
Applying the Standards

Personnel evaluations and the standards that guide them affect every professional employee within an education organization, whether in the role of evaluatee, evaluator, or user of the information. Consultants, researchers, and developers in the field of personnel evaluation also should be cognizant of these standards. Regardless of role, the Joint Committee suggests five steps in applying these standards:

1. Become very familiar with the standards.
2. Clarify your purpose for applying the standards.
3. Review and select one or more appropriate standards.
4. Apply the standards you have selected.
5. Based on your application of the standards, decide on and implement a course of action.

The following sections present each of these five steps in greater detail, illustrated by an extended case study example.

Step 1: Become Very Familiar With the Standards

The first recommendation is to become very familiar with all the standards to develop an overall understanding of their interconnectedness and direct relationship to the various attributes of sound evaluation. While the standards do not attempt to recognize or recommend any specific design of personnel evaluation (e.g., observation/checklist, rubric/evidence, performance-based, summative/formative, etc.), they most appropriately are used to guide the sound development and implementation of any system. Each standard addresses areas most applicable to specific concerns or issues related to either development or implementation. Understanding the overall function of each standard will help the user target those most useful to a particular application.

Reading the book may be the most effective means of establishing familiarity with all the standards. This book is organized conveniently to lead the reader in a number of

different approaches. You may wish to begin with reading only the explanation and rationale in the overview section of each standard chapter. An examination of the guidelines and common errors for each standard also may prove useful as a first step in understanding each standard. Illustrative cases provide examples of actual practice directly related to each standard. Just reading the standard statements without examining at least some part of the supporting sections may be misleading.

Another way to become familiar with the standards and their application is to read supporting literature (suggestions can be found at the end of each chapter and in the References) or attend workshops and conference presentations. Such annual conferences as those for the CREATE National Evaluation Institute, the American Evaluation Association, and the American Educational Research Association generally offer papers and presentations directly related to this field of work.

Step 1: Specific Case Application

A preconference workshop offered at the CREATE National Evaluation Institute provided the opportunity for teams of educators from districts around the country to come together to examine and apply *The Personnel Evaluation Standards*. Each participating district had teams composed of district-level administrators, building-level administrators, and, in two cases, teachers. The first step of the process was to review the entire set of standards as a team. The workshop facilitators provided an overview of the standards, their development, and their potential uses.

Step 2: Clarify Your Purpose for Applying the Standards

The second step, once you have become familiar with the standards, is to decide your primary purpose for applying them. Do you want to develop a new model of personnel evaluation? Does your district need to select from among several existing models? Does your university or college department need to revise an existing system of awarding tenure? Do you simply want to ensure that the current procedures and policies of your district personnel system are fair, appropriate, and effective?

An assessment of your current system of personnel evaluation is usually an excellent beginning for clarifying your purpose. The Key Question resource starting on page 20 provides additional guidance in examining current practice. For example, if the standards of performance for teachers have changed significantly since the development of your current process, then a revision of the process to better address these new performance standards would be in order. It also may be that you would need to adopt an entirely new process or develop one on your own.

Unfortunately, school districts often wait until personnel evaluations result in grievances and lawsuits to evaluate their current system for flaws such as lack of training for evaluators, improper storage of personnel records, missed deadlines, and so forth that may have contributed to grievance incidents. While it is never possible to

Step 2: Specific Case Application

After examining the standards during the preconference workshop, District A determined that its current process of teacher evaluation and the Key Questions for each standard needed to be adjusted, as did several procedures in its current system. Of primary concern was the lack of training for new administrators. Several years prior to this workshop, the district had adopted a new model of teacher evaluation that required extensive training and expense. An outside consultant worked with the district for two years to develop the evaluation skills of all principals and assistant principals. The staff developer for the district assumed training duties once the contract with the consultant expired. The staff developer, however, was no longer in that position, and her replacement had not placed teacher evaluation training as a high priority. This resulted in new administrators beginning to evaluate with little or no training.

This seemed like an easy deficiency to fix by arranging for two or three days of training for all administrators; however, as the team began delving further into the Key Questions, it discovered that personnel records also were being managed inappropriately. Since there was no real oversight of the evaluators other than checking off completed evaluations at the end of each school year, the reports often were not filed properly and might sit stacked on a desk at the central office for several weeks. The district team was not sure whether anyone checked for proper signatures and dates.

In addition to these concerns, the district team began questioning whether the issue of diversity among the teaching staff was addressed appropriately. While this would certainly overlap with the training of evaluators, the team thought that with a growing population of immigrants in their district, the personnel evaluation system should provide safeguards against unfair treatment due to cultural, racial, or other differences.

totally avoid human error in judgment, a sound system of personnel evaluation will greatly reduce the risk of errors caused by improper procedures or policies.

Step 3: Review and Select One or More Appropriate Standards

Once the purpose has been defined, the Functional Table of Contents is an excellent resource to identify the most pertinent standards applicable to most uses of the standards. If your purpose is not found there, a quick review of the standards and their explanations may help focus your application. Each set of standards is organized into four attributes of sound evaluation: *Propriety, Utility, Feasibility, and Accuracy*. If, for example, the question arises concerning the practicality of your process in terms of resources available, you may wish to begin with the Feasibility standards. Cross-references to other standards within the contents of each standard chapter may lead you to other pertinent standards in other attributes.

Step 3: Specific Case Application

The team from District A reviewed the Functional Table of Contents and the Key Questions to select specific standards applicable to the issues raised by the examination of its current system. To work more efficiently in the time allotted for the workshop, the six-member team divided into three pairs, each of which examined specific standards relevant to one issue.

The first pair of teammates examined the issue of lack of consistent training for evaluators. Of the 22 standards listed, they used the standards' explanations to focus on those most pertinent to their district's concerns, which included the following: P4, P5, P6, U3, U5, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, and A10.

The second pair of teammates examined the issues surrounding the team's concerns regarding lack of oversight of personnel records. While there did not seem to be a specific category for this in the Functional Table of Contents, the pair decided to use the overview of the standards provided in the morning session and the Key Questions to select the most relevant standards to consider. They decided to target the following: P2, P3, P7, U5, F1, F3, A4, and A7. This pair decided to examine these standards to create a chart of appropriate application, the existing deficits within their current system, and possible remedies.

The final team pair was charged to look at issues of diversity among the population of teachers and the fairness of the current policies and procedures of the existing system. The Functional Table of Contents provided an entire section of suggested standards for evaluating individuals from diverse backgrounds. The third pair decided to examine their current system in light of all these standards.

Step 4: Apply the Standards You Have Selected

How you go about using the standards once they have been selected depends on your purpose. If your purpose is to ensure that your current system of teacher evaluation is being used appropriately, you might want to review the Utility Standards and reflect on practices as suggested by specific standards to adjust practice as necessary.

If you are engaged in developing a personnel evaluation system, this would require a much more extensive application of the standards. You might choose to develop a checklist of your own or use the one on page 17 to determine whether your system meets, partially meets, or does not meet each standard. You could then make adjustments as required to meet the standards.

Another purpose for an extensive application of the standards involves a metaevaluation of a current system. Metaevaluation requires an accurate and complete examination of all current policies, procedures, documents, uses, and other aspects of a personnel evaluation system against the practices outlined by the standards. This may involve examining a large selection of completed personnel records to check signatures, dates, comments, ratings, and so forth. It also may involve interviews or focus groups of

evaluatees and evaluators to determine appropriateness of such activities as interactions, balance of comments, extent of follow-up, and professional development. A careful reading of all pertinent policies and laws is essential to determine the system's legal and political viability, appropriateness of policies and procedures, and orientation.

This level of examination may be viewed as too time consuming and demanding for school district administrators and staff who have many other pressing duties and responsibilities. Nevertheless, a sound personnel evaluation system is essential to a district's ability to meet expected goals. A district may conduct a metaevaluation in stages based on level of concern. For example, the district may schedule the metaevaluation extending over a period of time to focus on specific aspects such as storage of personnel information and appropriate procedures for conducting evaluations. Such a systematic approach will alleviate undue burden on district staff. Another approach would be to hire an outside consultant with expertise in this type of evaluation. In either case, knowledge of the standards by district administrators who will oversee the project will ensure more useful outcomes.

Step 4: Specific Case Application

The District A teammates reviewed their selected standards. Then they used the form on pages 18–19 to rate the current level of application for each of the selected standards based on the review of their system. Each pair was able to determine which of the selected standards were met, partially met, or not met at all. They also were able to eliminate some of the standards as not being applicable to their situation once they had reviewed them. By completing this checklist based on the evidence provided by examining their current practices and their understanding of the standards, the teammates were able to develop a list of recommendations for improvement.

Step 5: Decide On and Implement a Course of Action

Just knowing that your personnel evaluation system does not fully meet certain standards is an appropriate start, but inadequate for providing your organization with a sound system. Action must be taken to correct any deficiencies that prevent fair and useful evaluations of personnel. This action may range from putting appropriate training and support in place for evaluators to more extensive revision or replacement of the current system. The development of a plan for improving a system of personnel evaluation is essential to correcting such deficiencies. Such a plan should be based on the standards and best practices.

Applying the standards to personnel evaluation systems can result in effective management of human resources, which is necessary to attain organizational goals. A great deal of money, energy, and manpower can be expended in correcting errors made as a result of poor personnel evaluation. Good teachers may be lost to the system.

Step 5: Specific Case Application

District A teammates came back together as a group to compare their lists of the standards not met or only partially met within their current teacher evaluation system with respect to the issues each pair examined. Where they found overlap among the findings of the different pairs, they eliminated duplication to make a more concise list.

As a group, they developed a list of recommendations for correcting deficiencies between actual practice and that recommended by the standards to take back to their district for discussion with a broader range of stakeholders. The team then agreed on a plan of action that included steps to introduce the standards to the district, solicit suggestions, and offer recommendations for improvement within a specific timeline.

Other, poor performing teachers may be allowed to continue, resulting in lower student achievement gains if appropriate procedures are not in place to set explicit criteria for necessary follow-up and professional development. Unfair evaluations may occur if evaluators are not trained adequately to guard against bias or to analyze the context of the performance correctly. In some cases, effective teachers may be evaluated unfairly, resulting in their loss to the district or university simply due to poor procedures.

Checklist for Applying the Standards

The Personnel Evaluation Standards guided the following activities (check one):

- Development of a personnel evaluation system
- Review and revision of existing personnel evaluation system
- Training of evaluators
- Selection of a personnel evaluation system
- Other: _____

Check the roles of all involved in the activity selected above:

- Consultant
- State department level administrators or staff
- Superintendent
- Assistant/associate/deputy superintendent
- District level director
- Building level administrator
- Teacher
- Parent
- School board member
- Union representative
- Other(s): _____

Check the type of organization for which the personnel evaluation system was intended:

- State
- University department
- College
- Graduate school
- Community college
- Regional education services
- Public school district (pre-K–12)
- Independent school
- Grade level configuration: _____
- Charter school
- Grade level configuration: _____

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To interpret the information provided on this form, the reader needs to refer to the full text of *The Personnel Evaluation Standards*. Following the review (either by an individual or committee) of the personnel evaluation system in question against these standards, please rate the appropriate level of implementation for each standard using the scale below.

The standard was Met M The standard was Not Met NM
 The standard was Partially Met PM The standard was Not Applicable NA

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<i>P Propriety Standards</i>		
P1 Service Orientation		
P2 Appropriate Policies and Procedures		
P3 Access to Evaluation Information		
P4 Interactions With Evaluatees		
P5 Comprehensive Evaluation		
P6 Conflict of Interest		
P7 Legal Viability		
<i>U Utility Standards</i>		
U1 Constructive Orientation		
U2 Defined Uses		
U3 Evaluator Qualifications		
U4 Explicit Criteria		
U5 Functional Reporting		
U6 Follow-Up and Professional Development		
<i>F Feasibility Standards</i>		
F1 Practical Procedures		
F2 Political Viability		
F3 Fiscal Viability		

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
A Accuracy Standards		
A1 Valid Judgments		
A2 Defined Expectations		
A3 Analysis of Context		
A4 Documented Purposes and Procedures		
A5 Defensible Information		
A6 Reliable Information		
A7 Systematic Data Control		
A8 Bias Identification and Management		
A9 Analysis of Information		
A10 Justified Conclusions		
A11 Metaevaluation		

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Linking Standard Statements to Key Questions of Evaluatee Evaluations

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Standard Statement</i>	<i>Key Questions</i>
PROPRIETY	P1—Service Orientation	<p>Are job descriptions clearly written and understood by both evaluatees and evaluators?</p> <p>Are these job expectations aligned with district goals and sound educational practice?</p>
	P2—Appropriate Policies and Procedures	<p>Are policies regarding all aspects of evaluatee evaluation written, adopted by governing boards, and available to all evaluatees and evaluators as well as other stakeholders?</p> <p>Is there oversight of the process to ensure consistency and the evaluator's fairness of judgment?</p>
	P3—Access to Evaluation Information	<p>Is the information gathered during an evaluation protected and held confidential?</p> <p>Is a process in place to ensure that only those with a legitimate purpose have access to personnel evaluations?</p>
	P4—Interactions With Evaluatees	<p>Are safeguards and oversights in place to ensure that evaluators conduct all interactions (both written and verbal) in a professional, constructive manner?</p> <p>Is a process in place to address incidences of unprofessional interactions with evaluatees?</p>
	P5—Comprehensive Evaluation	<p>Do procedures and expectations allow both strengths and weaknesses to be identified rather than focusing solely on the deficits of performance?</p> <p>Are the ratings conducive to differentiating among levels of performance?</p>
	P6—Conflict of Interest	<p>Are safeguards and oversights in place to ensure that preexisting conditions or events would not compromise the evaluator's ability to be fair and unbiased?</p>

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Standard Statement</i>	<i>Key Questions</i>
PROPRIETY	P7—Legal Viability	Does the evaluation process meet all federal, state, and local laws and guidelines, including those established through collective bargaining? Do those involved generally agree that the evaluations are fair and efficient?
	U1—Constructive Orientation	Does the evaluation process reflect the institution’s goals and mission? Is a process in place that aligns feedback and professional development based on evaluation with the institution’s goals and mission?
UTILITY	U2—Defined Uses	Have all users (evaluatee, administrators, school board members, etc.) of the evaluation process been clearly identified from the beginning of the evaluation cycle? Have the uses for the information (dismissal, tenure, merit pay, etc.) been clearly identified?
	U3—Evaluator Qualifications	Have all the evaluators received appropriate training in the evaluation process? Have those who manage the records received appropriate training, and do they hold appropriate credentials?
	U4—Explicit Criteria	Do the criteria reflect only the job expectations of those evaluated? Are criteria for one group used for another group with unrelated job expectations (i.e., an evaluation form for teachers used for guidance counselors)?
	U5—Functional Reporting	Is there a system of oversight to ensure that all reports generated by the evaluator meet deadlines and provide useful, accurate information?

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<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Standard Statement</i>	<i>Key Questions</i>
UTILITY	U6—Follow-Up and Professional Development	<p>Is a structure in place to allow the data generated by evaluations to be used in developing professional development plans?</p> <p>Are procedures in place that allow oversight to ensure appropriate follow-up of evaluation results?</p>
	F1—Practical Procedures	<p>Are procedures for collecting data as simple and job-embedded as possible to prevent undue overburdening of either the evaluatee or the evaluator?</p>
FEASIBILITY	F2—Political Viability	<p>Is a process in place that allows all stakeholders the opportunity to question the procedures or results of an evaluation?</p> <p>Is there a process to determine the outcome of questions asked concerning an evaluation?</p>
	F3—Fiscal Viability	<p>Can the district afford the resources to conduct evaluatee evaluation in the way that will maximize its effect?</p>
	A1—Valid Judgments	<p>Is there an adequate number of data sources to provide a comprehensive view of performance?</p> <p>Is there a system of oversight in place to ensure that the evaluators follow procedures, analyze all appropriate data, and report judgments based only on the criteria set forth in the system?</p>
ACCURACY	A2—Defined Expectations	<p>Are the expectations and scope of work for the evaluatee clearly defined and understood by both the evaluatee and evaluator?</p>

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Standard Statement</i>	<i>Key Questions</i>
ACCURACY		<p>Have these expectations been provided to all evaluatees in both written and verbal formats?</p> <p>Are these expectations reasonable and directly related to stated job descriptions?</p>
	A3—Analysis of Context	<p>Whenever data are collected, is there a structure or expectation in place that the details regarding the circumstances also be recorded (i.e., notation on observation forms)?</p>
	A4—Documented Purposes and Procedures	<p>Is a structure in place for ensuring that all evaluators and evaluatees clearly understand the purposes and procedures to be followed?</p>
	A5—Defensible Information	<p>Is oversight in place to ensure that the results of any given evaluation would be the same regardless of evaluator?</p>
	A6—Reliable Information	<p>Is there oversight to ensure that the evaluation procedures are the same for all evaluatees regardless of the evaluator?</p>
	A7—Systematic Data Control	<p>Is a structure in place that ensures that all evaluative information is held in a secure location (e.g., locked file cabinets, secure server, etc.)?</p> <p>Is a system in place to record person, time, date, and purpose of access to records?</p>
	A8—Bias Identification and Management	<p>Is there oversight to ensure that the results of any evaluation are not influenced by preconceived ideas of the evaluator that may be unrelated to the actual job performance of the evaluatee?</p> <p>Does evaluator training include bias control and diversity awareness training?</p> <p>Is there a grievance process in place to offer protection to evaluatees?</p>

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<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Standard Statement</i>	<i>Key Questions</i>
ACCURACY	A9—Analysis of Information	Is there oversight of the evaluator’s final reports and disposition to ensure continued accuracy and use of data? Are conclusions drawn consistent with the data gathered?
	A10—Justified Conclusions	Is a structure in place that requires the evaluator to justify the disposition of an evaluation based on documentation of performance?
	A11—Metaevaluation	Is a system in place to allow the periodic review of the personnel evaluation system to ensure its continued usefulness?

Adapted from Howard, B. B., & Sanders, J. R. (2006). Applying the personnel evaluation standards to evaluatee evaluation. In J. H. Stronge (Ed.), *Evaluating teaching: A guide to current thinking and best practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.