

The Evaluation of Minnesota's School Principals

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Top performing principals contribute to top student results. This simple axiom has led the professional administrative organizations in Minnesota to develop a system by which principal performance can be more uniformly measured in order that professional growth can more effectively take place. In a project jointly sponsored by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association, the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Minnesota Association of School Administrators—with support from the Board of School Administrators—a task force representative of professionals from throughout the state examined best practices literature and effective systems of principal evaluation in place across the nation. The group synthesized this research and generated a process for “The Evaluation of Minnesota's School Principals.”

The basic framework for the Minnesota principal evaluation process involves conducting an annual evaluation as a part of a three-to-five year cycle of performance improvement. In the first year of this cycle, deep and meaningful formative evaluation, conducted in accordance with Minnesota's Core Competencies and linked to existing School Improvement Plans, sets the stage for ongoing performance reviews in the subsequent years. Measurable goals are set at the outset and then principals are evaluated annually based on the progress that has been made each year.

Several critical steps are recommended to be a part of the evaluation process. Principals should receive an orientation from the superintendent/designee on the system to be used and the timeline to be followed. The principal should conduct a self-assessment. A pre-conference session should be held at which competency targets should be set. Evidence should be gathered to support the evaluation; reflection should be engaged. Both evidence and reflection should be synthesized in preparation for a formal evaluation conference. Finally, an evaluation conference should be held from which an Evaluation Summary document and a Professional Growth Plan should emerge.

This process, tied closely to Minnesota's K-12 Principal Competencies, is designed to provide tools that can be used to assess principal performance and to enhance professional growth. Administrators can use the approach in whole, for it is a comprehensive assessment instrument, or they can incorporate parts into evaluation systems already in place. In either case, the process outlined in “The Evaluation of Minnesota's School Principals” and supported by the professional associations whose charge it was to develop the document will add substance and credibility to the important task of assessing the professional performance of school principals. The framers expect that their work will both inform efforts to evaluate school principals as it will drive Minnesota's already high quality school principals to stronger levels of achievement. Minnesota's children will be the winners as a result.

A process flowchart can be found on the next page:

THE EVALUATION PROCESS FLOWCHART

