CREATE

Consortium for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation

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The vision of the Consortium for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation (CREATE) is improved student learning, development, and achievement in PK-12 schools, institutes of higher education, and other educational settings.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
Christopher Gareis, Ed.D.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Professional Learning Communities

For the past seven years, I have been part of an amazing online professional learning community called the Virginia Teacher Leader Forum. This is a group of 100-some teachers and teacher educators in Virginia, all of whom have been recognized as exemplary professionals in various ways, such as National Board Certification, Teacher of the Year honors, and service on state and national commissions. (As a side note, I've met fewer than half of the participants face-to-face, but I feel as if I know so many more of them. It goes to show that a "community" can take many forms, including a *virtual* form.) We are an amiable but forthright group—which is to say that we're nice and polite with each other, but we're also very willing to tackle tough issues, challenge each other's assumptions along the way, and risk coming to conclusions that we may not have reached as individuals. *In short, we're willing to learn together as professionals.*

One of our more recent discussions began with a question about the ethics of "teaching to the test"—more specifically, teaching to the state standardized tests. The conversation within the online community was robust. The criticism leveled at such practices as narrowing the taught curriculum, forsaking instructional time to administer benchmark assessments, and replacing content subject matter with test-taking strategies was, perhaps, to be expected. However, more surprising to me was the fact that a number of teachers articulated the case that "teaching to the test" is *exactly what teachers should be doing.*

Let me clarify. The point these teachers made was that, *(1) assuming the appropriateness of the learning objectives from which the test is designed and (2) assuming the fidelity of the test items to those objectives, the state assessments should represent exactly that which we teachers would <u>want</u> students to demonstrate about their knowledge and skills.* Therefore, teaching to the test—if the test is, indeed, an appropriate test—is good practice.

Of course, that's a big "if." So, these same teachers also articulated another qualifier: They made it clear that the state's standardized assessments do, in fact, *not* tap into some of the most important intended outcomes of learning, such as evaluative thinking and creativity. Therefore, the teachers in the Virginia Teacher Leader Forum concluded that *all teachers must be proficient at constructing and using assessments in their own classrooms and for their own instructional purposes.*

The discussion eventually went on to other topics, but, as someone who regularly works with teachers and school leaders in the field of assessment and evaluation, I was thrilled by the understanding these teachers shared with each other. *Assessment* and *evaluation* are rapidly becoming pejorative terms among so many educators, yet here was a group of teachers within a community of professional educators who viewed the maelstrom of high-stakes testing with insight. What's more, through the conversation within this online professional learning community, teachers shared with and learned from each other.

How does this experience relate to CREATE? In my view, it speaks directly to components of our organization's mission. For instance, a core focus of our organization's purpose is to promote best practices in the area of *student assessment*. Our role in the creation of *The Student Evaluation Standards* (Corwin Press, 2003) is a testament to our collective expertise in this area. Second, CREATE itself is a *professional learning community*. Each year for more than a decade our National Evaluation Institute has served as a forum for disseminating best practices in the field of assessment, evaluation, and accountability. It follows, then, that a further role for CREATE is to serve as a *catalyst* for developing and sustaining professional learning communities in our respective quotidian work settings.

With this perspective in mind, it is my pleasure to announce the theme of our 2008 NEI: *Assessment, Evaluation, and Professional Learning Communities.* I invite you to learn more about the NEI here in our Spring newsletter, and I strongly encourage you to submit a proposal for our upcoming conference in Wilmington, NC!

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation: Enhancing Personnel Evaluations through an Application of the Standards

Drs. Paula Egelson and Barbara Howard

Introduction—Created in 1975, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) is located at The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University. It is a coalition of major educational organizations concerned with the quality of evaluation. The JCSEE has published three sets of standards for evaluations over the past 25 years. The program evaluation standards were originally developed in 1981 and were revised in 1994. Another revision is currently underway. The personnel evaluation standards were published in 1988 and were recently revised. The student evaluation standards were published in 2003.

The organizations that comprise the JCSEE include the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Evaluation Association (AEA), the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, the American Psychological Association (APA), the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES), the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE), the Consortium for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation (CREATE), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the National Association of School Psychologists, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), the National Education Association (NEA), the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society (NLPES), and the National Rural Education Association (NREA).

Personnel Evaluation Standards—The purpose of this article is to provide readers with additional information about the newly revised personnel evaluation standards.

In this age of accountability, educators are coming under greater scrutiny than ever regarding their own performance as it effects student achievement. Implementing a sound system of personnel evaluation ensures that educators meet acceptable levels of skill, knowledge, and performance in supporting the goals of their organizations. For instance, in a PK – 12 school setting, the effectiveness of each classroom teacher determines the success of students in meeting the school's educational goals. This is also true in higher education settings.

The purpose of these standards is to improve the practice of personnel evaluation of PK-12 teachers, higher education faculty, and administrators at all levels. The standards provide guidelines for sound evaluations based on the four generally accepted attributes of all evaluation processes: propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy. Within these four broad categories, 27 standards provide guidance in how to conduct evaluations that will be legal, ethical, useful,

feasible, and accurate to the individual evaluated and other users of the information. In the publication *Personnel Evaluation Standards (2nd ed.)*, each standard is fully explained and explored in its own standard chapter.

Each chapter contains the following components: standard statement, explanation, rationale, guidelines for application, common errors encountered in the field, illustrative cases drawn from actual field experiences, and supporting documentation from current literature. This easy-to-use format allows in-depth and practical exploration of specific areas for investigation and application. Appendices provide additional support in using the standards. The JCSEE developed this publication as a resource for those engaged in the implementation, development or adoption of a system of personnel evaluation.

Additional information on the educational evaluation standards for program, personnel and students may be obtained from the JCSEE website: http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/jc/. The *Personnel Evaluation Standards (2nd ed.)* will be released later this year by Sage Publications.

Contact Information—CREATE member Dr. Paula Egelson (egelsonp@cofc.edu) represents CREATE at JCSEE meetings and CREATE member Dr. Barbara Howard (bhoward97@gmail.com) chaired the revision of the personnel evaluation standards. Please feel free to contact either of them about the work of the JCSEE.

2008 NEI Key Presenters in Wilmington, NC

- **Robert Marzano,** President of Marzano & Associates
- **Arlen Gullickson,** Professor and researcher of education
- **James Stronge,** Professor at The College of William & Mary
- **Anne Jolly,** Project Director for Professional Learning Teams

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Submit your research for publication in the CREATE Newsletter!

We welcome articles associated with educational evaluation and accountability. We prioritize articles presented at the annual National Evaluation Institute. Articles should be sent in electronic format and should be approximately two pages in length (single-spaced, Times New Roman, font 12).

For consideration, please send your work to:
Drs. Marco Muñoz and/or Florence Chang at:

marco.munoz@jefferson.kyschools.us
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Evaluating the Success of a Professional Development System for Improving P-12 Learning and Higher-Order Instructional Dispositions

By Diane S. Calhoun, PDS Director, &
Karen S. Wetherill, Associate Dean,
Watson School of Education, UNCW

No matter how highly qualified teachers are upon entering the classroom, the professional expectation is that they continue to refine their practice and become more distinguished in their ability to create constructive learning environments and nurture student learning. Professional Development Schools (PDSs) are challenged to substantiate partnerships that make a difference in preparing and sustaining highly qualified educators impacting learning.

Program Highlights

For the last 17 years, the Professional Development System at the UNC-Wilmington Watson School of Education has served as a comprehensive university-public school partnership with over 1400 K-12 personnel in 114 schools. The partnership provides extensive collaboration with 11 districts, one charter school, and an early college high school for placement in field experiences and internships, reciprocal professional development, partnering in grants, and other educational initiatives, while helping redesign teacher education programs and aligning efforts and resources for the improvement of education in southeastern North Carolina.

In UNCW's PDS partnership, a learning-centered model provides environments for reflection and deep learning among teacher candidates, faculty, and school partners developing and sustaining key *higher-order instructional dispositions* for increasing teacher effectiveness. Structures for self-assessment of teaching identify and assess desired results, determine student learning evidence, and engage partners in collective deliberation transforming instructional practices (Wetherill & Calhoun, 2006).

Candidates are paired with partnership teachers trained in this model and committed to refining their practice. The systematic structure utilizes 8-10 *reflective coaching cycles* (pre-conference, data collection, and post-conference) focused on making informed instructional decisions. Partner teachers facilitate, placing strong emphasis on candidate's ability to make decisions using data. The intent is for analytical thinking about pupil performance to become an automatic self-questioning script that candidates practice and see modeled by teacher supervisors. It focuses on "mental rehearsal" (thinking out loud) using cognitive processes to develop strategies, learning activities, and assessment (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

Evaluating Success

A comprehensive study was undertaken with three primary components yielding triangulated data on the impact of the model explicitly connecting teaching to student learning:

- A partnership teacher evaluation component
- An intern work-sampling assessment component
- A supervisor/partnership teacher evaluation component

The *partnership teacher evaluation* had two phases. *Phase I* collected survey data from 100 teachers in 29 schools. Teachers identified six PDS model features having significant impact on student learning. These features are, using:

- *inquiry strategies*
- *reflective coaching*
- *individualized instruction meeting diverse needs*
- *pre-post assessment designing/evaluating instruction*
- *collaborative communication structures*
- *reflective decision-making improving understanding/application of best practices*

Using these data, *Phase II* measured teacher perceptions on the *degree of impact* these six features had on ability to improve learning. Data from 93 teachers in 26 schools rated all six features as having *strong/very strong* impact.

A second source of data used *interns' pre/post assessment of student knowledge* using NCLB subgroups to document their impact on student learning. Data analyzed/aggregated over three years strongly supported their ability to improve student learning across all subgroups.

A third component utilizing *supervisor/partnership teacher evaluations* rated interns' performance in designing, implementing/assessing instruction, and making responsive decisions related to their impact on student learning. Data revealed that interns scored 96% or higher on all indicators.

These evaluation components strongly support this PDS model as systemic, sustainable, and replicable. The intentional self-assessing structures engaging all partners holds the key to improving teaching and student learning. As one partner stated:

> The learning-centered model is a way to help teacher candidates reach their potential in teaching and also help me reach mine. Not only does it allow for the one who is being mentored to grow, but it allows for the one who is doing the mentoring to grow as well.

References

Costa, A., & Garmston, R. (2002). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for Renaissance schools (2nd ed.)*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Wetherill, K., & Calhoun, D. (2006, October). Cognitive coaching: A supervision framework that builds capacity for improving learning and teacher higher-order instructional dispositions. Paper presented at COPIS annual meeting, Gainesville, FL.

Conducting Strategic Human Resources Planning (SHRP)

Douglas R. Davis
University of Mississippi

SHRP is a comprehensive planning process that includes all areas of organizational and operational planning. The framework for the process is an intentional focus on organizational performance (output) and human behavior (resources). The term strategic identifies the process as a holistic, comprehensive and all-inclusive effort to develop a plan for achieving the organization's mission. It is the highest level of planning in an organization. In other words, you might have many sub-plans that fit under the strategic plan but there is no higher plan at the building level than the SHRP. The human resources focus allows an organization to achieve its mission by preparing for the efficient utilization of available human recourses. SHRP must be consistent with the organization's mission as articulated in the mission statement.

The mission statement is a concise description of the moral purpose, or vision, of the school. A mission statement articulates the primary purpose/goal of the organization. The mission statement also articulates the dominant cultural values; what the professional staff, the students, and the community want the school to be. It is helpful to keep three principles in mind when developing a vision statement: schools serve children, schools belong to the community, and schools are centers of teaching and learning. While mission statements need to be clear and concise, it is critical that they not be trite and cliché. When mission statements are imposed on a professional staff from administrators, they have little cultural relevance and often convey negative symbolic meaning (members may view the statements as cliché, trite, trivial and/or silly). This is also true when previous, or old, mission statements are simply passed-on. Meaningful mission statements are developed through a team effort involving representatives from multiple groups within the school and in the community.

The next part of the process is determining strategic objectives. Strategic objectives should articulate the immediate and long-term goals of the school that are consistent with the mission statement.

Once the objectives have been articulated, the next step in SHRP is to link the strategic objectives to human resources management. This is accomplished by considering several structural and process questions.

Structural Questions:

➢ What type of professional practitioner do we need to accomplish the objectives?
➢ How many instructional and staff positions will we need and in what areas?
➢ What resources do we have available to commit to HR?
➢ When will resources be available?
➢ How will we maximize the efficient use of available resources?
➢ Who will be involved in HR processes and decision making and why?

Process Questions:

➢ How will we identify and hire the best teachers/personnel?
➢ How might we successful bring new people into the organization?
➢ How might we assess priority needs in order to improve teaching and learning?
➢ How might we provide the most effective professional development for all instructional and non-instructional personnel?
➢ How will we deal with personnel issues; especially marginal instruction?

While the structural questions are more pre-determined and theoretical, the answers to the process questions translate directly into the day-to-day operation of the school. There are fairly standard procedures for answering the process questions. The first step is to collectively engage in a gap analysis. A gap analysis is a tool for discovering where the organization is at the current time and comparing the current status to where it needs to be (the strategic objectives). The gap analysis requires the collection of data through action research (see Calhoun, 1994; Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994; Gay, Mills, Airasian, 2006, Ch. 20). Using the example of the new teacher induction program, data is collected to assess current new teacher induction practices. It is important that data also be collected on the effectiveness of the current practices. In collecting this data (engaging in action research), there may be some quantitative measures available; however, the most useful understanding of current practices will come from observations and conversations (interviews and focus groups). Thus, there needs to be meaningful conversations with new teachers about their induction.

The next step in the action research and SHRP process is to develop and implement strategies for eliminating the identified gaps. It is essential that the strategies be developed collaboratively and be supported by data, both from with and from without the school. Thus, research on effective new teacher induction should be utilized and combined with the type of new teacher induction needed and desired in the school. The key to successful implementation of a revised new teacher induction program is buy-in and ownership by the professional staff.

The final step in the planning process is an assessment plan that specifies how the new teacher induction program will be monitored and assessed. Key elements of the assessment plan must identify what data will be collected, when and how it will be collected and maintained, and how the data will be used to improve the program and inform future decision-making.

Anderson, G. L., Herr, K., & Nihlen, A. S. (1994). *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to qualitative practitioner research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Calhoun, E. F. (1994). *How to use action research in the self-renewing school.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Gay, W.R., & Airasian, P. (2006). *Educational research* (8th ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Invalidity of Inferences of ACT Scores in High-Stakes Accountability Systems

By Marco Muñoz, Ed.D.
Jefferson County Public Schools
Louisville, KY

Most states have test-based accountability systems to make inferences about the effectiveness of schools. In many states across the nation, ACT test scores are now included in these accountability systems. Some consider the ACT the core of the state testing system for high school students. In fact, this is why it has been suggested that these tests should be given a major weight in the test-based accountability systems.

The problem, however, is that using a norm-referenced test like the ACT--with scores ranked on a bell curve--is contrary to the intent of NCLB and of state accountability systems to ensure that all children reach proficiency. A bell curve measurement, by design, ranks children. According to assessment experts like Jim Popham, it is not appropriate to use norm-referenced tests to assess educational programs in high-stakes accountability environments. In Popham's book entitled *Modern Educational Measurement (2000)*, he argues that students' scores on these tests do not provide an accurate index of educational effectiveness. He states that any inference about educational quality based on students' standardized achievement test performance is invalid.

It is not that the standardized achievement tests are, by themselves, invalid. Rather, it is the second-level inference about educational quality that is wrong. The function of a norm-referenced standardized achievement test is to permit inferences about the knowledge and/or skills students possess, in a given content area, in relationship to knowledge and/or skills possessed by other students throughout the nation.

> Standardized achievement tests also have a different mission than indicating how good or bad a school is. Standardized achievement tests should be used to make the comparative interpretations that they were intended to provide. They should not be used to judge educational quality. (Popham, 2000, p. 400).

To further complicate the norm-referenced issue, in subjects ACT does test, many questions are not properly aligned with the state learning standards. For example, ACT does not test biology, chemistry, physics or other fundamental areas of science. In subjects that ACT does not test, the problem is graver still. For example, ACT ignores history, civics, geography, economics, and cultures.

In summary, there is a clear testing-and-teaching mismatch when it comes to the ACT because the content measured by the test is not necessarily aligned with the content taught. Furthermore, from a psychometric perspective, the quest for score variance in a norm-referenced framework requires the

elimination of items with high p values (i.e., easy items) and, as result, important topics that teachers teach will not be assessed by standardized achievement tests. The curricular mismatch and the specific psychometric properties of norm-referenced tests should prohibit using ACT scores as an indicator of educational effectiveness in accountability systems.

Jason Millman Award

Congratulations to our 2008 Millman Award Winner, **Arlen R. Gullickson**! Arlen is recently professor emeritus of education and emeritus researcher of The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan. Since 1998, he has served as chair of the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. His, and the Center's, work focuses on improving the theory and practice of evaluation. His writing includes books, chapters, and articles on evaluation. Much of his writing has focused on teacher preparation and practices for evaluation of students and on improving teachers' assessment practices.

Arlen will be presenting and will receive his award at this year's National Evaluation Institute being held in Wilmington, North Carolina, October 9-11, 2008.

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October 9-11, 2008

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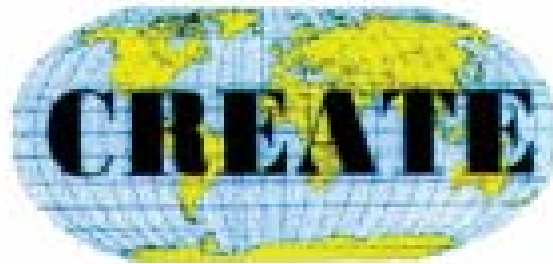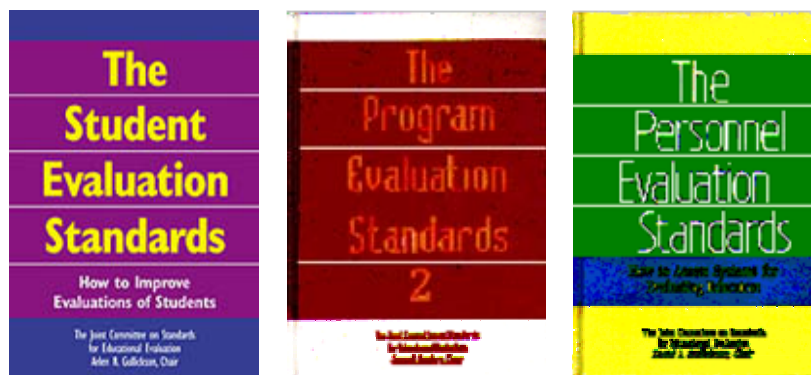
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