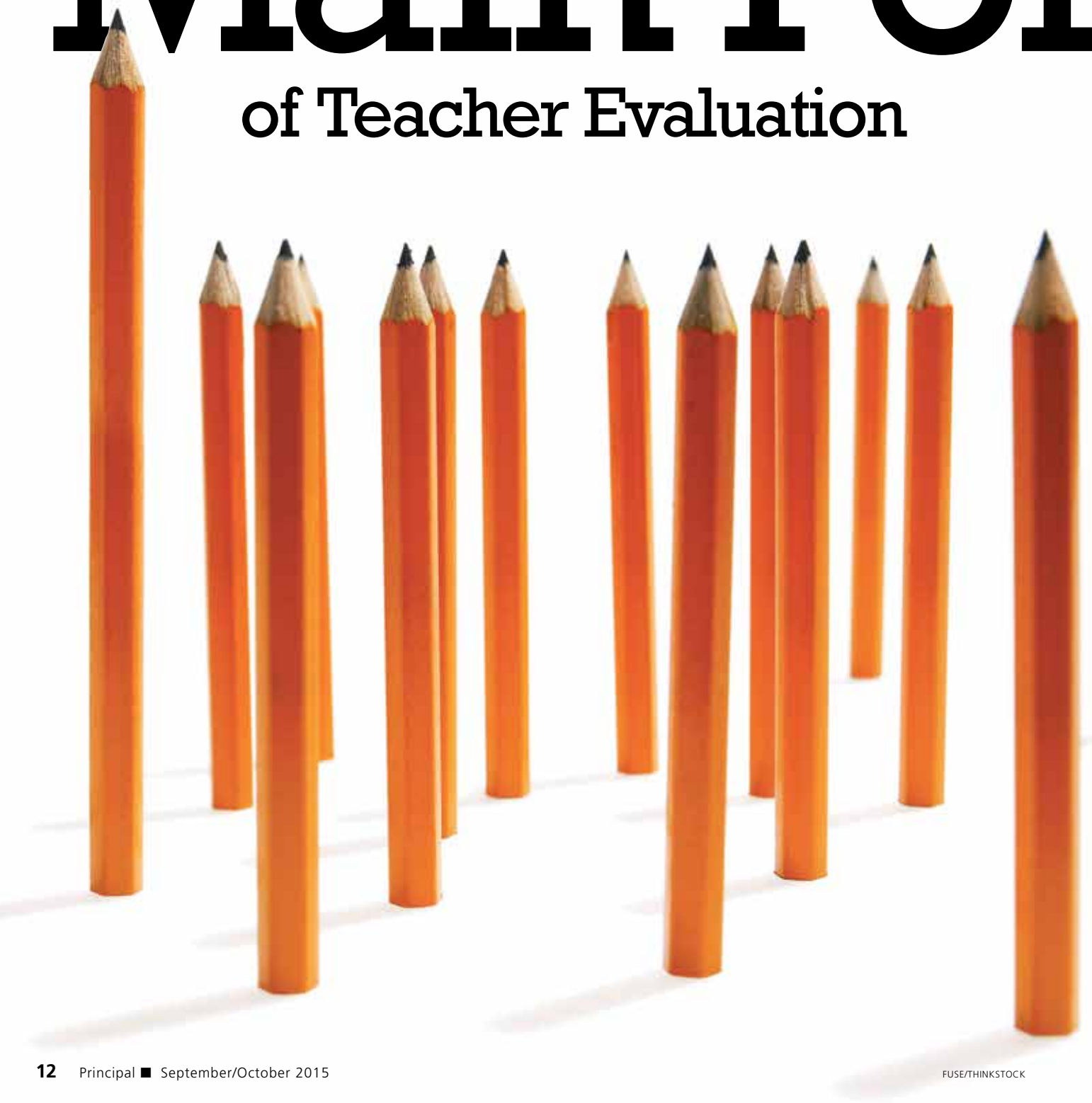


The Main Point

of Teacher Evaluation



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To help teachers grow, principals must take on the combined role of supervisor and evaluator.

By John F. Eller and Sheila A. Eller

The job of a building principal has become increasingly complex. Adding to that complexity is the expectation that school leaders help their staff members to grow and improve. This expectation has become an integral part of the new teacher evaluation processes that are being implemented across the country,

which require principals to do more than rate or evaluate the performance of their teachers. Now, principals are expected to work with their teachers to help them improve their performance.

In our new book, *Score to Soar: Moving Teachers from Evaluation to Professional Growth*, we discuss many ideas and strategies principals can use to help their teachers to grow. In this article, we will highlight several of these ideas.

Supervision vs. Evaluation

Two important roles govern the work of principals in teacher evaluation: evaluation and supervision.

In evaluation, a principal's major responsibility is to measure or assess the effectiveness of a teacher in relation to a set of standards. In teacher evaluation, the principal uses the data to rate or score the teacher's performance. In some cases, the data are used to make decisions about whether to retain a teacher or move him or her forward in the continuing contract process.

In supervision, a principal's major responsibilities are to measure the effectiveness of the teacher for improvement or growth purposes. Information gathered from the supervision process can be used to determine professional development priorities and content, coaching support, professional learning community priorities, and other functions related to the growth of a teacher.

While it might appear that these roles are able to be separated, the truth is that most principals must integrate these roles together in their work with all their teachers. Keeping track of everyone's strengths and limitations and comparing performances with all of the other teachers in the building makes the task even more complex.

Integrating the roles of evaluation and supervision requires that principals understand the various skills needed for each role. Moving between the roles of evaluator and supervisor takes a high level of expertise. Principals who are able to make the shift seamlessly possess a distinct set of skills. The table on page 15 outlines the roles of evaluator and supervisor and the specific skills principals should possess to manage their teachers.

Working With New Teachers

Principals typically work with teachers who have a wide range of experiences, needs, strengths, and limitations. While this diverse range of performance makes the work interesting, it can also make providing adequate supervision a challenge.

New teachers bring a fresh perspective and new ideas to a school. They also bring needs that impact how a principal should work with them in the supervision/evaluation process. Many new teachers have not developed the frames of reference they need to make instructional decisions, evaluate their lessons and make improvements, and monitor their teaching and adjust their instruction during their lessons. One of our jobs in supervising new teachers is to provide them the feedback and information related to their teaching performance to build their frames of reference.

New teachers learn by trying out strategies they learn from others and their own experiences. They need information and ideas to help

them develop a strong frame of reference and toolkit of strategies.

In supervising new teachers, the focus should be on assessing their performance, then providing them with information to help them develop their skills. New teachers need to receive feedback about their performance. They need to be provided with information about what is effective in their teaching and “taught” the areas they need to improve. Some of this needed information can be provided by peer coaches, mentors, and colleagues, but they need clear and specific feedback from their principal.

Principals often communicate the level of performance they observe in teachers through a face-to-face instructional conference. Each instructional conference should include a learning element for the teacher. To improve, new teachers need additional information about their performance efforts, so their conferences should include information to help them build their frame of reference related to teaching skills. If new teachers are exposed to learning new ideas during their instructional conferences with their principals, they will learn and be able to implement new instructional strategies. These new strategies will help them to deal with new situations they encounter in their teaching.

Conferences for new teachers should include specific feedback about:

- What happened during the observation;
- What was effective and why it was effective; and
- What areas of improvement or refinement are needed, why, and how to make the changes.

Specific feedback in these areas will help new teachers gain the new ideas and strategies they need to build up their toolkit and frames of reference. As new teachers gain more experience, they will begin to try or develop new tactics to address the new issues they face in the classroom. Over time, they will have several strategies to use in a given situation.

Helping Good Teachers Get Even Better

Good teachers may need new ideas and challenges to help keep them at the top of their game and growing. As principals, it is important to provide them with opportunities to stretch themselves a bit. Some teachers need an opportunity to critically examine their own practice, reflect on it, and be coached to improve. Good teachers also need to have an opportunity to have data other than classroom observations used in their supervision process. These alternative data sources could include discussions on instructional units, professional learning community work, leadership experiences, feedback from students, and a variety of other nonclassroom information. Using information from other sources outside of their classroom performance allows teachers to look at the big picture of everything they do as a teacher.

When teachers are encouraged to look at information sources other than just their classroom performance, they can find exciting areas of growth. For example, a teacher we know had a significant role outside of the classroom in providing professional development to other teachers. Her principal included an observation of her conducting a professional development session in her supervision process. The teacher received feedback for the first time in this area.

As a result of this feedback, she selected a professional growth goal in the area of conducting professional development sessions. This teacher was very motivated to grow in this area. The skills she gained helped her do a better job in conducting workshops, and she also used what she learned back in her classroom to enhance her teaching. If she had not been encouraged to look at the alternative data source of her outside professional development as a part of the supervision process, she may never have had the chance to grow in this area.

Many veteran teachers are looking for continued growth and challenges, while others are simply trying to survive in the classroom. It's a good idea to think about the teachers you work with and their particular needs so you can tailor your supervision strategies to be beneficial to them.

Veteran teachers who are meeting the instruc-

WEB TOOLS

Want to implement the ideas in this article? Access the following resources to deepen your knowledge.

- **Solution Tree.** Free resources related to the book, *Score to Soar: Moving Teachers From Evaluation to Professional Growth* by John and Sheila Eller www.solution-tree.com/free-resources/leadership/ss
- **Teaching Channel.** Features teaching ideas, videos, and other strategies principals can use to help their teachers learn and grow. www.teachingchannel.org
- **Learning Sciences Marzano Center.** Website features resources principals can use with teachers. www.marzanocenter.com/teacher-evaluation
- **Danielson Group** Information and resources for principals and teachers. danielsongroup.org



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Roles and Skills for Teacher Evaluation

ROLE	MAJOR SKILLS/PROCESSES REQUIRED OF THE SUPERVISOR
Evaluation Evaluating, Rating, or Grading the Performance of Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the teaching performance standards; • Prioritize the teaching performance standards that are most important or essential based on student learning needs within the school or district; • Determine the level of performance of individual teachers in relation to teaching performance standards; • Determine the gap between the actual and the desired teaching performance; and • Determine the likelihood that the teacher can learn the skills to close the gap between the actual and expected performance.
Supervision Gathering Information to Assist in the Development of Individual Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the teaching performance standards; • Prioritize the teaching performance standards that are most important or essential based on student learning needs within the school or district; • Determine the level of performance of individual teachers in relation to teaching performance standards; • Identify the difference between the teacher's performance and the required level of performance; • Identify the skills or strategies needed to meet the teaching performance standards; and • Identify the resources to assist the teacher in gaining the skills needed to reach the teaching performance standards.
Supervision Gathering Information to Assist in the Development of a Group of Employees or the Entire School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the teaching performance standards; • Prioritize the teaching performance standards that are most important or essential based on student learning needs within the school or district; • Determine the level of performance for the entire group in relation to the teaching performance standards; • Identify the difference between the group's performance and the required level of performance on the teaching performance standards; • Identify the skills or strategies needed to help the group meet the performance expectations in relation to the teaching performance standards; and • Identify the resources to assist the group in gaining the skills needed to reach the performance expectations in relation to the teaching performance standards.

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tional, teaching performance standards may benefit from instructional, face-to-face conferences that include the following components:

- An opportunity to share their intended outcomes for the experience being discussed;
- An opportunity to share their perceptions of the effectiveness of the experience being discussed and the rationale for their perceptions;
- Specific feedback about the observer's perceptions of the experience being discussed and the evidence the observed used to draw these conclusions; and
- An opportunity to plan how to use what was gained from the conferencing experience to grow as a teacher.

When conferencing with teachers who are performing at a high level, it's important to use specific language to communicate feedback. For example, it may be more accurate to recommend that an area needs refinement when minor adjustments are

needed rather than say the teacher "needs improvement." Principals should aim to use language that promotes growth rather than language that makes a teacher feel devalued or under attack.

Next Steps

As you work with your teachers in the evaluation process, think about how you can tie together some of the existing processes to help your teachers grow. In the long run, you'll find it helpful and you'll be able to keep your staff growing and improving so they can continue to provide exceptional learning experiences for your students. 

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