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EXPECTATIONS OF PERFORMANCE AND METHODS FOR THE  
EVALUATION OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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PREVIEW

EXPECTATIONS OF PERFORMANCE AND METHODS FOR THE  
EVALUATION OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

Richard D. Eisenhower

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Under the Supervision of Professor Dale K. Hayes  
and Associate Professor Loren R. Bonneau

Lincoln, Nebraska

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**TITLE**

EXPECTATIONS OF PERFORMANCE AND METHODS FOR

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PREVIEW



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The position of the school principal brings with it continual evaluation from many fronts. Educators have recognized the growth of demands for accountability in recent years encompassing demands for assessments of services rendered to the public coming both from within and outside of the education profession. Greene, writing for the National Association of Secondary School Principals for example, cites increasing demands for accountability and the need for educators to develop specific measures for providing the public with evidence of a school's effectiveness.<sup>1</sup> Greene goes on to say that the principal is the single most important determiner of the educational climate of any school, and is, therefore, in the position viewed by many boards of education and superintendents of schools as the logical starting point for initiating a formal system of accountability through evaluation of the personnel in this position.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the need for accountability of the principal by superordinates as suggested by Greene, the principal is evaluated by others as well. There are teachers, board members, parents, students,

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<sup>1</sup>Robert E. Greene, Administrative Appraisal: A Step Toward Improved Leadership (Washington: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1972), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

and peers with whom he or she must deal, and who continually evaluate his or her performance.

Lipham and Haeh described the accountability phenomenon with the point that any principal can attest to the exercising of proprietary interest in schools of various factions of the public, often exercised with impropriety.<sup>3</sup>

### Significance of the Study

There are those all around the principal with whom he or she must deal, all evaluating his or her performance and job based upon their peculiar vantage points, perceptions and experiences.

Much of the evaluation of principals is based upon the role perception held for the principal by the evaluators. The parents of a child in trouble with the school, for example, might have a perception of the role of the principal quite different from one held by the parents of a child receiving academic plaudits. Increasing concerns for greater accountability of those in public service seem to be phenomena of the times. Those who influence or establish policy--parents, taxpayers, and boards of education--all seem to be asking for increased accountability.

The school principal holding a middle management position serves under the policy established by the board of education, under the

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<sup>3</sup>James M. Lipham and James A. Hoeh, Jr., The Principalship: Foundations and Functions (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1974), p. 73.

leadership of the superintendent. Knowledge of this factual situation still requires the further recognition that definitions of role offered to the principal may not be clear or be congruent with role expectations held by others. The delineation of duties described by board policy may, in fact, prove secondary to personal priority expectations held by those who shall perform formal evaluations.

With demands for accountability appearing from many points, school principals themselves appear to be asking for more refined, systematic, and fair evaluation, due to a recognition of the need to clarify just what expectations are held for them.

The significance of this study is that there are growing demands for greater accountability in school affairs, coupled with a growing need for clarification and greater agreement on the criteria and techniques to be utilized in determination of successful performance by the principal. The principal must understand how evaluation criteria and techniques are to be applied to his or her job performance.

If there is one criterion upon which most authorities seem to agree, when discussing issues associated with evaluation of administrators, it is that such evaluation must somehow reflect local job expectations, if it is to be workable. Local expectations, however, must be balanced against some more universally-held expectations, in order to achieve greater consistency in standards and greater understanding of what constitutes fair treatment in implementation of procedures of evaluation within the guidelines established by law, board policy, commissions, and professional associations.

Obvious questions have been raised by school principals: Does accountability mean the same for all? Can accountability be measured equally and fairly in all cases and, if so, under what conditions? If it cannot, this is significant information for all those who now, or in the future, will hold the position of school principal.

### Reasons for the Study

During the summer of 1974, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators sponsored a conference-workshop involving Nebraska school administrators and board of education members. The purpose of this two-day conference was to identify the degree of interest held by the participants of the need for the development of suggested administrative evaluation procedures and guidelines on a statewide basis. Participants also attempted to identify the issues involved in the evaluation of the professional performance of school administrators. In addition, an attempt was made to determine if there was a perceived need for follow-up work by committees of the National Council of School Administrators on the formulation of guidelines for the evaluation of the professional performance by Nebraska school administrators.

At the conclusion of this conference, the participants were polled to determine which course of action they desired the Nebraska Council of School Administrators to pursue concerning the development of procedures and criteria for evaluation of administrative professional performance. Participants overwhelmingly favored further work by the Council in this area. The Executive Committee of the Nebraska Council appointed

a special committee to develop a set of guidelines for administrative professional appraisal for the state.

Subsequently, the writer was appointed by the Nebraska Council of School Administrators to serve on this committee, and later as the representative of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators to the Nebraska Professional Practices Commission, to review efforts to develop minimum competencies expected of school administrators. Both of the aforementioned activities convinced the writer of a need for the development of guidelines for the evaluation of educational administrators in Nebraska. Both experiences were indicators of the growing demands, from both outside the profession and from within, for greater accountability, a demand which created apprehension among those to be evaluated, especially when they were not certain of the criteria upon which judgments were to be made. Later that same year, the Nebraska State School Boards Association, at their annual meeting, asked the writer to serve as a consultant at a special session dealing with issues related to administrator evaluation. In this forum, also, the expressed reactions of participants favored the development of procedures for administrator evaluation and criteria for successful administrator performance.

Subsequently, the writer served on the Executive Committee of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and later as its chairman. During the writer's tenure on this committee, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators developed Administrative Counseling Committees on which the writer served. The function of such committees was to meet

and confer with administrators who found themselves in contractual difficulties with their school, facing dismissal or non-renewal of contracts. The writer served on several such investigative committees, and from this capacity observed that administrators were frequently evaluated on rather abstract expectations related to something the evaluatee "did not do," rather than professionally-developed evaluative criteria which stated what would be expected. Frequently, it appeared that the reasons for "firing" were premised upon individual or group expectations of what should or should not be done by one in a perceived role, as opposed to evaluations containing evidence of having met specific performance criteria. As stated earlier, the principal faces evaluation from many evaluators, and perceptions could be held by one "public" which conflict with those held by another. Expectations seemed to vary according to location, accepted procedure, and personality. The observation of the writer was that perceptions of role performance evolved into evaluative criteria upon which negative personnel decisions were made with no apparent regard to other expectations, or of the reasons for actions which did not meet these perceived expectations. The writer observed a need for making individual or local expectations and, when they are to be used as evaluation criteria, known to the evaluatee and present throughout the entire evaluation process as part of stated criteria of success before any formal evaluation occurred. This would have assured that persons involved knew and abided by the same rules.

Discussions between the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and others in education at institutions of higher learning appeared to substantiate the need for evaluation of educational administrators as a target area for in-service activities.

In addition, the writer witnessed passage of LB 82 by the Nebraska Legislature which created standards of legal "due process" for Nebraska teachers and certain administrators, including principals. Standards of due process, and tenure maintenance procedures available to some administrators, were somewhat clouded by the legal case of Roth vs. Sargent Board of Education, in which United States District Court Judge Warren Urbom upheld the dismissal of secondary school principal Roth. As a basis for this decision, Judge Urbom stated the rationale that the degree of closeness to the policy-making board of the principal in this particular setting precluded the tenure status granted under statute. The interpretation was that, regardless of tenure, this school setting placed the principal at board meetings, and as acting superintendent in some instances, which necessitated a close working relationship. This ruling appeared to significantly affect the standard of legal due process as it applied to the school principal, since the size of administrative procedures and policies of individual school districts all would have a bearing upon considerations of termination or appointment.

At the same time all of this was occurring in Nebraska, there appeared to be a similar trend growing nationally for evaluation and accountability.

All this firmed up, in the opinion of the writer, the need for this study to determine just what the "state of the art" of administrative evaluation was in Nebraska, and how Nebraska evaluation practices compared with what appeared to be a rising nationwide interest in the area.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to make comparisons between:

- (1) the criteria of evaluation of performance of principals by Nebraska boards of education and Nebraska superintendents of schools, and
- (2) how criteria of evaluation by Nebraska school districts compared with criteria used in current practice in evaluation of the professional performance of principals.

A set of guidelines for evaluation of principal professional performance was the culminating product of the study, including recommended purposes and practices in evaluations, and a sample evaluation instrument utilizing these guidelines.

### The Procedure

The first phase of the study consisted of a review of literature to trace the historical development of evaluative procedures for school principals over the past ten to fifteen years, which seemed to represent a period of uncertainty and change in role expectations of the principalship. A review of literature was also used to define the current types or styles and methods of evaluation, and to determine recommendations



and rationales for administrative evaluation practices made by writers in the field of education.

The second phase of the study consisted of a survey of selected school districts from various geographic areas of the United States. The school districts were selected from responses to an inquiry made to all state chief school officers, asking for identification of schools conducting evaluations of principals. The areas of the United States were identified by major geographical regions, as identified by the World Book Encyclopedia. The purpose of this national survey was to gather "models" of evaluative techniques so that a national sampling could be categorized into like types of evaluation. The types or categories of evaluation were those identified from phase one, the review of literature. In addition, phase two of the study included a listing of criteria of successful performance by principals common to the models.

Phase three consisted of a request directed toward the respective superintendents of schools asking for the submission of either instruments of evaluation or descriptions of methods of evaluation employed in the conduct of actual evaluations of principals. This was done for the purpose of determining the evaluative practices of these same school districts.

Phase four of the study consisted of a comparison between the ranked criteria assessing the frequency of occurrence of the criteria. From this survey, a priority ranking of the criteria of successful performance of principals could be obtained.

Phase five of the study concluded the effort through the development of suggested guidelines for the evaluation of Nebraska principals based upon the literature, practice throughout the country, and Nebraska research. These suggested guidelines will be a recommendation addressed to Nebraska superintendents of schools and board of education members, and culminates with a sample evaluation instrument.

### The Sample

The decision to utilize the one hundred seventy-two largest school districts in the state of Nebraska was based upon a review of the following data. There were 317 schools within the state with kindergarten through twelfth grade organization. The sizes of schools dropped off at a significant rate. The fifteenth largest school district, the Columbus City Schools, stated in terms of pupil population for the school year 1976, for example, had enrolled 3159 students, 50,666 fewer than Omaha, the largest. The one-hundredth largest, the Homer Public Schools, contained 441 students. The Nebraska Educational Directory<sup>4</sup> listed the Hordville School District, with 121 students, as the smallest Nebraska School employing a full-time principal. It was obvious that the one hundred seventy-two largest districts represented a sample of sufficient size to practically illustrate the practices of school districts within the state employing principals.

The decision to utilize the chief state school officers of the

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<sup>4</sup>Nebraska Educational Directory (Lincoln: State Department of Education, 1976).

various states for the purpose of identifying school districts making use of procedures for principal evaluation is based upon the rationale described below. At least nine states had mandatory evaluation of principals. This mandate, stemming from legislation in these states, coupled with the very nature of the position of the chief state school officer in the state government and educational circles, would indicate that the chief state school officer would be in a position to be knowledgeable of trends in education within their respective states as well as with the laws of their state dealing with evaluation.

The chief state school officer was also identifiable, which was a criterion necessary to help assure sufficient responses to inquiry.

The regions of the country identified for the purpose of grouping were identified from the World Book Encyclopedia.<sup>5</sup> These groupings are:

Middle Atlantic States: New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

Midwestern States: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Wisconsin, South Dakota

New England States: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont

Pacific Coast States: California, Oregon, Washington

Rocky Mountain States: Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming

Southern States: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia

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<sup>5</sup>World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. 20 (Chicago: Field Enterprises Corporation, 1973), p. 46.

Southwestern States: Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

Other: Alaska, Hawaii

The geographic regions of states along with the recommendations of the chief state school officers assured a true sampling, representative of the nation, for the study. The sampling did not need to be from every state since it was for the purpose of only indicating a trend.

The individual school systems contacted for the sample were those which were suggested by the chief state school officer or designee.

PREVIEW

## CHAPTER II

### A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter was to review literature relative to the need for evaluation of principals, the "state of the art" in the evaluation of principals, current trends and practices in the evaluation of principals, and recommendations for effective evaluation of principals and their professional performance.

A publication recommended that evaluation procedures be developed to measure an administrator's performance in executing specific tasks and his or her approximation to specific goals.<sup>1</sup>

Formal evaluation of administrators is a relatively recent development in the history of education and is a direct result of increasing complexity in the operation of schools.<sup>2</sup>

A review of the literature tended to support the existence of trends toward a growing demand for evaluation of the performance of those who administer the schools, a natural outgrowth of demands for accountability of the schools themselves.

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<sup>1</sup>Terry Barraclough, Administrator Evaluation, Educational Management Review Series Number 15 (Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, April, 1973), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

## The Need for Evaluation of Principals

The principalship, by the very nature of the position, has been one of continual evaluation from many fronts. Parents, teachers, members of boards of education, superintendents of schools, school district staff supervisors, peers, and many others with whom the principal must deal continually evaluate his or her performance on the job.<sup>3</sup>

The current demand for greater accountability of schools has further accentuated the need for development of procedures and criteria for the evaluation of principals. Pharis, Executive Director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, tied the two together by comparing the view of evaluation held by principals as being like a mother-in-law, necessary but difficult to live with. Pharis also noted that evaluation, when used synonymously with accountability, should be a major concern of principals since it has been utilized, however fairly, to measure past performance and not as a basis for professional growth or improvement.<sup>4</sup>

Research reported by Barraclough included an assertion that administrators had always been evaluated, since decisions concerning hiring, training, promotion, and firing of principals were of long

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<sup>3</sup>Wes Peters, The Role and Evaluation of the Elementary Principal (Salem: Oregon Education Association Press, 1972), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>William Pharis, "The Evaluation of School Principals," The National Elementary Principal (February, 1973), p. 36.

standing, and were based upon some sort of evaluation, either formal or informal.<sup>5</sup>

Redfern, of the American Association of School Administrators, devised a model for the evaluation of principals in 1972. Redfern offered a number of points to illustrate the many faces of, and the need for, continuous evaluations of the school principal. Redfern described the various points from which the school principal is evaluated:

1. Teachers furnish general evaluation of the principal on the basis of teacher-principal interactions and relationships.
2. Pupils furnish general evaluations of the principal in those areas where they come into direct contact with him.
3. Parents and patrons furnish general assessments restricted to those items of parent-patron-principal relationships about which they have direct knowledge and experience.
4. Administrative superiors focus upon performance objectives which they and the principal have cooperatively formulated and which are designed to move the principal ahead in this performance.<sup>6</sup>

This model, as developed under the auspices of the American Association of School Administrators, still reflected the magnitude of the process of evaluating principals. The American Association of School Administrators and Redfern, noted consultant in educational

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<sup>5</sup>Terry Barraclough, "Evaluation of School Administrators," The School Leadership Digest, V (1974), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>George Redfern, "Proposals for Progress, Promise, and Performance," School Administrator (March, 1972), p. 7.

accountability, have made repeated references to evaluation and statements promoting it. For example, in 1975, AASA published an Administrator's Bill of Rights<sup>7</sup> in response to increasing administrator accountability demands. Redfern spoke out again for professional administrators in 1976, tracing the development of the movement toward accountability and his consultative work experiences with several school systems around the country. He cites, particularly, his observations of increased pressures on principals. He spoke of principals as "scapegoats":

Blame for failure is often placed at the doorstep of the principal, but the causes for "accountability and educational outcome" failure are more complex than simple inadequacy at the principalship level.<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of the bill of rights, written for AASA by Shannon, was to develop a specific response by professional educational administrators and is, therefore, illustrative of educators' recognition of the emergence of the trend toward increasing evaluation and a subsequent feeling of a need to respond. By 1975, all three major administrative professional associations--the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the American Association of School Administrators--had published responses to the growing trend in education.

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<sup>7</sup>Thomas A. Shannon, Administrator's Bill of Rights (Washington: American Association of School Administrators, 1975), pp. 3-23.

<sup>8</sup>George Redfern, "Accountability: Echoes from the Field," The National Elementary Principal, LV (March-April, 1976), p. 44.