practices in different school settings will also take place over the multi-year phase-in period of this initiative and shared with other schools that are developing new approaches.

School-based professional development activities requiring new and/or additional professional development resources beginning fall 1994, will be dependent on the Board of Education and the UFT jointly identifying, seeking, and obtaining specific revenue sources.

2 CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD TEACHING

A broad-based framework for assessing good teaching and providing professional development activities in the New York City public schools is dependent upon mutually agreed on characteristics of good teaching. Numerous focus group discussions involving teachers, principals, parents, superintendents, community school board members, and educational advocate groups have led to a consensus on the characteristics listed below. Each characteristic is important for good teaching, but each needs to be considered in an integrated manner in order to present a well-rounded picture of classroom teaching. How each characteristic described below translates into practice will vary in different school settings according to the needs of different students.

Demonstrates Classroom Management Skills

Teacher has an organized approach to classroom learning, effective classroom management skills, and is able to pace the curriculum. Teacher sets appropriate behavioral standards and enforces them consistently.

Engages Students in Learning

Teacher motivates students to be continually engaged in learning activities. Teacher has a knowledge of child development and corresponding age characteristics and needs. Teacher is responsive to individual student learning styles, knowledgeable about varied instructional strategies and materials, and makes appropriate decisions about how to use them. Teacher relates the curriculum to the appropriate learning context. Teacher strives to meet the needs and abilities of the classroom student population.

Encourages Parent Involvement

Teacher is sensitive to and respects the diversity of parents' native languages and cultures. Teacher is pro-active in reaching out to communicate with parents and involve them in classroom and schoolwide activities as well as other forms of parent involvement. Teacher has awareness of and sensitivity to students' family circumstances.

Fosters Professional Collegiality

Teacher respects other teachers' styles of teaching and has a collegial approach to working with school staff and community, sharing effective practices, engaging in problem-solving, and similar activities.

Maintains an Ongoing Commitment to Learning

Teacher stays current with educational research and trends in subject areas. Teacher is open to learning new approaches and techniques and shares information with colleagues. Teacher has enthusiasm for learning and is able to reflect and grow as a professional. Teacher makes use of community and other outside resources both for student growth and own professional growth.

Possesses Knowledge of Subject Matter

Teacher has command of subject matter and uses appropriate instructional materials. Teacher is able to present information in a clear and effective manner.

Promotes Positive Student Learning Outcomes

Teacher has high expectations for all students. Teacher recognizes and develops instructional strategies appropriate for individual student learning styles, language proficiency, cultural background, and disabling conditions. Teacher regularly assesses student learning and adjusts instruction according to evidence of student growth. Teacher strives to realize educational goals set for students.

Recognizes the Importance of Students' Diverse Cultural Backgrounds

Teacher respects and supports differences among students' languages and cultural backgrounds, and encourages mutual respect in the classroom. Teacher integrates curricula, instructional strategies, assessment, and support services with appropriate language and cultural contexts. Teacher acknowledges the importance of students' diverse cultural backgrounds in all aspects of classroom teaching.

Responds to Different Student Learning Behaviors

Teacher shows flexibility and has the ability to adapt to different modes of student learning. Teacher facilitates students' progress in acquiring their own knowledge and developing their own thinking skills. Teacher shows creativity and imagination; challenges and encourages students to explore and build on their knowledge. Teacher is innovative, willing to experiment and take risks.

Supports an Atmosphere of Mutual Respect

Teacher sets a good example for students: punctual, courteous, concerned about others, and so on. Teacher respects each student as an individual and encourages mutual respect in the classroom. Teacher listens and pays attention to what students are saying; respects individual learning styles as well as cultural diversity, language differences, and disabling conditions.

3 PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

As part of its commitment to developing effective schools, the New York City Board of Education encourages principals and supervisors to visit teachers' classrooms frequently in order to discuss matters such as students' needs, classroom teaching strategies, or professional development interests. A classroom visit may entail an informal assessment of a teacher's performance based on the Characteristics of Good Teaching outlined in Chapter 2 and may include a broad range of classroom assessment activities. Except when a teacher wants a series of classroom visits as a performance option, such visits generally are not written up.

The following guidelines provide an overall structure for teachers and supervisors to develop collaboratively a process for performance reviews that is most suitable for them.

1. DEVELOPING SCHOOL-BASED PROCEDURES

Both teachers and supervisors must have input into developing a school's procedures for annual teacher performance reviews. Teacher performance review procedures must be developed at the school level by teachers and supervisors which integrate the Characteristics of Good Teaching with the school's plan for achieving its educational goals and objectives.

Such educational plans must be consistent with state mandates (e.g., A New Compact for Learning, State Registration Review Process, Regents Action Plan), citywide policies (e.g., Learning Outcomes), and district policies and procedures; district policies must be consistent with citywide policies. School principals are responsible for the implementation of strategies to realize a school's educational goals and objectives.

2. ESTABLISHING DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCEDURES

A school's performance review process should be developmentally appropriate for teachers at different levels of experience and expertise. Specifically:

New and Probationary Teachers

New and probationary teachers must be provided with benchmarks for achieving tenure along with a description and plan for professional development and evaluation. Formal classroom observations should be carried out in a meaningful and developmentally appropriate manner in order to further each teacher's professional growth and teaching competence.

In community school districts, new and probationary teachers will have a minimum of two formal classroom observations a year. One observation must be conducted by the school principal; the second observation may be done by the teacher's supervisor. In schools that have no assistant principal, however, the principal must conduct both classroom observations.

At the high school level, new and probationary teachers must have a minimum of four formal classroom observations a year (two per term), due to semi-annual reorganization of classes and teaching assignments. The school principal will conduct at least one observation a year; the assistant principal may conduct the other three.

At the principal or assistant principal's discretion, a composite observation (a series of short observations highlighting different parts of a lesson) may serve as a formal classroom observation.

Tenured Teachers

A school's performance review procedures should recognize the different levels of experience and expertise of tenured teachers in order to encourage continuous professional growth and ensure that teachers continue to be accountable for a satisfactory level of

teaching. As described below, performance review procedures should distinguish among:

- satisfactory, tenured teachers
- tenured teachers who are new to a school
- tenured teachers who received an unsatisfactory rating during the prior year
- tenured teachers who are in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory rating

3. PERFORMANCE REVIEW MODEL

Based on a teacher's level of experience and/or expertise, a teacher and his or her supervisor will agree upon the basis for a teacher's performance review during the school year as described in Component A and Component B below. This decision should be made during the spring term for the following school year or at the beginning of the fall term. Each component should be utilized in a manner appropriate to a teacher's level of experience and/or expertise.

Component A: Annual Performance Option

As noted earlier, New York State's A New Compact for Learning encourages a broad range of teaching and learning strategies—e.g., performance-based assessments, team teaching, interdisciplinary courses, "alternative" organizational approaches—to meet student needs and ensure that students meet desired learning outcomes.

To encourage teachers' ongoing professional growth and the use of innovative instructional approaches, a satisfactory, tenured teacher—in conjunction with his or her supervisor—may choose an annual performance option as the basis of the teacher's yearly performance review.

Annual performance options should both further a teacher's professional growth and be related to:

- the Characteristics of Good Teaching outlined in Chapter 2
- school-based educational goals and objectives
- outcomes expected in terms of student performance
- classroom instructional strategies, and/or
- individual teacher needs assessments

Teachers should prepare a brief written statement describing their annual performance option in terms of their own goal(s) and objectives for the school year (see hypothetical examples that follow). At the end of the year, the impact of these activities on their teaching and students should also be summarized and evaluated.

EXAMPLE 1

Goal: to develop students' language skills using whole language as a classroom teaching strategy

Objectives:

(1) Attend approved whole language conference.

(2) Present report at faculty conference.

(3) Identify materials (e.g., books, magazines) for ten whole language lessons.

(4) Videotape one or more lessons for review and feedback.

EXAMPLE 2

Goal: as determined by schoolwide SBM/SDM team, to use a school-based professional development grant to develop enriched mainstream models in the mathematics department to provide greater access for special education students

Objectives:

(1) Develop cadre of special education and general education mathematics teachers to review Sequential Mathematics I.

(2) By end of the school year, team develops recommendations for appropriate instructional modifications for first semester Sequential Mathematics I.

(3) Team completes implementation plan to initiate full mainstreaming into Sequential Mathematics I for the following fall term.

EXAMPLE 3

Goal: to integrate more ESL strategies into monolingual classroom lessons

Objectives:

(1) Review current literature.

(2) Observe bilingual and ESL teachers' classrooms.

(3) Have bilingual and ESL teachers visit own classroom for observation and feedback on teaching strategies.

(4) Discuss new strategies at monthly faculty meetings.

EXAMPLE 4

Goal: to provide students with an interdisciplinary math and science program through team teaching

Objectives:

(1) With supervisors' support, schedule time to develop curriculum and prepare materials.

(2) Design and implement six-week portfolio projects for students to complete.

(3) Review student portfolios.

Objectives related to specific goals may include such activities as:

- conferences and workshops

- university or inservice courses

- clinical supervision

- classroom visits

- portfolios

- student and parent feedback

- voluntary videotaping of classroom teaching

- other appropriate activities

Activities may also include two or more teachers working together to support each other through mentoring, team teaching, and other collegial efforts.

A teacher's goals and objectives should be achievable within the context of a school's and/or district's resources. To support teachers in realizing their objectives throughout the school year, a school must provide opportunities for discussion among teachers and supervisors such as mid-year conferences and informal classroom visits.

As part of the performance review process, teachers must provide appropriate brief documentation (e.g., a summary report) describing the activities they have pursued to realize their objectives.

With the principal's concurrence, teachers at other levels of experience and/or expertise (as described on page 6) may also choose annual performance options as part of their performance review.
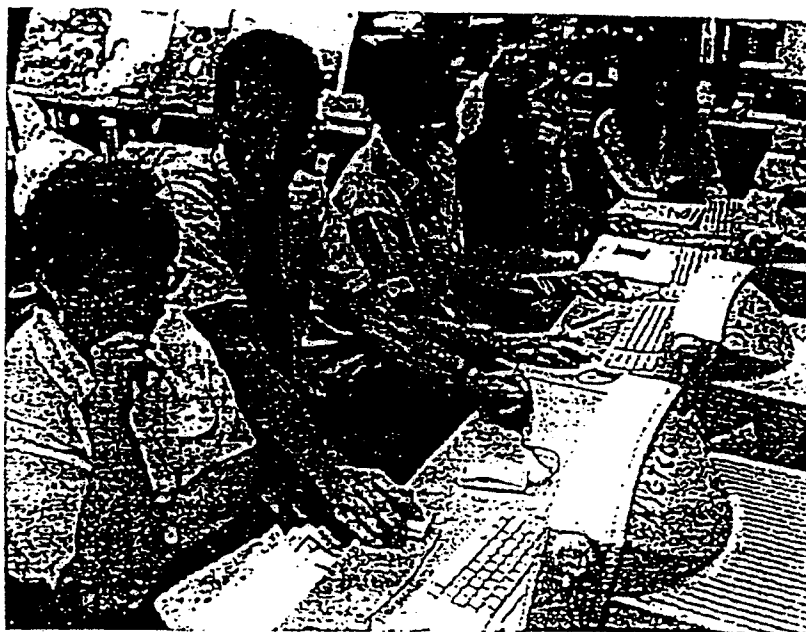
Component B: Formal Observation

Formal observations provide teachers with an opportunity for feedback and discussion in regard to their classroom teaching skills. New teachers, probationary teachers, tenured teachers who received an unsatisfactory rating the prior year, and tenured teachers in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory rating must have formal classroom observations by a principal or supervisor early in the term. Satisfactory, tenured teachers may also choose to have a formal observation as the basis for their performance review.

An observation may be conducted as a single full period classroom visit or a series of short visits by the principal or supervisor. Discussion between a teacher or supervisor before and after an observation must be built into a school's formal classroom observation process, along with a post-observation conference and written report by the principal or supervisor including prescriptive recommendations for professional growth, where appropriate.

Choosing Component A or B

As noted, Component A (Annual Performance Option) and Component B (Formal Observation) must be correlated to a teacher's level of experience and/or expertise. Specifically:

- Satisfactory, tenured teachers may choose Component A or B, or both, with the concurrence of the principal.

- New and probationary teachers, tenured teachers who received an unsatisfactory rating the prior year, and tenured teachers who are in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory rating must have formal observations (Component B) by the principal or designee as part of a prescriptive plan to improve their teaching. These teachers may also utilize Component A as part of their performance review, at their principal's discretion.

- Tenured teachers who are new to a school will have a formal observation (Component B) by the school principal near the beginning of the term; after a satisfactory observation, they may then choose Component A or B, or both, for their performance review.

4. INCORPORATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES INTO THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESS

Annual performance options (Component A) should be supported with appropriate professional development activities—such as intervisitations, conferences and workshops, clinical supervision, peer coaching, or higher education courses. Prescriptive recommendations resulting from a teacher's performance review based on a formal observation (Component B) should also be supported by appropriate professional development activities.

Developmentally Appropriate Activities

Professional development activities should be developmentally appropriate to a teacher's level of experience and competency. For example:

■ A group of satisfactory, tenured teachers might choose to collaborate on learning an innovative instructional strategy and participate in professional development activities that support their goal.

- A new teacher would follow a supervisor's or mentor teacher's prescriptive recommendations for mastering basic teaching competencies around some or all of the Characteristics of Good Teaching described in Chapter 2.

- A tenured teacher in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory rating would follow a supervisor's or peer's prescriptive recommendations to strengthen his or her teaching competency.

Implementing Professional Development Activities

Schools should utilize available conference times (faculty, grade, departmental, interdepartmental, or other) in ways that provide time for professional development, whenever possible. Schools may also choose to utilize school-based options and SBM/SDM to seek waivers as a means to restructure school programming in order to facilitate ongoing professional development activities. Such activities should not interfere with the instruction to which children are entitled.

Appropriate professional development activities such as conferences and university courses that take place outside of the school day should be encouraged whenever possible. Activities occurring during the school day should be arranged in consultation with a supervisor or the school's staff development subcommittee in a SBM/SDM or schoolwide projects school. Schools not participating in SBM/SDM should develop a staff development team to focus on professional development issues (e.g., a principal/UFT Chapter committee, teachers' center).

5. INCLUDING RESPONSIBILITIES THAT SUPPORT DIRECT INSTRUCTION

A teacher's annual performance review must also include an assessment of staff responsibilities that support classroom instruction such as planning, attendance, promptness, and completion of required reports (e.g., student attendance records).

6. NOTIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE REVIEW CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

All school personnel must be made aware of the Characteristics of Good Teaching (see Chapter 2) and the procedures used for teacher performance reviews in their schools.

7. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITTEN COMMENT

Each teacher must have the opportunity to meet with the appropriate supervisor to discuss his or her performance review and provide written comment on the review itself.

8. OWNERSHIP OF ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

Materials used to assess a teacher's classroom teaching skills such as portfolios, or videotapes of classroom teaching, among others, may remain the teacher's property as long as adequate performance review documentation is maintained. A teacher may also choose to allow the school to use such materials for professional development purposes (e.g., to provide examples of effective teaching strategies).

9. TEACHER RATINGS

As the official rating officer, the school principal has final responsibility for rating a teacher's performance and making the recommendations for the granting of completion of probation.

10. PROVIDING INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Supervisors must provide teachers in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory rating with appropriate prescriptive activities developed in consultation with the teacher and provide the teacher with support and opportunities for improvement within an appropriate time frame.

11. FACILITATING DIFFERENCES

Should a teacher and his or her individual supervisor have differences in professional judgment concerning a teacher's annual performance review option (Component A), the matter will be referred to the appropriate superintendent to facilitate differences and further collegial work relationships within a school. If necessary, the superintendent will enlist the assistance of a

conciliator to be assigned by the chancellor. The conciliator will be chosen from a list of central staff members agreed upon by the Board of Education and the UFT. If no agreement can be reached through the conciliation process within 15 working days, the status quo will be maintained.

12. RELATIONSHIP OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCEDURES TO COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

The performance review process at the school level must comply with citywide and district policies and procedures. Community school district policies and procedures must be consistent with the citywide procedures established for the annual performance review process.

13. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN A TEACHER'S COMPETENCE IS IN QUESTION

School officials will comply with state education law and appropriate citywide procedures when a teacher's competency is in question.

14. APPEAL PROCESS

School officials and teachers will follow the appropriate citywide procedures when an individual teacher's rating is appealed.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS
& ANSWERS

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

THIS SECTION COVERS a range of topics about which school staff may have questions with regard to new guidelines for teacher performance reviews.

Q. Can my supervisor still informally observe or visit my class if I choose the annual performance option for my performance review?

A. Yes. Principals and supervisors are expected to visit their teachers' classrooms frequently on an informal basis to provide support and professional development suggestions.

Q. Can our school decide whether all satisfactory, tenured teachers in our school will participate in the annual performance option?

A. No. Each individual, tenured teacher, in consultation with his or her supervisor, decides which performance assessment component is the appropriate one. A tenured teacher may always determine that participation in the classroom observation process better meets his or her needs. However, in several schools, groups of teachers have opted to join together to develop goals and objectives and alternative performance review activities.

Q. Can part-time, temporary per diem, first-year, or probationary teachers participate in the annual performance option?

A. Yes, at the discretion of their supervisor, after receiving an initial satisfactory rating. Some formal classroom observations will still be required for these teachers, however.

Q. If I choose the annual performance option one year, do I have to choose it again the following year?

A. No. You may opt for a different approach (e.g., a traditional classroom observation or a different annual performance option) each year. In some instances, teachers may choose to continue specific goals for more than one year.

Q. Does my principal or supervisor need to approve my annual performance option?

A. Yes, teachers need to discuss their annual performance option with their supervisors and have their concurrence. If a teacher and his or her supervisor have differences in professional judgment, a conciliation process will be utilized (see Item 11, Facilitating Differences, page 32 of this document). If no agreement can be reached, the status quo will be maintained.

Q. Can the goals for my annual performance option be personal professional goals as well as goals that reflect my school's and district's educational goals?

A. Yes, as long as they support school and district educational goals.

Q. May I change my annual performance option during the school year?

A. Changes in annual performance goals must be discussed with your supervisor and mutually agreed upon.

Q. If I choose the annual performance option and find out that my goals aren't working halfway through the year, what should I do?

A. Discuss this with your supervisor. He or she may have suggestions to assist you. You may also want to get input from your teaching colleagues and/or your school's professional development committee.

Q. Can my annual performance option extend for more than one year? If so, when do I write a final report?

A. A year-end summary report may, in some cases, be a status report, especially if a teacher or group of teachers is engaged in a multi-year goal or project. However, a short summary report should indicate what strategies were used, current status, and what would be the appropriate next steps.

Q. May another teacher observe my class and offer input regardless of whether I have chosen the annual performance option or a formal observation?

A. Yes. Any colleague, teacher, or supervisor, may be invited by you to provide input gained through a classroom visit, regardless of which performance review option you choose.

Q. If my school or department is experimenting with innovative classroom observation techniques such as videotaping or peer/collegial observations, can these techniques be considered as a formal observation?

A. A satisfactory, tenured teacher, with the concurrence of his or her supervisor, may choose to utilize innovative observation techniques such as videotaping or peer/collegial observations for a formal observation (Component B). Other teachers may, at the discretion of their supervisors, participate in these types of observation techniques.

Q. What role does parent involvement play in a school's performance review process?

A. An individual teacher's performance review is confidential and cannot be shared with anyone. At the same time, parent involvement is an integral part of a school's effectiveness in educating students, and parents play an important role in developing school policy. In SBM/SDM schools, this would entail participating in establishing the school's educational goals and objectives as part of the SDM/SBM planning team. As the New York City Board of Education moves toward full implementation of New York State's A *New Compact for Learning*, every school will have a school-based planning council, including parents. Teachers' goals must be aligned with their school's educational objectives.

Parents must also be made aware of the Characteristics of Good Teaching as well as the school's procedures for evaluating teachers. In addition, the citywide framework of Characteristics of Good Teaching includes Encouraging Parent Involvement. This entails having teachers reach out to communicate with parents, encourage participation in school activities, and show sensitivity to parents' native languages, cultures, and family circumstances. This effort, of course, requires the support of administrators and districts as well.

Each school must also provide vehicles for parents to communicate both positive outcomes and concerns about their child's educational experience to the school's administration for appropriate follow-up.

Q. Won't implementing a new performance review process in our school require a lot of extra time for teachers?

A. Developing in a school an alternative performance review process that helps teachers work together better and ultimately helps students perform better is a critical task. It is likely to take additional time, especially in the developmental stages. However, some schools (e.g., those participating in SBM/SDM) have already begun to develop approaches to support teachers through professional development committees, regularly scheduled time for teachers to work together, or school-based staff development activities that will be able to provide support for a teacher's annual performance option.

Q. What is the relationship between the citywide Characteristics of Good Teaching and a teacher's annual performance review?

A. Annual performance reviews utilize the Characteristics of Good Teaching as a broad framework for ongoing professional growth in teaching. For new and probationary teachers, this would entail developing a "satisfactory" mastery in each area. Satisfactory, tenured teachers would select one or more of these characteristics as areas in which to develop additional professional skills and growth.

Q. What if I don't agree with the citywide Characteristics of Good Teaching?

A. The chapter describing Characteristics of Good Teaching, required by New York State education regulations, covers a broad spectrum of teaching qualities and should be regarded as a general framework for teaching. This framework has been developed and revised with considerable participation from teachers, supervisors, parents, superintendents, education advocates, community school board members, and others. These characteristics reflect the consensus of a broad range of input from these groups. Working

within this framework of teaching characteristics is a state education requirement. Additional characteristics may be included, if deemed appropriate, by teachers and supervisors for their particular school and student population.

Q. If my contractual rights have been violated, can I file a grievance?

A. Yes. All due process rights continue unaltered, including the right to grieve contractual violations.

Q. What goes into my personnel file at the end of the year?

A. A new professional performance review report for New York City public school teachers will replace form BE/DOP 9955B (5/87) and be the official performance review document placed in a teacher's personnel file.

In conjunction with the new form, for teachers who choose the annual performance option (Component A), a short year-end summary report describing how they pursued their goals and objectives along with their supervisor's written evaluation will become part of their file. For teachers who have a formal observation (Component B), their supervisor's written report along with their own comments will become part of their file.

TEACHING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

APPENDIX B

GETTING STARTED

INTRODUCING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO TEACHER PERFORMANCE REVIEWS AND RELATED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

OVERVIEW

The material for this section is based on interviews and focus groups with teachers, principals, and assistant principals from more than 80 public elementary, middle-level, and high schools in New York City. While this section describes alternative approaches to teacher performance reviews developed by a few of these schools, the New York City Board of Education, the United Federation of Teachers, and the Council of Supervisors and Administrators wish to thank the hundreds of educators who generously shared their experiences and insights with regard to teacher evaluation and professional growth.

ITHIN NEW YORK CITY'S PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, some elementary and middle-level schools, as well as comprehensive and alternative high schools, are experimenting with alternative approaches to teacher performance reviews, and related staff development activities. While most schools currently utilize traditional classroom observations for annual teacher performance reviews, this appendix provides examples of alternative approaches, collaboratively developed by teachers and supervisors, that go beyond the minimal requirements for teacher evaluation and exemplify good practices for promoting professional growth. For example, teachers and principals in a number of elementary schools have collaborated to establish a goal-setting model which most eligible staff members have adopted. In some schools, teachers and supervisors have worked together to refine the traditional observation approach to make it more supportive of professional growth. Still other schools have piloted specific activities such as videotaping or collegial observations in which individual teachers choose to participate on a voluntary basis. A few alternative high schools are experimenting with peer support and assessment models.

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

The efforts of these schools provide initial models that other schools may want to adapt and build on as staff members develop alternative performance reviews and related professional development activities that are most suitable for their school setting. While these schools varied considerably in terms of size and school culture as well as specific types of performance review activities, teachers, principals, and assistant principals in nearly all of the schools had similar recommendations about how to initiate this type of change and have it be a positive experience. Some of these include:

1. Focus on Instruction

Teachers and supervisors piloted innovative approaches to teacher evaluation, and related professional development activities, in order to encourage teachers to continue to grow professionally, and experiment with instructional strategies that would enhance their students' achievement in school.

2. Teacher and Supervisor Collaboration

Teachers, principals, and assistant principals in schools that piloted alternative performance review approaches, especially those adopting goal-setting models, collaborated on developing all aspects of the model for their school or department. Each school also developed procedures that were most appropriate for their particular school culture. Staff met frequently to discuss topics such as new school policy, implementation procedures, review criteria, professional development support, and intervention strategies.

3. Voluntary Participation

Schools experimented with alternative approaches to performance reviews for teachers on a voluntary basis. For example, eligible staff members volunteered to participate in a series of collegial observations, chose videotaping for self-assessment, or developed annual professional goals, in conjunction with their supervisors. Some eligible teachers chose to have traditional classroom observations for their performance review instead. As teachers who had volunteered to participate in new activities discussed their experiences with colleagues informally and at departmental conferences, more eligible teachers participated the following year

PILOTING PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE-LEVEL SCHOOLS

Teachers and principals in a number of elementary and middle-level schools have developed alternative approaches to teacher performance reviews and school-based staff development activities as a means of enhancing classroom instruction and furthering student achievement. While initiating a process of change entailed a transition for both teachers and supervisors, teachers indicated that they liked the professionalism of these approaches and felt a strong sense of ownership since they were able to participate on a voluntary basis.
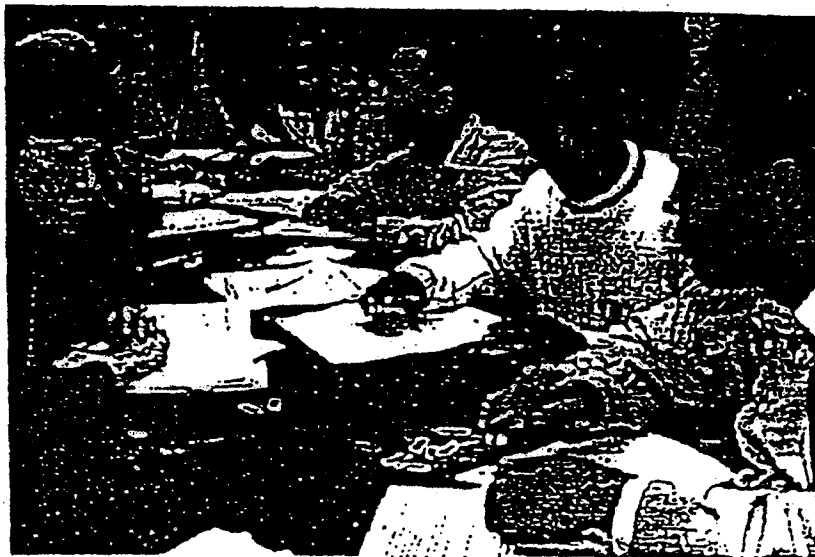
CREATING GOAL-SETTING MODELS FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

In one elementary school, the principal and UFT chapter leader began discussing ways in which experienced, tenured teachers could develop alternatives to traditional classroom observations in order to encourage teachers to experiment with innovative teaching strategies that would further the school's educational goals. Most of the teachers had been on staff for many years, and were highly dedicated professionals. After discussing possible approaches, the staff and administration agreed to pilot a goal-setting model as a basis for teacher performance reviews. Participation was voluntary. During the first year, a few teachers chose to have formal classroom observations. In the beginning, considerable faculty conference time was set aside for discussions on how to choose and write goals and objectives. Most teachers' goals involved:

- ■ using a new pedagogical technique (e.g., cooperative learning)

- ■ implementing a new program (e.g., literature-based reading program)

- ■ improving instruction in a specific area by using methods that were innovative for that person (e.g., using more manipulatives to teach mathematics)

Goals could reflect either specific school and/or district goals or personal goals related to the educational program that teachers

wanted to accomplish for their students. Teachers could continue to work on a goal for a second year as long as they added one new goal, in order to continue experimenting with innovative approaches. Teachers could also create group goals and collaborate with other teachers.

Year-long Process

Early in the fall term, participating teachers met individually with the principal to review and agree on a short written summary of the teachers's goals and objectives. Afterwards, teachers had the opportunity to revise their goals in order to be more realistic or develop a clearer definition of what they wanted to accomplish. "This is a give-and-take process," the UFT chapter leader noted. The individual goal process also helped to link teacher's goals with those of the school and district. "We automatically start to discuss our goals during lunch," one teacher observed. "It helps everyone move in the same direction."

Mid-year, teachers met with the principal informally to discuss any support they needed or to review problems. "We use this as a staff development activity," noted the principal. Such an activity might entail providing teachers with relevant literature, arranging for

teachers to attend conferences, or suggesting other teachers with similar goals with whom to share ideas and information. In contrast to post-observation conferences that focused on a single lesson, staff members noted that annual goal-setting conferences frequently led to discussions on such issues as personal and educational philosophy, curriculum development, and instructional trends as well as specific teaching activities. In addition, the principal informally visited teachers' classrooms throughout the year to discuss teachers' goals and provide staff development support.

Near the end of the school year, teachers prepared a written summary of what they accomplished during the year. This served as a basis for a year-end discussion with the principal; teachers were encouraged to keep notes during the year to make a summary easy to prepare. Afterwards, the principal also attached a year-end evaluation and both documents were put in the teacher's file. Occasionally, a teacher might not realize a particular goal even after actively pursuing it. For example, one teacher found that her goal of introducing more manipulatives in a heterogeneous fifth and sixth grade mathematics class was proving difficult because students varied so much in terms of their cognitive understanding of math concepts. As a result, it was difficult to sufficiently individualize exercises utilizing manipulatives. However, the principal noted that "learning what doesn't work can be just as important as what does work." To address this problem, the principal arranged to have a staff development conference with an expert consultant in this area.

Even though goal-setting is more time-consuming than traditional observations and requires ongoing administrative support to be effective, staff indicated that they found it to be a much more meaningful process. Teachers commented that they were pleased with the process because they felt that it was professional. "You get to set your own sights," observed one person. Another staff member remarked, "This is how people in business are evaluated in their jobs."

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Focus on Teaching

A teacher in a middle-level school that adopted a similar goal-setting model, commented, "I like goal-setting because it isn't an isolated snapshot of your teaching. Setting goals encourages you to take risks and make changes in your methods of teaching. It also requires a lot of professional thought: I really had to think about areas that I wanted to improve for my class as well as for myself as a teacher." She noted that one of her current objectives was:

> To enhance the whole language approach, a modified writing process program will be implemented to maximize writing opportunities in a setting which provides for child-centered, individualized development.

Previously, she had taught second grade writing process. Her new fifth and sixth grade students, however, needed a somewhat different approach. Since she was teaching a different grade level

this year, having a specific objective in this area helped her focus on exactly what she wanted to accomplish during the year.

Likewise, she and other teachers were also committed to using a problem-solving approach with their students, and making it part of the classroom learning process. Teachers used staff developers to help them distinguish feelings, empathy, and identification from critical thinking and shared decision-making. The teacher commented that this had opened up more classroom discussions, debates, and forums to facilitate critical thinking among students. If she hadn't focused on this objective, she noted, this probably would not have occurred.

The teacher also observed that her principal's support had been critical to realizing her objectives. Her third objective for the year entailed developing student-generated group responses to literature. The class began with paired student responses and was currently working on small group responses. In order to provide sufficient staff to interact with student groups, the principal visited the class to work with one of her groups.

Team Goal-setting

In some other schools, a number of teachers chose to work in teams of two to four teachers on goals that resulted in tangible products of student work and had staff development as an integral component. Staff members in one school noted that this approach gave them opportunities to develop interdisciplinary curriculum and interact with teachers who specialized in different fields. Toward this end, many teachers attended writing process workshops at Columbia University and also worked closely with the Teachers Center in their district for additional staff development support as well as resource materials for thematic planning.

Start-up Year Experience: During the first year of the school's goal-setting experiment, everyone was exploring the way. For some teachers, this entailed learning both research skills (for planning thematic units) as well as developing cooperative

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learning skills in working with each other. Teachers also learned how to develop realistic, focused objectives to realize their goals rather than trying to be too general about what they wanted to accomplish. At the end of the school year, staff members assessed how the program was working at a faculty conference and made presentations on their goals to provide opportunities for teachers to share their experiences with each other. The school's principal noted, "it's important to stick with this from one year to the next so that staff members have time to become proficient at how to work with this approach."

Second Year Impact. During the following year, a number of participating teachers developed interdisciplinary goals which were, as the principal noted, "producing great student outcomes." For example, the resource room teacher teamed up with the school's computer teacher to accomplish the following objective:

> To improve the self esteem of special education children by publishing a resource room magazine using their computer skills.

Strategies which the two teachers chose to implement this objective included writing process, computer literacy, magazine layout, and book binding. The student magazine contained stories and poems written by children using their own word processing skills. "We have never had this kind of work from our resource room students," noted their teacher. Children received a bound, laminated copy of their publication to take home and copies were also put on display throughout the school. By the end of the second year, both teachers and supervisors felt that their school's team goal-setting approach was having a positive impact on both student achievement and teacher professionalism in their school.

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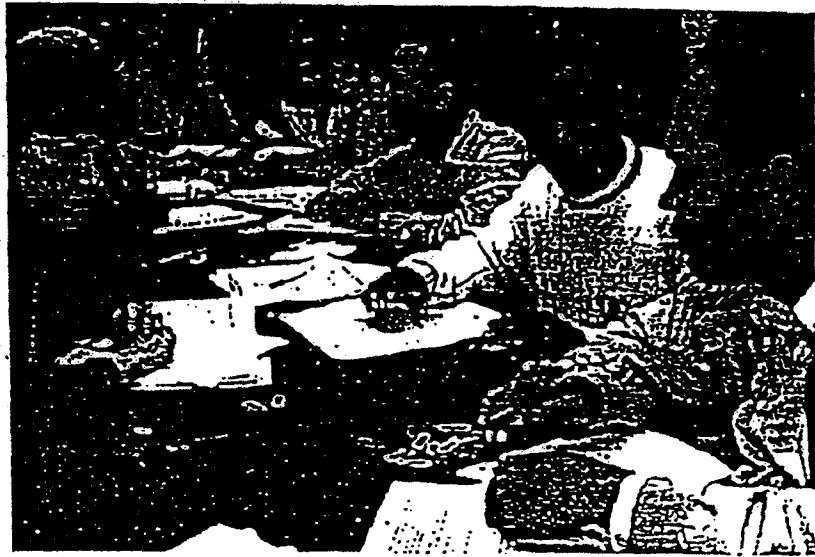
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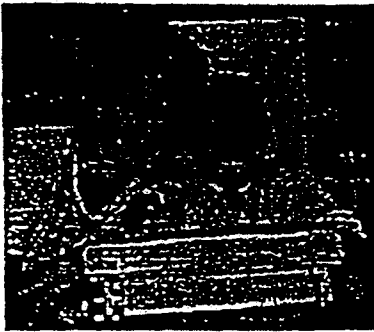
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Previously, she had taught second grade writing process. Her new fifth and sixth grade students, however, needed a somewhat different approach. Since she was teaching a different grade level,

Assessing Team Goal-setting. Staff comments at schools that emphasized team goal-setting included the following · ·s: ·

■ Team goal-setting was considered · · · ·.g, non-threatening, expansive, and coll·· ·ojects also allowed staff to intergrade ..u in... .n according to children's needs and interests.

■ Team goal-setting encouraged intervisitations among teachers to observe new teaching strategies.

■ Having classroom, cluster, ESL, and bilingual teachers team up on goal-setting projects gave staff a clearer understanding of what other teachers were doing with students.

■ Team goal-setting encouraged staff to move into integrating curriculum areas. As a result, this approach made everything going on in the school more integrated.

INITIATING AN SBM/SDM ALTERNATIVE-TO-OBSERVATION OPTION

In lieu of classroom observations for satisfactory, tenured teachers, some SBM/SDM elementary schools have received waivers from their superintendent's office and, instead, proposed alternative activities to promote professional growth and teaching innovations in support of the school's educational goals. Staff participation is voluntary; tenured teachers also have the option of choosing a traditional classroom observation. Exempt from participation are teachers new to the school (both new and experienced) as well as any teacher in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory rating.

Alternative Activities

In one SBM/SDM school, the principal and participating teachers collaboratively developed alternative projects reflecting a wide range of innovative instructional strategies and other activities that supported their school's educational priorities. A sample of these includes:

■ Alternative Student Assessment. A number of teachers chose to participate in alternative student assessment activities in order to learn about portfolios and other alternative assessment techniques. Participating teachers also made presentations at faculty conferences where they described alternative assessment techniques and how they were using these techniques with particular students.

■ Research Projects. Several teachers did background reading and research for long-term school projects. One staff member researched a topic to develop as a thematic unit. Two others did background preparation to implement a school goal to restructure the fifth and sixth grades. Teachers then prepared reports summarizing their findings which they shared with their colleagues.

■ Peer Observations. Teachers who chose this alternative wrote up what they had learned from other teachers by observing such classroom activities as a hands-on math lesson, a reading class, and the organization of a science lesson that promoted active student learning.

■ Staff Development Workshops. To provide school-based staff development opportunities, a number of teachers prepared and presented workshops on a wide range of subjects. Topics included learning disabilities, materials and approaches to teach HIV/AIDS lessons, classroom management skills for new teachers, library skills for second and third grade teachers, and a whole language conference report.

■ Parent Involvement Activities. Some teachers conducted parent workshops on parenting skills held both during the day and in the evening in order to accommodate working parents. Resource room teachers also gave a workshop to help parents understand the learning disabled child. In addition, several teachers handled the orientation for new kindergarten parents. To document their alternative-to-observation, each teacher wrote up a summary of what they presented for their file.

School-based Staff Development

Facilitating the alternative-to-observation option was a strong commitment to school-based staff development on part of both administrators and teachers. They wanted to create an environment that supported formal and informal school-based staff development for all teachers. To this end, they jointly decided to hire out of the school's budget a part-time staff developer (a former teacher) for three days a week. This past year, her priorities included weekly individual mentoring for the school's 11 new teachers, working with all teachers through workshops and individual coaching to learn how to implement the school's philosophy of assertive student discipline, and providing any teacher in need of intensive assistance with appropriate intervention activities.

In addition, teachers, parents, and administrators actively pursued outside funding and program opportunities to enrich teachers' professional growth. For example, to strengthen its school-based staff development program, the school also applied for an SBM/SDM professional development grant to provide funds for such purposes as:

- providing consultants for staff development based on teachers' needs assessments

- scheduling staff retreats and meetings before or after school

- developing materials such as newsletters and grant proposals

- disseminating professional literature to school staff

Flexible Scheduling

Flexible school scheduling was also key so that teachers could work together or pursue professional development opportunities through conferences and school intervisitations. This was accomplished in several ways. For example:

- Time for Workshops. The school arranged with the superintendent to have extra staff development time in order to provide all teachers with whole language workshops taught by consultants who would then work individually with teachers as well.

■ **Substitute Teachers.** Hiring school substitutes who could cover different teachers' classes enabled the staff developer to work with teachers on an individual and group basis. This also made it possible for teachers to do intervisitations, brainstorm with each other about curriculum activities, etc.

■ **Common Preparation Periods.** The school occasionally utilized common preparation periods for groups of teachers during group student activities to enable teachers to work together on projects, etc.

As noted earlier, SBM/SDM schools which have initiated an alternative-to-observation option for satisfactory, tenured teachers have school cultures that encourage piloting innovative approaches to teaching; effective teacher, supervisor, and parent collaboration on professional development activities; and flexible school scheduling. As these schools continued to formulate their initial efforts, administrators and staff members noted that the:

wanted to explore how teachers can learn to give each other informal feedback as peers as well as how to institutionalize the alternative-to-observation performance review option in their school.

FACILITATING SCHOOL-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A middle-level school with nearly 1,400 students in grades five to eight is organized into four distinct houses in order to give students a cohesive sense of belonging to a smaller community, and provide teachers with opportunities to work together to share instructional strategies, develop special projects, discuss curriculum issues, set staff development priorities, and increase parent involvement, etc. While the school has been in operation for 11 years, many changes have occurred over the past seven or eight years, as teaching and administrative practices appropriate for each house have evolved.

Houses: Schools Within a School

Once students are assigned to a house, every effort is made to have them stay within the same house as long as they are in the school. While two houses contain activities that span different grades, (e.g., music, gym, library), "each house is essentially a school within a school, with differing instructional strategies and types of classrooms," noted an assistant principal. For example, one house may emphasize cooperative learning activities while another provides students with a more traditional learning approach. Fifth grade students have non-departmentalized classes; seventh and eighth grade students, however, have departmentalized classes for science, math, social studies, and language arts. All four houses also have resource rooms. In addition, the assistant principal and guidance counselor work as a team, collaborating with teachers to resolve student problems. Once a week, a mandated house-team meeting is scheduled so that all staff members can discuss issues specific to their house.

Parent Involvement

The house structure facilitates school communication with parents as well. If a parent contacts the school with a concern about his or her child, the parent can attend a house-team meeting and have all teachers present to discuss a problem: sometimes the child may also attend the meeting. Examples of problems that teams work through with parents include:

■ parents' concern that their child does not seem to have homework or tests

■ a drastic drop in a child's grades

■ a student who is cutting classes

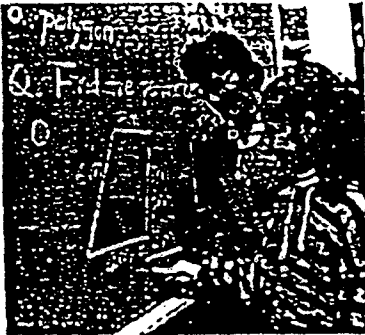■ a student who will be held over in terms of grade advancement the next school year

One staff person noted, "This approach helps clear up communication problems and barriers and issues get resolved quickly this way."

Professional Development

Within each house, teachers work together in four-member teaching teams on a self-selected basis. Team members discuss responsibilities for covering the curriculum as well as teaching strategies and materials, covering a wide range of topics at their weekly team meetings. The focus one week might be a demonstration lesson; the next week, curriculum issues; the third week, current educational research literature, etc. In addition, the school's staff development committee provides a vehicle for teachers to say, "We need staff development in this area." In addition, regular staff development activities (e.g., speakers, interschool visitations) take place for half a day on the first Monday of each month. Teachers also have access to the assistant principal's office for additional meetings.

Classroom intervisitations are common as well. "Having a visitor in the classroom isn't startling to either students or teachers.

There is a lot of self-motivated teacher interaction here," one staff member observed. The school library's media center also has a separate room for faculty with professional periodicals, as well as equipment such as a laminating machine, computer, laser printer, and scanner. In addition, the school librarian gets involved in classroom projects in order to provide teachers and students with access to appropriate books, magazines, videotapes, and reference sources.

Special Projects

One outcome of team collaboration has been the ongoing development of special projects that build on teachers' strengths and interests. For example:

■ **Multidisciplinary Curricula.** Seven magnet team teachers researched, planned, and collaborated with five seventh grade teachers to develop a thematic multidisciplinary project on colonial America that connected social studies, language arts, science, mathematics, music, and video arts.

■ **Intergrade Activities.** Promoting intergrade activities is a priority for other teams. When fifth and seventh graders were both studying the president's cabinet, teachers arranged for seventh graders to visit a fifth grade class to learn how these students were working on the same assignment. Another intergrade project started by other teachers is a buddy system so that eighth graders can be big brothers or sisters to fifth graders

■ **Mathematics-Science Projects.** Two sixth grade teachers researched experimental hands-on math projects to help students develop multi-level thinking skills in mathematics processes. A science teacher developed a "Jeopardy" game board to help his class review science units. He commented, "I like to make lessons as close to real life as possible. It helps get students interested in what they're learning."

■ **School Museum.** The school's museum highlights projects that children have developed through ongoing exhibits.

from other disciplines (e.g., art, English, library, technology). The topic of injustice was an ongoing theme of the course. Mini-observations focused on ways in which this theme utilized an integrated curriculum approach through lessons on *The Crucible*, *Huckleberry Finn*, slavery, strict vs. loose construction of the constitution, etc. Another topic, cultural diffusion, also involved integrated curriculum planning for lessons on music, masks, ritual, etc.

CLASSROOM AS LABORATORY

In the social studies department at another high school, the department chair and interested staff members developed a collegial process for teachers to explore pedagogical issues of interest to all participating teachers, e.g., "What can we do about this issue, using our classroom as a laboratory?" The assistant principal facilitated this process by encouraging teachers to experiment with new teaching methods, become part of a collegial team to observe each other's teaching, and then discuss what worked and what they would do differently. Participating teachers noted that such discussions helped to develop reflective teaching practices as well as meaningful teacher-as-researcher experiences (e.g., preparing protocols on why a teaching strategy is successful; why something works in a class).

Preparing Students for Essay Exams

One team of seven teachers chose to experiment with pre-writing teaching methods that would enable their students to more effectively prepare for essay exams. Participating teachers read and discussed relevant research on "scaffolding" and "fading"—techniques designed to give students initially high levels of structure (i.e., a scaffold) for completing a task, and, as they become more proficient, gradually reducing (i.e., fading) the amount of structure provided by the teacher. Teachers then prepared a series of lessons utilizing this technique. One teacher of American history had students work together in groups to organize their classroom notes and reading assignments around four broad

2 EXPANDING PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

In a number of high schools, on a departmental basis, teachers and assistant principals, with the support of their principal, have voluntarily collaborated to pilot alternative performance review activities such as collegial observations and voluntary videotaping for self-assessment in order to develop new teaching strategies to enhance student achievement. While teachers participated in other school-based professional development activities as well, they commented that they found these activities meaningful and stimulating with regard to their classroom teaching.

DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE WORK ENVIRONMENTS

As a means of encouraging teachers to talk with each other, share ideas, and break down barriers that frequently isolate staff, high school teachers and supervisors stressed the importance of building, over time, collaborative work environments. In a number of high schools, teachers and assistant principals noted that carefully planned collegial observation activities—whether arranged as informal classroom visitations or previously arranged observations—were effective approaches to developing more collaborative environments within their department and helped lay a foundation for staff to collaborate on team teaching projects, reflective teaching practices, and other activities which encouraged ongoing professional growth. Among different departments, this has entailed such activities as:

- encouraging *voluntary* participation by teachers for collegial observation activities

- arranging informal classroom visits for staff *throughout the year*

- using the departmental office for teachers to meet informally and share ideas

- scheduling the supervisor as the first to be observed by his or her teaching peers

Whether teachers wanted to participate in informal classroom intervisitations, peer observations, or collegial observation teams, assistant principals facilitated the process by arranging, when

Recent displays have focused on jungle habitats, poetry exhibits, celebrities, faculty show of teachers' hobbies, and a bodega setting.

■ **Media Center.** The media center in the library houses print, non-print, computer, and telecommunications resources. The librarian noted, "We fuse the resources of the library and technology to make the curriculum sing. Students have access to everything here. At the same time, we place a strong emphasis on teaching children social responsibility with the materials they use here in the library."

Commenting on the broad spectrum of projects taking place in the school, the assistant principal of one house commented, "We try to stay flexible and empower our staff. If a science teacher needs a double period so that his class can carry out a special lab assignment, we work it out. As a result, our teachers stay actively involved in teaching, right up to the end of school."

themes related to the impact of the Federalists and the Jeffersonian-Republicans. Based on their discussion, each group was also responsible for preparing two sentences that could be used as the basis for essay questions for the upcoming exam. Near the end of class, the teacher wrote each group's potential essay sentences on the chalkboard, and had students vote for the sentence they thought would most likely be used on the upcoming test. Examples of the "exam" sentences that students prepared included:

■ The legacy of the Federalists is felt more today than is the legacy of the Jeffersonian-Republicans.

■ The purchase of the Louisiana territory was contrary to the domestic and foreign philosophies of the Jeffersonians.

■ The Jeffersonian-Republican era was a major turning point in American history in terms of political, economic and social ideology.

Afterwards, the class analyzed why some sentences would be more likely to be used for essay questions than others.

Teachers noted that they had found this collegial process very useful. "How to support students in developing their writing skills is a major concern for us," one staff member remarked. "At the same time, I'm a social studies teacher and not trained to teach writing skills. However, by observing other teachers, I've learned some new methods to apply to my classroom. For example, one teacher told her class to write their essay for someone who knows very little about history (rather than for their teacher), and to define their terms as they wrote. Just this one instruction helps students learn how to write for a specific audience."

A first-year teacher, who had been invited by her supervisor to be part of the collegial observation team, commented that she had initially had a great deal of difficulty with student writing assignments because her instructions were too vague and what her students wrote bore little relation to what she had been teaching.

However, she found that watching more experienced teachers use the scaffolding techniques to give their students greater structure enabled her to adapt this process to her own classes. "At first, I thought that the issues that the collegial team were discussing were too complex for my level of experience. However, their discussions gave me a lot of new ideas that I could use, and being able to watch them teach showed me how to put these techniques into motion. This collegial observation process connected me with a network of experienced teachers from whom I could learn how to appropriately structure writing assignments for the level of my students."

Assessing Student Participation in Group Work

Another group of teachers, in conjunction with their supervisor, decided to work on the issue of student participation in group work. Toward this end, staff members developed an assessment instrument to determine the level of student interaction in group discussions. Using a scale of 1, 2, 3, or 4 to assess varying levels of student involvement, discussion, considerateness, and role responsibility, the teachers tested its effectiveness in their own classrooms during lessons involving group work. After observing each other's classes, they met to discuss the outcomes and make any necessary revisions in the instrument. Teachers also looked at how they could interact with their students to bring all their students to a level 4 performance. In addition, they asked their students to describe the qualities that they felt made a student a good group participant. "This was interesting feedback for us," noted one teacher, "because the students themselves came up with the same qualities that we had developed for our scale. We learned that students intuitively knew what makes a good group participant."

The department chair also arranged for the team members to discuss their work at a departmental conference, and actually demonstrate the different levels of student participation in group discussions for the rest of the department. The final performance

review report, reflecting the comments and observations of all team members, noted that "this type of collegial activity models the new teacher for the 21st century—a teacher who collaborates rather than isolates, who clinically examines practice rather than simply living with results."

DEMONSTRATION LESSONS

In the foreign languages department of another high school, some teachers have participated in collegial observation lessons in order to generate professional discussions about teaching and take the judgment out of the observation process. Each year, 20 to 25 demonstration lessons are announced and open to any teacher who wants to attend. Sometimes, as many as seven observers may participate; at other times, as few as two. Afterwards, the lesson provides the basis for an open discussion among colleagues.

Developmental Lesson

One demonstration lesson focused on a developmental foreign language lesson with the aim of teaching a specific verb structure. Several colleagues, including the department chair, a substitute teacher, and a former student teacher were observing this particular lesson. Afterwards, the teacher began the post-observation discussion with a self-evaluation of the lesson:

> This is a level one class. Today, they pleasantly surprised me in their responses. Yesterday, these same students were flat and I went home discouraged. There has been tremendous progress in this class in terms of the skills that they have developed since September. Many students have not had any previous foreign language experience. In the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, they have made even progress. I'm pleased with the year.

All of the staff who were present then analyzed each segment of the lesson (following an outline which the teacher had prepared)

and commented on some aspect of the lesson that had stood out for them. For example:

■ This lesson was a good example of going from the known to unknown. In the warm-up, you solidified what your students had learned yesterday by working through three model sentences, and then you moved to the unknown. But students first talked about what they had done previously.

■ Your timing was very good. Transitions from one part of the lesson to the next went smoothly and students were well-informed about what you were doing. You also involved everyone.

■ There was a momentum to the lesson which was maintained by effective use of questioning. You asked a question, paused, and then waited for the student to respond, rather than moving on to someone else or giving the answer yourself. It's difficult to deal with silence but everything should be elicited from the students.

■ You deliberately called on both students who volunteered and ones who didn't volunteer. While it's easier to go with the flow of students who volunteer; this approach maximized classroom participation.

■ You made a conscious effort to evaluate student responses. For example, you made corrections when students wrote responses on the blackboard, and if oral responses were incorrect, you allowed them to call on another student for the answer.

The department chair noted that a meaningful yardstick in evaluating one's own lesson was to assess the frequency and quality of student participation. However, he noted, it was important to go deeper, and ask, "Did I really develop *all* the skills? Integrating all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, writing—into a lesson requires a holistic approach; one can't separate the skills." Staff members then looked at why this particular lesson was able to accomplish this. They observed that:

- The aim of the lesson was realistic and adhered to throughout the lesson.

- There had been effective planning in terms of developing all the skills (i.e., the entire lesson had been thought through).

- The teacher explained various drill concepts so students understood exactly what was expected of them (e.g., substitution, repetition, transformation, cue response).

Homework and Tests

The teacher who gave the demonstration lesson also commented that explaining the homework assignment to students was very important. "At first, you must explain what's expected of them everyday, especially for first year students. Language is much more activity oriented and students need to know how to handle it. Then, in the second year, you need not explain as much about the homework." The same was true for tests, she added. "When you give a test to level one students it's very important to thoroughly explain every part of it. Students get upset if they don't understand the directions. If you have a lot of questions from students about some part of a test, then you should look at how you wrote the directions. How you formulate the test questions also has the same criticalness."

Open Exchange of Ideas

Near the end of the discussion, the assistant principal commented, "This process makes our department what it is. Classroom observation is not a secretive thing, we share strategies. We're not evaluating the teacher, our energy is spent on the lesson: the goal and activities. If something doesn't work, we'll talk about it. It's not a reflection on the teacher. If something about this lesson hadn't worked, we would have discussed what activities could have been done differently. We have a free exchange of ideas based on mutual respect. As a result, we have a good program here which meets the needs of our students."

TEAM TEACHING

> **"**
> *You get to try innovative approaches without being afraid of failure.*
> **"**

In still another high school, a group of teachers, in collaboration with their supervisor, participate in an ongoing series of collegial planning and observation activities throughout the year. Each year, teams of three teachers, choose a specific type of lesson to work on (e.g., cooperative learning activities, audio-visual lessons that engage students in active learning, or lessons that address individual student learning styles). By brainstorming and pooling their ideas and materials, teachers noted that they had developed a series of great lessons that expanded their repertoire of lessons for the future as well. They also noted that they had an opportunity to share various learning strategies such as the "report card scheme" which they could apply to a range of topics (e.g., What kind of report card would you give to each of these political candidates? to New Deal programs?)

To create time for teachers to plan together and observe each other's classes, their supervisor scheduled common preparation periods and flexible coverage for classes. After the team prepared a series of lessons, one teacher delivered one lesson to his or her students. Later in the period, the other teachers helped small groups of students carry out cooperative learning assignments. Afterwards, all three teachers met with their supervisor for a follow-up conference. Each staff member's comments about the lesson were included in the team observation report prepared by the supervisor. Participating teachers noted that they felt very enthusiastic about this approach. One teacher commented, "Sometimes it's more viable to use a team approach when developing something new." Another teacher added, "You get to try innovative approaches without being afraid of failure."

USING VIDEOTAPE FOR SELF ASSESSMENT

"

Once you get past the initial surprise of seeing yourself on video, it's a great way to learn about your own teaching style.

""

In some high schools, a teacher may choose to have his or her classroom teaching videotaped as a tool for self assessment. The teacher first takes the videotape home to watch and then decides whether to discuss it with his or her supervisor. If the teacher is unhappy with the videotape, arrangements can be made to work on aspects of teaching which need improvement and then retape the lesson. In one mathematics department, teachers and supervisors follow a guided self-analysis format when discussing videos, i.e.: (1) what I liked, (2) what I would adopt (from observing another teacher), and (3) what I would do differently. Some teachers have offered to have their videotapes shown at a faculty conference, while others have even wanted their students to watch them. A few departments are considering, as a staff development tool, a catalogued videotape library of different types of lessons in different subject areas.

Teachers noted that they could also develop a better understanding of how effectively their students were learning by watching their students on videotape. In addition, teachers could see things about themselves that they otherwise wouldn't notice, such as keeping their hands in their pockets, distracting gestures, or repetitive expressions. For one special education teacher, watching himself on videotape enabled him to see that he needed to make more frequent eye contact with students in order to hold their attention. "Once you get past the initial surprise of seeing yourself on video, it's a great way to learn about your own teaching style," commented another teacher.

Portfolio System

In addition, the committee recommended. and the staff agreed, that faculty members maintain annual portfolios. For tenured teachers, these would contain, at a minimum, one administrative evaluation, one peer evaluation, and one self evaluation. Portfolios for nontenured teachers would contain, at a minimum, two self evaluations, two peer evaluations, and two administrative evaluations. In addition, all teachers' portfolios would include two class sets of student evaluations for each cycle.

One faculty member observed that since staff are part of a learning community, how teachers model learning influences the way in which students learn. If teachers are authoritarian, students will learn to .be authoritarian. If teachers demonstrate self improvement as a goal, students will also learn this. Like the faculty, each student in the school also maintains a portfolio of his or her work throughout the year. Both staff and student portfolios are available for others to review and are used as a basis for presentations to peers.

Presentations to Peers

As a third initiative, the committee established a system for peer review and assessment which involved the entire staff. To allow the peer support groups to emphasize staff development, the committee chose to maintain a distinction between peers who provide support and those who evaluate. After much discussion and consultation with the staff, the committee recommended that at certain points in a staff member's career, he or she make a presentation before a peer evaluation team of four randomly-selected staff members (including someone from the personnel committee acting as chair) plus one member of the presenter's peer support group. All faculty members are reviewed by peer evaluation teams in their first and second years at the school. The teams then make recommendations regarding appointment, continuation of probation, tenure, and continued service. Tenured faculty members are reviewed every three years. "As

professionals, our commitment to professional growth needs to continue after tenure and we wanted a system to support this," noted a personnel committee member. The presentations help members of peer evaluation teams learn more about what teachers in other disciplines are doing as well as provide colleagues with an opportunity to affirm a teacher's contribution to the school. With the school's open teaching environment, any serious teaching problems tend to surface early in the school year, allowing staff and administration time to give an individual teacher intensive assistance and support, if needed.

Implementing a New System Over Time

Both the principal and staff stressed that the process of building up trust among faculty members did not happen overnight. "We took things one step at a time; too many efforts start all at once rather than gradually," noted the principal. Even so, the personnel committee chair said that working through all the issues required a lot of patience and willingness to hear everyone's concerns. Teachers also had to learn how to grapple with such issues as how to provide constructive feedback to colleagues and when to separate professional responsibilities from personal friendships with their peers. Working out the logistics to keep the process on track as well as creating time during the school day for teachers to work together remains an ongoing challenge. However, since staff developed this approach themselves, they also developed ownership of the process. In addition, the process is constantly being revised to meet changing needs and priorities.

As a result of implementing this system, "teaching has become a matter of public focus rather than a private concern discussed only between an individual teacher and supervisor behind closed doors," noted one faculty member. Another teacher commented that visitors to the school frequently asked why staff worked so hard and were so productive; she said she thought that the high level of collegial support was the reason. "It creates synergy on a group level and energy on an individual level."

3 CREATING PEER-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS IN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

> "
> *We view*
> *accountability as*
> *everything we do*
> *to maintain a*
> *healthy system*
> *that will enable*
> *staff and students*
> *to work and learn*
> *on a daily basis.*
> "

As described below, numerous alternative high schools are experimenting with innovative approaches to student learning as well as new forms of teacher assessment. The small size of these schools (e.g., student bodies ranging from 100 to 600) and alternative educational settings facilitate a high level of informal teacher interaction and collaboration. Teachers frequently observe each other's classes, team teach lessons, model new instructional strategies, or provide support for various student learning activities (e.g., teaching computer word processing commands for a social studies writing assignment). School visitors often sit in on classes as well, creating an atmosphere where teachers and students are accustomed to informal observations. To develop new experimental approaches for peer assessment and accountability, several alternative schools have either obtained a Board of Education-United Federation of Teachers contract waiver or utilized a school-based option; in addition, they worked out detailed school-based plans to carry out experimental approaches.

The staff and administration at many alternative schools are also engaged in looking at school accountability from a holistic perspective. "We view accountability as everything we do to maintain a healthy system that will enable staff and students to work and learn on a daily basis," a principal noted, "rather than as a way of assigning blame when things go wrong." In this context, teachers and supervisors are experimenting with a wide range of peer-assessment activities and establishing personnel policies that reflect this responsibility. Teachers "buy in" to the school's work culture when they are hired. "Teachers need to be flexible and willing to collaborate with others in order to feel compatible with this type of environment," another staff person observed.

CREATING A PEER SUPPORT AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

The staff and principal at an alternative high school serving approximately 400 limited English proficient students established a faculty personnel committee to explore alternative approaches to teacher evaluation. After much discussion and planning, the school prepared a detailed performance review plan which was approved by the Board of Education and the UFT. The premise

underlying this effort was to demonstrate that sharing leadership in a high school could foster the professional growth and development of teachers, which would, in turn, lead to the empowerment of students as successful learners. The committee was charged with developing several initiatives. The first one entailed establishing procedures for the recruitment and selection of new applicants for faculty positions. Staff members noted that by sharing the responsibility for school staffing, the entire faculty became invested in orienting and supporting new staff, and helping them succeed.

Supporting Ongoing Professional Growth

The second initiative involved a peer support and evaluation process designed to foster professional growth on the part of the teacher. As they discussed possible approaches, staff members noted that they began to change their view of evaluation from one of judgment to one of promoting development. Based on faculty discussions, the committee decided that the most helpful approach would be a model that combined self evaluation and peer evaluation in a sharing, supportive atmosphere. This entailed organizing the entire staff into self-selected peer support groups of three or four; the only requirement was that new staff members work with those who had been at the school longer, and that untenured teachers work with tenured teachers.

Each group first identified goals for self improvement as teachers or guidance counselors. "Individuals have a greater commitment when they assess their own needs, and their standards are higher when they set their own goals," one staff member observed. Peer groups were intended to eliminate isolation among teachers and provide a vehicle for sharing with colleagues. "Interdisciplinary peer support groups seem to work especially well," the principal observed. "We are continually developing interdisciplinary curricula for our students and this gives teachers an ongoing reason to observe each other and work together over a period of time."

INITIATING TEAM TEACHING ON A SCHOOL-WIDE BASIS

Developing collaborative work cultures in alternative high school settings has challenged many teachers to develop new ways of working together as professionals and provide each other with constructive feedback and assessment of their teaching activities. In the process, staff members have frequently discovered new vehicles for professional growth as well as new formats for school accountability. For example, beginning with English and social studies classes, 14 staff members at one school initiated team teaching in groups of 2, 3, or 4 members as a means of developing a more integrated school curriculum. With the principal and site coordinator serving as project facilitators, teachers volunteered to work with each other and redesigned the school schedule to accommodate the team teaching classes. Most team teaching took place between 10:00 A.M. and 12:00 noon and from 1:00 to 3:00 P.M. on Fridays; planning times for staff were arranged throughout the rest of the day. Teachers still taught classes individually as well.

Working Through Issues of Team Teaching

Team teaching put teachers into situations where they had to be responsible for each other as well as responsible for what was happening in the class (e.g., how to plan the course, how to select materials, how to organize assignments). They also saw that different colleagues had different teaching styles. Initially, some teams scripted out lessons in terms of what they were going to say minute by minute. During the first year, staff had to work out many issues—personality differences, on and off time, and scheduling, etc. Teachers discovered that while they might like another person they might not work well as a team. At the end of the year, however, the staff decided that while they had encountered a thousand snags, they wanted to keep at it because, as one staff member noted, "something good was happening; we were starting to break down the boundaries of individual disciplines." Teachers also liked the idea of being together; no one wanted to leave the team teaching project. By the end of the second year, many of the initial problems had been resolved. "The longer you keep at it, the easier it becomes," one staff member remarked. Students also seemed to respond in a positive way. "For many students, the team teaching course became their most important class; it had the most excitement for them," he noted. Based on the staff's experience, the coordinator observed:

> A group of teachers needs to be ready to do team teaching—that is, have talked about it, see the purpose of it, and be able to integrate it. Otherwise, it will be a fad and when staff hit a rough spot, they will drop it. We spent a lot of time talking before committing to it. It's good to look at different models, and then adapt what will work for you. There are a lot of ideas coming out in education; selecting the ones you adopt should depend on who your students are.

When interviewing prospective new staff members, the coordinator commented, "We let them know who we are, what our culture is like and that everyone will be working on a team, i.e., this is how we work—our philosophy."

Integrating New Staff Members

Staff members found that team teaching also helped to bring new teachers on board and integrate them with the school. Teams provided informal professional development opportunities as well, and each teacher took techniques learned from colleagues back to his or her individual class. Experienced teachers also modeled techniques for new teachers. The coordinator commented, "This kind of pairing provides balance because new teachers bring in current literature and this creates dialogue. For experienced teachers, it is rejuvenating; for new teachers, it's a great experience."

Role of Facilitator

For team teaching to succeed, staff stressed that the role of the group leader was critical in terms of facilitating communication and good work relations as well as effective use of planning time. In addition, common prep time was a must along with mechanisms for feedback and venting—sharing feelings, reflecting, and reviewing what was happening. "It's essential to encourage dialogue. This type of approach can't be top down," one teacher noted. Staff members were also learning how to use team teaching as a teaching assessment tool without creating judgment about colleagues. One approach was to do a team write-up of their experience. In addition, the conflict resolution and cooperative learning techniques that teachers used with students were influencing staff relationships as well, and helping teachers to learn strategies for giving honest feedback in a supportive way. It was also important to provide time for teachers to meet at the end of a course to reflect on how they worked as a group and share what worked and what didn't work. In addition, staff developed a formal intervention process that included the site coordinator and principal when problems arose that teachers could not resolve with each other.

The principal and coordinator also visited teachers' classrooms. "Staff frequently ask me to stop by. Sometimes teachers ask to be

observed, especially if they want feedback on something new," the coordinator commented. He mentioned that he frequently makes informal visits as well in order to pick up the tone of a class. The principal noted that sometimes he directed his observation write-ups to the students as well as the teachers so that everyone could have the benefit of feedback.

DEVELOPING A REPERTOIRE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

Other alternative high schools are developing approaches to teacher assessment and professional development that stress a broad range of self-assessment techniques, reflective teaching activities, and peer coaching. After determining specific goals, each teacher meets with either the principal and/or his or her peer coach to plan mutually how to monitor professional growth, and work out schedules for classroom intervisitations, peer coaching sessions, clinical supervision, videotaping, and portfolio roundtable discussions, etc., during the year. At the end of the year, each teacher has a year-end conference with the principal to review goals.

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Facilitating Adult Learning

One principal noted that the learning theory behind this approach to supervision and staff development was based on the assumption that teachers, like their students, need to be active participants in constructing new knowledge for themselves. She cited the following research literature:

> Much of our knowledge about learning remains unused in classrooms not because teachers are unwilling to use it, but because they have not been given the opportunity and the time to work with the concepts and practices in order to relate them to their own knowledge, experience, and context—to truly make them their own.[3]

This viewpoint, the principal noted, had broad implications for the role of supervisors, how data on the teaching-learning process

[3] James Nolan and Pam Francis. "Changing Perspective in Curriculum and Instruction." Supervision in Transition. (Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1992). pp. 44-60.

are collected and analyzed, and how to provide teachers with feedback on their respective teaching styles and activities. Rather than being a critic or judge, the purpose of supervision becomes one of improving teaching by helping teachers acquire a deeper understanding of the teaching-learning process. Feedback focuses on (1) reinforcing good practices, and (2) teaching how to improve one's skills. "Just telling people what they do wrong doesn't work," commented the principal, "For example, rather than focusing on a teacher's inflexibility, a supervisor would comment on a teacher's progress toward flexibility."

Peer Coaching

Toward this end, the school has adopted a peer coaching model—distinct from staff development in that it has a one-on-one rather than a group focus, and provides more specific direction for an individual teacher. Faculty noted that it also facilitates staff interaction. Staff members interested in serving as peer coaches apply for the position. Through peer coaching, one teacher noted, the school tries to set up a safe environment for teachers to support each other in terms of professional growth. For example, the emphasis in peer coaching would not be on what's wrong with a lesson; rather, participants would discuss problems they all had in common and brainstorm for ideas and solutions.

The staff is organized into teaching teams of six teachers, and teachers on each team meet for two hours a week to discuss teaching strategies; a peer coach works with each team. Team members collaborate to develop lesson plans and everyone informally observes each other's classes as well. In addition, teachers experiment with new teaching approaches and student assessment.

Classroom Intervisitations

Classroom intervisitations are also designed to encourage reflective thinking. Typical questions teachers are asked to discuss with each other following intervisitations include:

■ How well were goal(s) met?

■ How well were students engaged in learning?

■ What did you learn about engaging students? Approaching subject matter?

■ How was student learning determined?

■ How much modeling did you see?

■ Were there high expectations for quality work?

■ How much input did students have in what they were learning?

■ How well were disciplines connected? (if appropriate)

Building on their experience with student portfolios, teachers are also experimenting with roundtable discussions using their own teaching portfolios. Discussions range from highlighting aspects of their teaching about which they are especially pleased to soliciting input on problematic instructional issues. Portfolio contents might include lesson plans, examples of student work, reports teachers have written, curriculum guides, journal articles, etc. Staff members were also considering taking their portfolios on a staff retreat and reviewing them as part of an end-of-year reflection process. The principal cautioned, however, that it had taken time for the school's faculty to be willing to interact with each other in this way:

> Nurturing this type of collaboration and openness among teachers and supervisors is a step-by-step process. It takes time to build trust. You have to go slow and in stages. We do not consider assessment a summative evaluation; rather, it's an ongoing process to help staff continue to grow and improve their teaching skills; everyone can always improve. The purpose of accountability is to help us reach our goals, not to emphasize whose fault it is.

The principal concluded that, over the next two years, she hoped to have the staff develop these and other self-assessment techniques more fully so that they would have an array of vehicles for ongoing professional growth.