

ESSAY 3

*Including Student Results
in Teacher Evaluation –
A Case Study in Focus
on Teaching Expertise*

Abstract

In this era of accountability in education, teachers are asked to be accountable for student results as never before. In Montgomery County, MD this accountability appears in the written evaluation of every teacher. This paper describes: (a) how this accountability avoids a reductionist numbers game tied to test scores; and (b) how joint responsibility for student learning has come about through a powerful alliance of union and administrative leaders.

How to Include Student Results in Teacher Evaluation . . . Responsibly

– Jon Saphier, Mark Simon, Jerry Weast

Accountability has been the watchword in the last decade of education reform; but with all the accountability tools that the standards movement has brought, it is not clear that the focus on accountability has improved the quality of teaching and learning. This is unfortunate since the prime variables in improving student results are teacher knowledge and skill. The time has come to make a closer examination of student results a part of everything we do in education, including teacher evaluation. But we must do so in a way that keeps sight of the main point—to improve teaching as the prime vehicle for improving student achievement. Inappropriate assumptions about causation and inappropriate stakes and consequences can make accountability systems largely counterproductive. It's time to pay more attention to the details of how data are used in evaluating performance of teachers and schools to ensure that the tail isn't wagging the dog. We can thus create a focus on student results that enable us to anchor our work on these vital questions:

- what do we want our students to know and be able to do?
- how will we know that they have learned it?
- what will we do if they haven't?
- what will we do when they already know it?

– Rick DuFour

Should teachers be accountable for student results? Our answer is yes. How then can this accountability be structured to provide for the wide range of differences students bring to a teacher's classroom—differences in prior knowledge, differences in proficiency at reading and writing, differences in the value their family puts on school learning, differences in motivation, differences in health and living conditions that put some children at severe disadvantage for learning in school? How can teachers be held accountable for results when there are so many variables besides their teaching influencing what students learn in a given year?

We have no choice as individual teachers and as a profession but to stand up to our responsibility for taking students from wherever they are when we get them and moving them forward. Further, we have a responsibility to bring all our students to proficiency with literacy

and numeracy, even if it takes some longer than others. We cannot be held responsible for the disadvantages students endure before and during their time with us, but we can be accountable for believing in their ability and providing rich and challenging learning environments. And by extension, we must be accountable for showing our work gets results.

Individual teacher accountability for student progress does come with the package we advocate—but not in a way that becomes a numbers game or oversimplifies the complex relationship between what teachers do and what standardized tests measure. The snapshot provided on standardized tests doesn't begin to measure the range and depth of learning we expect of children. Our measures of student learning must be sufficiently complex to capture those subtle but ultimately more important habits of mind in students that come from good teaching and quality education. Student achievement scores on annual tests may be highly inaccurate reflections of the quality of a school or the quality of teaching, as we will demonstrate in the sample evaluations to follow.

Standardized test score data must never, in and of its self, constitute a judgment about the quality of teaching. There are just too many variables that impact high or low scores; too many ways to make scores improve like emphasizing test-taking skills or focusing on the kids at the margins of cut-off scores, all of which have little to do with improving the quality of teaching and learning. The problem with a reductionist approach that reifies standardized test scores as a valid measure of teacher quality, is that it does an injustice to the complexity of teaching. There is no substitute for close observation by a skilled, knowledgeable evaluator.

In a responsible teacher evaluation system, data on student results, such as test scores, provoke questions that are the grist for substantive dialogue about the quality of teaching. We look at real student work of all kinds and ask what might be contributing to patterns in results. What are *we* doing or not doing that contributes to these results? What can we try differently? The data fuels the analysis, augments observations, and becomes the subject of dialogue. Judgment is exercised as to which data are most valuable and which data sheds little light. Data are not used as a short cut way around close observation and analysis of teaching.

Our first thesis in this essay will be that student results should be included in the improvement of teaching and teacher evaluation,

but included in a responsible way. Our second thesis is that including student results must serve the larger and more important thrust of developing shared responsibility for student learning across the school system.

The purpose, then, of examining student data is the creation of a schoolhouse culture in which looking at student work and other data about student progress becomes a part of the way we do business. *The process is as much the point as the measurement of results.* Educators in a school must be asking tough questions, trying new strategies together, and engaging in honest self-critique. In short, developing a true professional community in each school and throughout the district is what we are advocating. If properly done, attention to student results can generate processes with broad ownership. Insistence that good teaching must include an analysis of student learning is essential to productive schools and a healthy teaching and learning culture.

In Montgomery County, Maryland, responsible use of student results is the goal of the District with an ongoing partnership, not with opposition from the Montgomery County Education Association (the teachers' union). What makes the inclusion of student results responsible is: (a) defining "results" as far more than standardized test scores, (b) sharing responsibility for student learning through joint union/district design, implementation and evaluation of the professional growth/evaluation system, and (c) maintaining the emphasis on the complexities of improving teaching and learning and avoiding the pitfalls of the numbers game based simply on test scores or performance pay. In this piece, are four examples of what final evaluations look like when student results are included in what we are calling a "responsible" way.

In part I of this paper, we will share these evaluations and expand on what an evaluation system looks like that creates them. In part II, we will focus on what it takes for individuals to produce a school district to support comprehensive, results-driven teacher evaluations like the four in this text.

Part I

What Are "Results?"

A good system of analyzing student results in teacher evaluations would be able to say the following:

1. Student learning is the target, and test results are held as an indicator of it, not the full measure of it. Student results means more than standardized test scores.
2. Student results are used to stimulate courageous conversations among educators about the cause and effect connections between what they are doing and what students are learning.
3. Evaluations are narrative. Student results including numerical scores from standardized tests are only included in the narrative in the light of observational data. The meaning of data is not assumed.
4. Pay raises are never connected to standardized test scores, though this does not rule out a more professional way of recognizing superior performance. (We are in the midst of creating a "career lattice" that will recognize superior teaching as a pre-requisite to pay increases tied to additional responsibilities.)

There are many kinds of results that are important for students beyond what standardized tests measure. Students may show a capacity to analyze and synthesize data, ideas, or competing opinions. This is important in the workplace and important for citizenship as well. They may demonstrate their capacity to do these things in their writing, in their projects, and in their verbal presentations. Standardized tests in a given state may not assess these capacities; but a skillful teacher will have these learnings as targets and have data about student progress on these learnings. A good evaluator will have gathered data on targets like these and be able to document student progress.

An additional important result is the teaching of students to work together in an effective way to get something meaningful done. The SCANS report of the U.S. Department of Labor (1992) cited the ability to work productively in groups as one of the most important demands of the 21st century workplace. The same finding is echoed in the summary of workplace demands in Murnane and Levy's *The New Basic Skills* (1996).

The results that concern Americans most these days, however, are that too many of our public school graduates, especially our city kids, have inadequate literacy and numeracy skills. These are concrete and measurable results our country has a right to expect from its public schools. Unfortunately, our society does not sufficiently support teaching staffs, especially in its cities, for teachers to provide the quality of education they could. We have the knowledge; we even have loads of motivated young adults willing to undertake the job. But we do not have the staff development support, the working conditions, the demanding knowledge-based certification requirements, or the job incentives to attract and keep able teachers in our toughest schools. Provisions for certification in the new ESEA law will help, but there is no provision in the new law to support continuous teacher learning or to raise teacher salaries to attract young people to earn the certification. So the argument can plausibly be made that, along with accountability for student results, must come support for getting the job done. We are strong supporters of this argument. In fact, it has been the premise of teacher accountability in Montgomery County that teachers must have adequate resources, schools must have adequate staffing, and the teacher corps must have supportive working conditions if teachers are to be accountable for student results. We are fortunate to have a community and a school board that have strived to provide these things; and we are willing to be held accountable for student results in return. Anything less would be unprofessional on our part.

So let us now look at this concept of “results” and how a fair reporting system might be constructed that connects teacher performance to meaningful student results.

The Relation of Teaching to “Results”

Paradoxically, it is possible for students to be doing well on standardized tests while receiving poor teaching. One can conjure many reasons this could be so (e.g., highly motivated kids who come well prepared to a high school AP teacher). These students do the work themselves while the teacher sits back and expects the students to complete their assignments and get ready for the AP test. The few kids who struggle get little help, are made to feel inadequate, and may slip through the cracks. Yet, the overall test scores make the teacher look good. We include an evaluation of such a teacher in the section that follows. Despite good student scores, this person’s teaching is so inadequate that he receives an overall “unsatisfactory” rating and is

put into the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) process. His job is at risk if he doesn't improve.

It is also possible for a teacher to be doing an outstanding job and be producing significant student results, just not the kind of results that show up yet on standardized tests. Take, for example, a first grade teacher whose students arrive not knowing the alphabet, have barely any phonemic awareness, and most can't sit still for more than one minute at classroom meeting. By the end of the winter, these children have learned how to function in school, complete tasks, can be attentive for a 20 minute meeting, and most know the alphabet. They understand the conventions of writing as recorded talk and have done "interactive writing" for their first print messages. They still can't budge the needle much on the Metropolitan test, but this teacher will be passing along a group of youngsters ready, as well as eager to learn, to the second grade teacher. Even though her standardized test scores haven't moved much, documentation of student results of a different kind shows the reader that this teacher has done an outstanding job. A complete final evaluation write up of this kind of teacher is included also in the section that follows.

Considering quality of teaching and correspondent standardized test scores, there are four possibilities represented in the following graphic (see figure 1).

Figure 1

		Student Scores	
		HIGH	LOW
Teacher Performance	HIGH		
	LOW		

One can be practicing: (1) high quality teaching and getting good standardized test scores, (2) unsatisfactory teaching and have good scores, (3) unsatisfactory teaching and poor scores, and (4) high quality teach-

ing and poor scores. With good analysis and documenting skills, an evaluator can show credible and convincing evidence of all four cases. We have included examples of all four below. Notice that the evidence of what the teacher has done and what results have been produced for students are included in narrative report form. Numbers certainly have a place. Standardized test scores also have a place. But the central questions are always: what kind of student progress has been achieved; how much; and how much of it can be attributed to the teacher's work? And standardized tests, though included, are far from the only measure of the outcomes of teaching.

Here are four samples of final evaluation summaries of a teacher's performance. See if you can tell which write-up represents which box of the matrix in figure 1 as you read.

Data about student results are highlighted by bold print in the text.

Note:

The reader may think the evaluations to follow are long and require much time and effort. While we do written evaluations for any teacher in any year if there are concerns about the teacher's performance, the normal cycle calls for these comprehensive written reviews only once every five years. Thus, evaluators are not swamped in paper work. In the years between formal written evaluations, administrators must continue to visit classes and dialog with teachers, but there are no written demands for lengthy documentation of the visits. Teachers, however, must engage in rigorous, substantive self-development plans each year in which they are reviewed. Readers more interested in policy implications of this essay may want to return later to the evaluation samples that follow, and skip to Part II on page 138.

Sample Evaluations

Final Evaluation Summary

Teacher: **Jim Turner**

Date: 5/25/02

Subject/Grade: **7, 8 Mathematics**

School: Osgood

Evaluator: **Evangeline Clark**

The evaluator will summarize, in narrative form, the teacher's performance on the following standards (use additional sheets of paper as necessary).

- I. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- II. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
- III. Teachers are responsible for establishing and managing student learning in a positive learning environment.
- IV. Teachers continually assess student progress, analyze the results and adapt instruction to improve student achievement.
- V. Teachers are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.
- VI. Teachers exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

Performance Standard I. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

- Mr. Turner's response pattern challenges the quick student but does not lower standards for those who need more time to grasp material. He routinely uses wait time and cues and perseveres with students to stimulate their thinking, as well as to build confidence. (see 10/9 and 11/6/97) During the last ten minutes of class (see 10/9/97, 2/5/98), he often pulls together small groups of students who are confused and reteaches the material in a different way while other students work in pairs on similar challenge problems.

- Mr. Turner’s portfolio has logs of monthly meetings with other 8th grade math teachers in his building from 1996-99. His records include notes on case studies of individual students’ difficulties, suggestions for alternative approaches he got from his colleagues, students’ grades, and work samples showing what happened to performance after strategies were tried. During our conference, Mr. Turner pointed out the impact that manipulative materials had had on **CRT results for 8 different individuals; gain scores ranged from 35 to 85 points. He also noted improvements in overall performance on problem-solving that occurred after the 8th grade team began to use computer tutorials to supplement extra help sessions (see conference notes of 2/5.)**
- Mr. Turner both preaches continuous improvement and sets up policies and practices which make that belief come alive. Assignments must be handed in on time and represent the student’s best effort to meet the criteria for success. After feedback, students have an opportunity to re-do certain assignments or to take on an added challenge within specified time limits. Students who really want to apply themselves, try hard problems, ask for help, and work strategically, get their highest earned grade for an assignment. Thus, he confirms the value of pushing oneself to improve performance. (see conference notes re: grading and incentives, 9/13; see also project criteria sheets and samples of students “re-dos”)
- Knowing the importance of including students’ own experiences and culture in his curriculum, Mr. Turner has classes demonstrate their understanding of algebraic concepts by assigning them to make up word problems about situations in their neighborhoods that embed the concepts. These have provided humor, motivation, and a way to recognize and use the diverse backgrounds of the learners.

Performance Standard II. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

- Mr. Turner uses a variety of methods to help his students master mathematical concepts:
 - a) short lectures and demonstrations with immediate application (see 10/7 and 11/6),
 - b) frequent use of diagrams and physical models to illustrate mathematical concepts (conference notes, 2/13)
 - c) frequent checking procedures (see 10/7 and 11/6)

- d) Slavin's STAD model for practicing problem sets and reviewing for the weekly quiz each student takes individually.

Note: His grade book shows a sharp drop in failure rate since STAD's introduction. Using research findings about what makes a difference in academic achievement, Mr. Turner is working on teaching students to analyze their strategies and group processes to identify areas for improvement after each class.

- Students in Mr. Turner's classes have wide access both to him and to technology for extra help. All know how to use graphing calculators. He varies using the calculator as a checking and as an instructional device (see 10/9/97, 2/5/98) and also uses supplementary computer tutorial programs for individuals who need another approach to concepts.
- Mr. Turner is a frequent contributor to the work of the mathematics curriculum committee and serves as a math mentor for accelerated students. He was selected to highlight and explain critical 7th grade concepts to parents four times over the last three years. Students routinely describe him as an "excellent explainer."

Performance Standard III. Teachers are responsible for establishing and managing student learning in a positive learning environment.

- Mr. Turner creates a climate of openness and respect through classroom routines such as his "question pass-off and listener summary," his before-class thinker's challenge, and his notetaker's summary (see 10/9/97, 2/5/98). He greets students one by one at the door and often stands there as they leave to remind them of goals, issue praise for effort or give a bit of encouragement.
- Mr. Turner makes a regular practice of calling each family once in the first month of school to establish contact and express his interest in the child's academic progress. Accomplishing this early communication and sharing something positive before conferences in the fall, he says, lays a solid foundation for honest talk should the student have problems later on. The parents already know he is on their side and difficult conferences are less defensive. Both parent and student surveys show satisfaction. "He's really tough on us, but I know he cares," is a comment from one student oft repeated by others in similar language.

- Students share responsibility for their class's success. Each class rotates the job of taking notes for absentees who are then responsible for checking the notes folder as soon as they return. In order to insure accountability and emphasize good summarizing, Mr. Turner has the note-taker explain the notes to him at the end of class; other students can then contribute missing pieces.
- Mr. Turner is proficient both at structuring cooperative groups and at letting students select a variety of ways to work together or alone. While he has required all his students to learn the social skills of cooperative work (listening, checking others' understanding), he also respects their individual styles and provides room for them to use their strengths.

Performance Standard IV. Teachers continually assess student progress, analyze results, and adapt instruction to improve student achievement.

- Weekly lesson plans routinely included two or more assessment activities that allowed Mr. Turner to gather data about student progress; students used learning logs three or more times a week and were given detailed feedback on how well they were doing at meeting the grade level standards; Mr. Turner also instituted a monthly "strategy" session during which he shared his analysis of what each student needed to do to improve, identified "key strategies" that would make a difference, and asked students to set goals for themselves. (see folder entries from 10/7/98, 1/12/99, 2/13/99)
- During conferences after both announced and unannounced visits, Mr. Turner clearly explained how he used data from both MSPAP and Criterion Referenced Testing to make decisions about emphasis in a unit; in several instances, conclusions drawn from data (e.g., a pattern of poor performance on problems involving statistics and probability) caused him to seek additional support materials and to design new activities for required units. In each observation session, I noted the use of a "diagnostic" assessment activity.
- The student work that was displayed throughout the year and that we reviewed during our conferences consistently demonstrated an emphasis on using data about performance to improve the next attempt **at meeting the standards**. Several displays included multiple drafts in which students had done significant re-

visions, explanatory paragraphs in which students (a) analyzed what they had not understood initially and (b) explained how they had used what they learned during subsequent class sessions to improve their next attempt. (see samples in folder)

- **Analysis of CRT scores for this year and the past three years shows** a consistent pattern of gain scores above the county average for Mr. Turner's students. **He is particularly effective with** children of color where 75% are at grade level or above . Eight of his incoming 7th graders had math achievement which the grade level team deemed "at risk" of not making it into an 8th grade algebra section. Six of these students (including all three children of color) ended the year at or near grade level and were assigned to the algebra section for 8th grade math.

Performance Standard V. Teachers are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.

- Mr. Turner collects anonymous surveys from his students each year asking for feedback on his teaching. When feedback indicated problems with the timing of complex homework assignments, he was able to work with other teachers on his team to organize a more reasonable load for students yet not sacrifice the standards and rigor he wanted.
- Two years ago, Mr. Turner started a monthly math department study group. Colleagues bring articles and techniques for teaching particular concepts they have come across in their reading. These sessions often focus on particular students and how new strategies can be brought to their instruction. Mr. Turner regularly brings up his students for review in these sessions.
- As one of his 1997-98 goals, Mr. Turner focused on student goal-setting and self assessment, both of which are associated with higher long-term achievement. Mr. Turner observed two colleagues from Redlands' exemplary goal-setting project, met with the Mathematics Coordinator, and had several colleagues observe him and collect data. His plan and end-of-year report were tightly designed and showed he had learned and applied a variety of strategies (see folder samples).

Performance Standard VI. Teachers exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

- Mr. Turner participates actively in all department and faculty meetings and was a key contributor to the building SES plan. He is punctual and responsible in fulfilling hallway and other duties.
- He played a leadership role in developing the school homework policy and involving parents in the process through evening forums. Minutes of the meetings show he personally pressed for high standards and meaningful work, and devised with his department colleagues a system for checking on homework that gives student prompt feedback. This policy has been implemented across the math department.

Summary

Mr. Turner combines a strong belief in students with a wide range of teaching skills. He draws alternatives from his large repertoire when students are not responding, and is persistent and personable in sending high expectation messages to all students. He achieves strong productivity and does so with students from all backgrounds and of different learning styles. His importance to the staff is augmented by his strong contributions to the whole school community.

Meets or exceeds standards of Montgomery County Public Schools (X)

Below standards of Montgomery County Public Schools ()

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Teacher _____ Date _____

Teacher's signature below indicates he/she has read the report. Signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the report.

.....

As is probably clear to the reader, Jim Turner is a skilled teacher who is getting good results. Notice how data easily fits in narrative text, yet is precise and quantifiable where appropriate. Some data are about gain scores on Criterion Referenced Tests; some are about decrease in failure rate; some are evidence that students can use feedback to make

significant improvements in writing drafts; and finally, there is an analysis of the achievement of children of color.

The next Summary Evaluation document is of Virginia Hyskil, whose first grade class, at the end of the year, cannot produce very impressive results on standardized literacy tests.

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Final Evaluation Summary

Teacher: **Virginia Hyskil**

Date: **5/25/02**

Subject/Grade: **2nd Grade**

School: **Dupuis**

Evaluator: **Carol Insight**

The evaluator will summarize, in narrative form, the teacher's performance on the following standards (use additional sheets of paper as necessary).

- I. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- II. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
- III. Teachers are responsible for establishing and managing student learning in a positive learning environment.
- IV. Teachers continually assess student progress, analyze the results and adapt instruction to improve student achievement.
- V. Teachers are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.
- VI. Teachers exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

Performance Standard I. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

- Ms. Hyskil has demonstrated her belief that virtually all students can learn although she has faced numerous challenges this year. Only two of her 24 students had attained first grade reading level

at the start of second grade. Many students' attendance was erratic; three youngsters were pulled from school for three months by their families and then returned in mid-year. In addition, a higher than usual quota of students with ADD and two particularly difficult children made classroom management very complicated in the opening months of school. Despite these obstacles, Ms. Hyskill has worked skillfully and diligently to build a foundation of skills that will position her students for solid academic achievement in years ahead

Her first objectives were to build students' ability to attend, function responsibly and follow the routines of the classroom. Her success here is described under standard III below. Her second set of measurable outcomes focused on the behaviors displayed by competent emerging readers and writers (see Early Literacy Indicators adopted 6/98). In the opening days of school, her children were disorderly, unresponsive to behavioral corrections, unable to follow multi-step directions, unable to engage in print tasks or attend to reading aloud for more than a few minutes. **By May, her class was a model of order and busy engagement with academic tasks.** Their significant progress from non-readers to emerging readers may not have been captured on standardized comprehension tests, but **23 of 24 children were able to work independently on story writing and seven children who had not been able to decode at all in September were able read aloud from a "just right" book which they had chosen themselves.**

- Ms. Hyskil consistently encourages students and provides help in ways that credit their ability to do hard work. Observation notes of 10/19 and 12/6 have numerous examples of critical incidents where she responds sensitively to student frustration with encouragement and specific cues. (*"I can't do these. They're too hard."* *"Well, they are hard. But you've done the first four just right, so I know you've got the brainpower. What part of this one don't you understand?"*) She holds students gently but firmly accountable for finishing meaningful tasks, even while granting breaks or switching gears for a while.
- Students get daily feedback on their work and correct all mistakes themselves, either from answer sheets Ms. Hyskil provides or in paired "editing" with other students. Students must explain the reasons for their corrections to Ms. Hyskil before taking their papers home. Being a "good explainer" of your corrections (see 1/17) is highly valued and praised in the class, so being speedy is

less important than understanding. She builds confidence by teaching her students that errors are opportunities for learning.

Performance Standard II. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

- At the beginning of the year, two students in Ms. Hyskil's class still struggled with phonic awareness of initial consonant sounds, although they had alphabetic recognition. After consulting with the reading specialist, Ms. Hyskil adopted a set of strategies specifically targeted to help these students make progress toward meeting grade level standards. She also provided a set of materials for parents to use at home. While they were working to catch up on their skill deficiencies, both children were full and active members of literature discussions and were able to participate in "reading" predictable texts and class poems. **Both youngsters can now do beginning decoding, and comprehend stories read to them at a high second grade level. They can read books at the "D" level in guided reading.**
- All students spend at least a half-hour daily in book groups with Ms. Hyskil or her aide. In addition, the total class meets as a group daily to play language games (see observation of 9/23 when children holding word cards arranged themselves to make sensible sentences in various ways). She has diagnosed the perceptual strengths and learning styles of all her students and varies her reading instruction accordingly (assessment instruments student profiles shared at conference of 10/19). Her astounding repertoire of materials and approaches, always focused on specific learning outcomes, has resulted in consistent high engagement of **her students and steady progress as demonstrated in her reading records and portfolios for each child (see standard IV).**
- Ms. Hyskil has created a collection of cassette tapes that use a strategy for slow reading and chunking by units of meaning. She constantly adds books her individual students want to learn to read and has them read aloud between the pauses in her taped phrases. As a result of practicing at this slow pace with her voice and the visual cues of the page, over a dozen of her children can actually read these short books.
- A master of using manipulative materials to illustrate mathematical ideas, Ms. Hyskil always has students verbalize in full sentences what they are doing when they, for example, trade 10 white rods for an orange. (From observation of 12/6.)

Performance Standard III. Teachers are responsible for establishing and managing student learning in a positive learning environment.

- Early in the year, many students were unable to sit still for over two minutes without fidgeting or disrupting in some way. This behavior was also present in small instructional groups. **By Thanksgiving, Ms. Hyskil could hold 10-minute meetings with good focus from the whole class including three children who had been diagnosed with ADD.** She worked very effectively during the first two weeks of school to teach routines and establish patterns of respect among students. Observations of 9/23 and 10/19 show evidence of her constant vigilance, high standards, and positive attribution in her corrective moves to refocus students (“Tony, you forgot that we were listening to Jamey. I know you can be a good listener.”)
- Students know they are safe and will be treated fairly when conflicts arise. The **number of fights between students in Ms. Hyskil’s class in the cafeteria, hallway, and play yard has decreased from several a day to one or less a week.** She has used immediate interventions and a special time out procedure to end conflicts swiftly. More importantly, she has gone on to teach her students conflict resolution strategies, an approach which is unprecedented in the school. Students now generate alternatives for handling situations of conflict and practice restitution for wrongs to others (see dialogs from 12/6 observation).
- Every night since the second week of school, Ms. Hyskil has called two families of children in her class to share good news and get to know parents and their concerns. She has used a personalized library of short books to send home with children for parents to read to them and has had great success in using these experiences to engage both parents and children in conversations. Several other teachers have adopted the practice.
- Ms. Hyskil’s 24 second graders, most non-readers, have a history of erratic attendance through grade K and 1. Until this year, seven families had never had a representative at a parent conference or back to school night. Largely as a result of Ms Hyskil’s efforts, **all but one family has attended at least one school function this year** and all families have responded more positively to contact with school personnel than in the past.

Performance Standard IV. Teachers continually assess student progress, analyze results, and adapt instruction to improve student achievement.

- In addition to daily language and writing groups, Ms. Hyskil meets weekly with each child individually to do assessment and goal setting for reading and writing skills. She has up to date “running reading records” with details of each child’s decoding ability and attainments in developmental skills (using context clues, word recognition, punctuation, etc.). Individual tasks are constructed for each child congruent with their goals. A parent volunteer corps of 8 people she has recruited from the school community works individually with the youngsters who most need extra tutoring to meet their goals. Ms. Hyskil prepares packets for each of these volunteers weekly and has a monthly group supervision session on Friday afternoons. This is an extraordinary commitment to providing individualized instruction and supervised practice for her students.
- **Average engaged time per student has increased from <40% to >75%.** Ms. Hyskil’s data comes from time study records she asked her colleague, Ms. Donahue, to collect during several peer observations this year and is confirmed by her evaluator’s tallies as well. Logs, checklists and running records from the Reading Initiative data forms show that **over 65% of Ms. Hyskil’s students have exceeded one grade level of growth on literacy indicators. Seven of her students can now read independently at the first grade level,** a huge increase from their incoming proficiency.
- While few of her students are on grade level in math, **her class logs of mastery of MCPS objectives show significant progress** for most of her students. She arranged tutoring by 5th graders for several of her students who lagged furthest behind. Though their progress remained slow, by the end of the year, they were looking forward to working with their “big brother” and “big sister” tutors after previously rejecting working on math at all. Ms. Hyskil has consulted with the area math specialist and varied the materials used with these students to match their visual and tactile learning styles.
- Ms. Hyskil has constructed a bar graph with data on each student to analyze progress on Reading Initiative checklists by race. The top three scoring students, including the two students reading at grade level, are white. These results are appropriate, given entry skills of her students.

Performance Standard V. Teachers are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.

- Ms. Hyskil has both consulted and led her colleagues at weekly grade level meetings, in examining new strategies to involve students in authentic experiences, and then writing in their journals about these experiences. She attended a course in primary literacy with special emphasis on spelling and grammar to try to bring to her team perspective on this issue for emerging readers and writers. As a result, she and her colleagues have developed an easily accessed “spelling bank” for commonly used words in her class. Students who are ready, use this tool after they have produced written products. Several of her students are still at the stage of dictating stories to her and to volunteers and are not ready for this device yet.

Performance Standard VI. Teachers exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

- Ms. Hyskil participates actively in faculty meetings. She has become an informal second mentor for a new teacher. The teacher’s official mentor is in another building. She has been very generous with her time, especially on Friday afternoons, and checks in with the new teacher to debrief the week and help her look ahead.
- She played a leadership role in the development of the new playground policy and the development of peer mediation training — an integral part of the playground policy. She attended the training herself and has been an effective coach to the upper grade children who are implementing the mediation strategies.

Summary

Ms. Hyskil has done a marvelous job of building a smooth flowing and warm environment where children are active and learning all day long. She is to be commended for her extraordinary accomplishments in moving all children forward. A large number of children entering with behavioral and academic profiles that put them at risk for school failure are now ready to learn. Next year’s teacher will inherit a class willing and able to advance from a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy.

Meets or exceeds standards of Montgomery County Public Schools (X)

Below standards of Montgomery County Public Schools ()

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Teacher _____ Date _____

Teacher's signature below indicates he/she has read the report. Signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the report.

.....

By the end of the year, Ms. Hyskil's children cannot budge the score very much on the Metropolitan test, which the district uses to assess literacy progress. But clearly, she has brought them a long way — and the data supports that conclusion. The data, however, that allows us to see how much she has achieved is not from standardized tests. From "disorderly and unresponsive," her students have become a model of order and busy engagement with academic tasks, able to work independently and sit attentively at classroom meetings. Fights are down, engagement is up (both quantifiable indicators). But most important, running records, class logs, checklists, and records of books read, show that 65% of her students have gained more than one year in readiness indicators. So in sum, standardized test scores may still be low, but a range of data shows that her teaching is achieving excellent results on other measures of academic progress.

The details of the narrative write-up tells us much about why she is getting these results. Excellent feedback on student work, classroom climate building, confidence building all take place and evidence tell us how she does these things. Thus, we have a skilled teacher whose skills are supported by evidence and whose results are documented in credible and convincing ways.

.....

Our next teacher, Ms. Marsh is not doing too well.

Final Evaluation Summary

Teacher: **Sybil Marsh**

Date: 5/25/02

Subject/Grade: **7, 8 Mathematics**

School: **Osgood**

Evaluator: **Arthur Clark**

The evaluator will summarize, in narrative form, the teacher's performance on the following standards (use additional sheets of paper as necessary).

- I. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- II. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
- III. Teachers are responsible for establishing and managing student learning in a positive learning environment.
- IV. Teachers continually assess student progress, analyze the results and adapt instruction to improve student achievement.
- V. Teachers are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.
- VI. Teachers exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

Performance Standard I. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

- Ms. Marsh's pattern of communicating expectations and structuring instruction is not designed to help all students in the classroom learn and achieve at high levels. During 3 separate announced observations (10/15/98, 11/30/98, 3/18/99) Ms. Marsh went through the same process of reviewing homework problems one by one. She called only on students who raised their hands, to assist her in solutions for board problems. Three or four individuals, all male, did most of the responding. The majority of the class were neither called upon nor checked to see if they were following her explanations.

On both 10/15 and 11/30, I observed several students copying problems off the board, which suggested they had not done the homework. Questioned about those students in the post conferences, Ms. Marsh remarked that the class was “above some of the students’ heads” and that she knew precisely who they were. She said at least by letting them have something to hand in they could hold on to a bit of self-esteem. She rejected my suggestion that self-esteem comes through achievement and mastery and that she was not doing them a favor by allowing them to slide through. When asked how they performed on quizzes and exams, she replied, “they fail most of them.” When asked what supplementary instruction she arranged for these students, she replied, “It’s really not much use when I have so many other motivated kids who need my help.” When asked (10/15/98) why she gives these students tests she knows they will fail instead of using test time for some remedial instruction, she said she hadn’t thought of it, but it might be a good idea. At the April conference, she said she had not had time to try that strategy yet.

- I observed no examples of varying instruction for different learning styles or for students with rich but different cultural backgrounds. When asked how she provides for such differences, Ms. Marsh replied that the daily extra help time she provides after school is when she individualizes.
- Ms. Marsh is consistently available in her classroom after 8th period. On several drop-in visits, I noted that sometimes she was alone and sometimes one or two students were working with her. These were students from the top third of the class working with her for help on extra credit problems. I asked if any of the low performing students ever showed up. She said, “rarely.” When I suggested she make appointments with the ones she felt needed the most help, she replied, “I feel they have to take responsibility for their own learning. Isn’t that one of the goals of our school?”
- Ms. Marsh’s lack of pursuit of low performing students together with the minimal interaction she has with them in class is sending consistent low expectation messages to a substantial segment of her students. Their confidence needs to be boosted through contact, help, encouragement, and concrete skill building. This is not happening at an acceptable level.

Performance Standard II. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

- All classes observed were recitation lessons involving teacher generated recall questions and student answers. The objective was expressed as “covering” Chapter X or the material that had been assigned. These periods were followed by teacher lecture / presentation on the board, followed by having individual students practice for about ten minutes until the end of class. No group work or manipulatives were observed. Ms. Marsh missed the opportunity to have students work in pairs and help each other. She circulated once around the class during the last five minutes; other than that time, she waited at her desk for the bell. There was neither a teacher led nor student generated summary.
- After the 10/15 observation, I suggested connecting the algebra to real life situations and using some of the MSPAP sample problems which students generally find complex and engaging. Ms. Marsh “doubted they would benefit from that.” I recommended having the students make up word problems that would employ the single variables she was working with. She agreed to try the idea. Later that month she reported to me that “it had been beyond most of them.” When I asked to see samples of what they had produced, she said she had discarded them.
- Instruction relies entirely on paper and pencil practice and the use of the chalkboard. During four different drop-in visits and three announced observations, I noted no use of technology, concrete models, visuals or demonstrations using manipulatives, or of the supplementary problem packet prepared by the 8th grade team. In all except one instance, computers in the back of the room were dusty and disconnected. Ms. Marsh admits that she has not yet included technology in her course designs or supplemental work with students. She intends to make it a focus for her professional development next year.
- The lack of both variety in instructional methods and relevance to students’ lives, makes Ms. Marsh’s instruction boring and deprives students of the alternate ways to think about and master concepts which are available to their classmates in other sections. The lack of opportunities to talk through their thinking in pairs, pose questions, find extensions or work with complex messy problems means students currently performing in the middle and lower third of the class are less likely to be successful on state and district

assessment tasks and may be limited from taking higher level courses.

Performance Standard III. Teachers are responsible for establishing and managing student learning in a positive learning environment.

- Ms. Marsh has surprisingly few overt discipline problems. "She'll kill us if we're out of line," said one sophomore to a question of mine after class. Yet she tolerates a high degree of low level talking and off task behavior. This is documented in all three observations conducted this year. Student scans at five minute intervals revealed **over 50% off task time for two thirds of the students. This is unacceptable.**
- There is no evidence of varying formats for individual or small group work. Queried about the persistence of recitation lessons, Ms. Marsh said the format was the best choice for maintaining control and keeping the class on task. Data(cited above)collected from observation does not support this assertion. Ms. Marsh initially claimed that I had come on a bad day. When confronted with the fact that the figures were consistent for all three observations, she replied, "I don't think you can tell all that much from kids' body language."
- Neither observations nor examinations of student work and teacher feedback yielded evidence that Ms. Marsh works on student goal setting and risk taking. Ms. Marsh's response pattern has been documented under standard I. Feedback on student work contains no specific comments about what to improve, and no correction or "see me" messages. I neither observed nor heard accounts of supplemental instruction or persistence with students who struggle. Students who asked for help were treated differently, depending upon whether Ms. Marsh perceived them to be "bright" or not. (see 3/18/99)

Performance Standard IV. Teachers continually assess student progress, analyze results, and adapt instruction to improve student achievement.

- Four different reviews of lesson and unit plans during the school year yielded no evidence that Ms. Marsh knew and was attempting to develop the competencies being assessed either as part of the MCPS CRT program or as part of MSPAP. Three of these lesson plan reviews (12/2/97, 3/19/98, 4/2/98) occurred.

- a) after Ms. Marsh had indicated that she did not understand how she was to “use all this test stuff”(10/16/97) and had subsequently been given 2 months of planning support from her Instructional Resource Teacher and
- b) after both the principal and the mathematics curriculum specialist had met with Ms. Marsh for a total of 6 hours each to help her practice analyzing student work and planning a variety of ways to reteach concepts which children found troubling.

Thus, while students in other classes were able to work on developing background knowledge and experiences necessary for their future understanding of Algebra, Ms. Marsh’s students received little or no opportunity to do so.

- At her request, Ms. Marsh was given copies of the appropriate curriculum guidelines and grade level standards on three different occasions between August 1997 and March 1999. When we conferenced on 4/2/99, however, Ms. Marsh was unable to find any one of the copies. Thus, she was unable to respond to questions about what progress students in her class *should* have made by early April and what next steps they would need to take in order to be ready to demonstrate what they knew.
- At each pre-conference, Ms. Marsh was asked to be prepared to show: (a) how she used informal diagnostic assessments to get data about individual and group performance, and (b) how she used that data to modify instruction. In three of the four classroom observations (10/15/98, 11/30/98, and 3/18/99) Ms. Marsh responded to this request by distributing worksheets and a game, both of which were yellowed and at least 7 years old; in a 4th session she had students engage in the practice of skills not assigned to her grade level and told them that “my diagnosis is that you all disappointed me. I was sure you were smarter than this work shows.” Student responses to the computer challenge exercises used during the observation of 3/18/99 and to the requirement that they work in groups to solve problems indicated that they were unfamiliar with both tasks. (see 3/18/99 and 4/11/98).
- **On informal pre-testing conducted by the eighth grade teams in November 1998 and again in January 1999, Ms. Marsh’s students were significantly less able to deal with geometry questions.** Ms. Marsh explained that the results were not surprising because she “had not had time to do any geometry yet.” When

she was asked to examine four years of comparative data showing that her classes had consistently lower performance on geometry items and on open-ended questions requiring application of geometry concepts, Ms. Marsh said that she did not like geometry and probably had skipped many of the activities in the geometry strand because she “thought the kids would get that later.”

- Ms. Marsh’s CRT scores over the last three years show an average of **70% of her students on grade level by the end of the year, slightly below the school average. When the data are further disaggregated, her low performing students show negative gain scores from the previous year while her average performing students show flat scores.** While many students appear to come to her class motivated and able to do grade level work, students who cannot do the work will fall further behind their age mates. When she was asked whether she knew about the pattern of poor performance and had made any attempt to change her instruction, Ms. Marsh said that “There is not much I can do when the kids come into 7th grade with such weak arithmetic skills and I have to review their number facts over and over again. At no point during a 45 minute discussion of how patterns revealed by test data could be helpful, did Ms. Marsh offer a suggestion about what she might think about or do differently.

Performance Standard V. Teachers are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.

- Ms. Marsh distributed student surveys in January but reported that not all the students returned them to her. Thus, she had no analysis of student feedback to share with me. I asked why she did not have the students fill the surveys out in class to ensure a 100% return rate. She said she did “not want to use class time for such business.” I directed her to redo the surveys in the spring. When asked for her analysis in April, she replied that there had been no useful information in the student responses. I find Ms. Marsh’s discounting of the usefulness of student input a significant problem.
- Her portfolio documents attendance at a professional development course last year in the use of the graphing calculator. Her end of year report cites introduction of the calculator to her high level algebra class, but not her basic level class where MCPS’s own research shows it contributes most to student gain scores. When confronted with this information, Ms. Marsh said her students

were not ready for the graphing calculator, since they still had basic algebraic algorithms to master. Denying students access to the visual modeling and rapid processing of graphing calculators, walls low performing pupils off from a significant learning aid. It is both a serious instructional mistake and reveals a lack of belief that all students can improve their performance incrementally given effective effort and strategies.

- Ms. Marsh has attended department and school faculty meetings during which SES plans were made and assessed. She makes substantive contributions to the discussions when the topic is programs for gifted and talented students or teacher professional development.

Performance Standard VI. Teachers exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

- Ms. Marsh performs expected hall duties and files reports and attendance sheets in a timely manner.

Summary

Ms. Marsh's overall performance is not meeting the needs of all students. I find her response to suggestions and direction for improvement unsatisfactory. I therefore recommend her for entrance into the PAR program and intensive assistance throughout next year.

Meets or exceeds standards of Montgomery County Public Schools ()

Below standards of Montgomery County Public Schools (X)

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Teacher _____ Date _____

Teacher's signature below indicates he/she has read the report. Signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the report.

.....

There is ample documentation in this evaluation of Ms. Marsh's poor teaching practices. She shows inertia and flat resistance to pursue low performing students or make instruction more relevant. There is no variety in the instruction and poor alignment between her lessons

and the curriculum. Finally, the student data reported in Standard IV clinches the unsatisfactory rating. This one, and evaluations like it, are not pleasant to write, but they are at least clear. Poor teaching, poor results.

Now let us look at a report that would not be written under most evaluations systems, because the students appear on the surface to be doing well. But when evaluators have the skills to do detailed analysis of both teaching practice and student results, new doors open.

.....

Final Evaluation Summary

Teacher: **Dale Sufferin**

Date: **5/25/02**

Subject/Grade: **AP American and European Lit.**

School: **Horace Mann H.S.**

Evaluator: **Geraldine Duffy**

The evaluator will summarize, in narrative form, the teacher's performance on the following standards (use additional sheets of paper as necessary).

- I. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- II. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
- III. Teachers are responsible for establishing and managing student learning in a positive learning environment.
- IV. Teachers continually assess student progress, analyze the results and adapt instruction to improve student achievement.
- V. Teachers are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.
- VI. Teachers exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

Performance Standard I. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

- Mr. Sufferin’s actions do not consistently help students meet quantifiable learning outcomes. Mr. Sufferin believes that he has high standards for student performance, both in class and on tests and papers. It is difficult, however, for students to know what those standards are. Feedback on work is non-specific and gives students little or no insight on what they have done to earn the judgments. “Very good analysis,” “Yes,” “No,” “Poor” are typical marginal and final comments on papers. I examined an entire set of papers Mr. Sufferin was preparing to return during our preconference on 11/18 and found no variation from this pattern of feedback. When asked about the lack of specificity, Mr. Sufferin said the students knew his expectations because he had “gone over them verbally in September” and that some of them were just lazy. He further said that problems are clarified in class. I saw no such evidence of clarification during my four observations, nor any confirmation from students that they knew what to do to improve. “Well, I guess he just didn’t like it.” was a typical comment. Students also reported that they rarely took the opportunity to rewrite work because second drafts are simply graded—usually with the same mark as on the first—and never contain comments. Mr. Sufferin needs to devote much more time to giving students specific feedback on how to improve their work and to spend time with them individually explaining this feedback when necessary.
- Few students ask substantive questions in class or elaborate upon or debate one another’s responses. During my four observations, three students asked questions at the end of lectures. Two were procedural questions about dates and forms of upcoming tests. One student asked Mr. Sufferin to clarify a point he had made in a lecture about the Great Gatsby. “I don’t think we were listening very well this morning, Mr. Smith,” was his reply. “I hope your group were taking better notes than you were!” Nine out of twelve students in the honors section said they perceived that Mr. Sufferin regards questions as interruptions or signals of lack of attention and that they go elsewhere to find help when they do not understand something.
- Mr. Sufferin’s predominant pattern of teaching, lecture, provides for no student interaction either with the teacher or with other students, and no monitoring mechanisms prior to tests and pa-

pers to assess how students are assimilating material. The patterns of teaching illustrated further below show that Mr. Sufferin is committed to presenting his material, but not to students and their learning.

Performance Standard II. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

- In my three of my formal observations this fall and winter (see write-ups of 9/20, 10/7,11/18, and 1/6), the pattern of teaching was the same. Mr. Sufferin began the class promptly at the bell with a short lecture on an aspect of the current novel and expected students to take notes. After approximately 20 minutes, he stopped and asked if there were any questions. When I asked later if he ever examines the notes, he replied, "No. They're AP students. That's their responsibility." Following the lecture he divided students into groups of four or five to discuss the material he had presented. No guidelines or questions were provided for these discussions. Mr. Sufferin sat at his desk during this group work, correcting tests. Most students attempted to review their notes with their peers. Some started on the next reading assignment. Mr. Sufferin commented later that cooperative learning groups were encouraged by the county. When I reported the varied quality of discussion I had heard and the confusion of many students, he said he would give some thought to my suggestion for explicit questions and tasks for the groups. I also suggested a time to discuss and a sharing/check-in time at the end of class. He felt my recommendation that he circulate himself and listen to the group conversations would stifle student spontaneity.
- During my 11/18 observation, Mr. Sufferin was reviewing for an upcoming unit test. He asked a series of questions presumably representing essay topics that would appear on the test. He called on seven different students during the class, all white (there are four students of color in this 23 student class). No follow-up or extension questions were asked when the answer he appeared to be seeking was found. When a student failed to give a complete answer, another student was immediately called on to finish. "So what did the train represent in Fitzgerald's imagery?" Student 1 "The charging machine in the garden of American life." Yes, but what else: Tom? (Tom answers.) No student received cues or probes to reveal their thinking. The questions and answers were aimed at producing specific answers Mr. Sufferin had in mind. This kind of dialogue is unacceptable in any class, but especially

an AP class where student thinking and analytical skills are as important to develop as their factual knowledge of literature.

Performance Standard III. Teachers are responsible for establishing and managing student learning in a positive learning environment.

- At the beginning of class Mr. Sufferin stands at the door and greets students, often with a joke about their appearance or a personal comment that shows some knowledge of what they're doing in sports or clubs outside of class. There is considerable bantering around his desk before and after class. His good humor is often mentioned in student surveys which, all in all, convey the image of a popular teacher.
- Mr. Sufferin has a reputation in the community as a scholar and a demanding teacher. Many parents ask to have their student assigned to his section, a fact he pointed out to me. Parent surveys confirm that many parents value his toughness. Parents of students in the lower quadrant of his grade distribution, however, are more likely to mention "need for extra help". These comments showed up in various forms in eight surveys I read.

Performance Standard IV. Teachers continually assess student progress, analyze results, and adapt instruction to improve student achievement.

- Students in Mr. Sufferin's classes do well on the AP tests. His percentage of students with 1s and 2s is approximately the same as the rest of the department. The percentage of African-American students scoring 1s and 2s is also about the same as other teachers. The small number of students of color in AP classes at Horace Mann makes statistical comparisons difficult.
- Mr. Sufferin gives grades on unit tests and analytical papers he assigns at the conclusion of novels and poetry units. The grade distribution of As through Cs is approximately a bell curve. Student grades were remarkably consistent over the year, with no examples of low performing students improving and three examples of low performing student scoring lower than in previous years.
- It is difficult to credit the performance of Mr. Sufferin's students on the AP exams, which are near the school average, to his teaching. The students are doing it on their own with very little help

from him. There is no evidence of analysis of student results or adaptation or even change in his pattern of instruction to try to elevate the performance of lower performing students. Mr. Sufferin's good personal relationships with students and his reputation for "toughness" allow him to get by without standing out in a school where parental expectations are high and students in his classes are strongly motivated to get help elsewhere. Thus, they continue to do well on AP exams. Mr. Sufferin must take improving student performance seriously and provide the clear expectations, periodic checking, and help to all his students that will raise all boats.

Performance Standard V. Teachers are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.

- This fall, Mr. Sufferin arranged a joint seminar with department members, George Washington University graduate students, and visiting Professor Dimitri Koskiosko from Berkeley on "parallels between modern Russian and American literature". Several department members attended the series and reported it to be an enriching academic experience.

Performance Standard VI. Teachers exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

- Mr. Sufferin participates actively in all department and faculty meetings and was a contributor to the building SES plan. He is punctual and responsible in fulfilling hallway and other duties.
- He has accepted requests to run department meetings when the chair is unavailable and produced minutes for review each time.

Summary

Mr. Sufferin displays an exceedingly narrow range of teaching skills. He has inappropriate expectations of all his students' ability to frame their own questions and absorb material on their own. He does little to cultivate interaction, intellectual dialog, or reflective thinking in his classes. He has been resistant to analyzing student results in relation to his own teaching and rejected suggestions for change. I recommend him for intensive assistance under the PAR program.

Meets or exceeds standards of Montgomery County Public Schools ()

Below standards of Montgomery County Public Schools (X)

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Teacher _____ Date _____

Teacher's signature below indicates he/she has read the report. Signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the report.

.....

Student results on their own would not have put Mr. Sufferin into the spotlight. His failure rate is not that much higher than others that it would attract the attention of any but the most careful inspectors. His teaching, however, is clearly unsatisfactory on many dimensions; as readers we become convinced of that by the ample documentation. And behind this documentation lie the classroom observations referenced in the text.

What skillful evaluation allows us to do is demand high standards of teaching from all our people...even those who get results they don't deserve. There are signs in the data that Mr. Sufferin's teaching is a cracked edifice, hidden by the motivation his AP students bring to their work despite his insufficient teaching. But when we analyze the teaching in depth, the inadequacy is revealed.

.....

Part II

What does it take for individuals to produce and a school district to support, comprehensive and results-driven teacher evaluations like the four above?

Multiple-Year Cycles Designed to Emphasize Professional Growth

Teacher evaluation is part of a multiple-year Professional Growth Cycle in Montgomery. Teacher evaluation is taken seriously, but it is secondary in the design to supporting the Professional Learning Community among the adults in a school and continual improvement of teaching for people who are competent professionals. Don't get us wrong: unsatisfactory teaching is dealt with in ways that are direct and decisive. Intensive assistance is provided for low performing teachers and those who do not improve are dismissed. Approximately 100 teachers a year out of 11,000 have left our teaching force because of poor performance since we initiated our Professional Growth cycle two years ago. But firing bad teachers is not the purpose of the cycle. The purpose is providing resources and structures for the constant improvement of the good people we already have, which as in most districts, is the vast majority of our workforce.

The staffing and supervisory ratios in most American schools make it impossible for administrators to do comprehensive teacher evaluations with thoroughness, quality, and full documentation annually. Class visits and feedback conversations should be on-going, every year, for every teacher. And formal evaluation must be an option for any teacher, any year when there are concerns. But recognize (as all functioning administrators do) that it's the paperwork associated with formal evaluations that is the killer when the supervisory ratio is between 25 to 1 and 50 to 1 (vs. the recognized optimum ratio in industry of between 8 and 12 to 1). Therefore, one purpose of the multiple-year Professional Growth Cycle is to reduce this paper load without reducing the quality and intensity of supervision and feedback teachers receive.

Non-tenured teachers in Montgomery are still evaluated every year for their first three years of employment, but the load is divided between the principal and a corps of Consulting Teachers released from the classroom for three-year tours of duty. Tenured teachers enter a cycle that gradually expands to formal evaluation every five years.

Overall, this structure significantly reduces paper work for evaluators; but we realize we still need to do more on that score.

The Consulting Teachers are part of the union/management collaboratively run Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program that serves both teachers new to teaching and tenured teachers with below standard evaluations. PAR has proven to provide better intensive support to bring teachers up to standard than our previous system of administrators and school based supports. That allows school based supports to focus on the Professional Growth Cycle for the vast majority of teachers who meet standard.

The main feature of this Professional Growth Cycle is that structures and support have been created that both challenge and enable teachers to be responsible for their own constant improvement. In the years between formal evaluations, teachers are required to undertake self-designed and substantive programs of instructional improvement tailored to their needs and the needs of their students. Ramping things up further, peer visits and analysis of teaching are required for all Montgomery teachers several times during at least one year of the cycle. Staff Development Teachers are available in each building to assist with annual professional growth plans, and to ensure that they are substantive and not fluff.

The creation of the Staff Development Teacher position in every school represents a major commitment of the county to the development of teachers as the key to the improvement of student results. We are convinced that examining the structure of the workplace for teachers and focusing resources on increasing their capacity is central to improving student results. And we don't want readers to be scared off as we profile the steps we have taken to accomplish these new structures in Montgomery County: "Oh, we could never afford that." This effort and these positions come from redistributing and focusing resources where they can do the most good for student learning. Others have done the same by reallocating the resources they already have (District #2 in New York City; Jefferson County Colo.). Equally important is joining the examination of student results to building a strong professional community of openness and non-defensive self-examination of practice. Our Staff Development Teachers are one potent way of focusing on this critical facet of school culture.

It is important to note that these new positions allow much more effective use of administrators' time. Total number of evaluations is reduced through the multiple-year cycle. Consulting teachers reduce

the net number of formal observation write-ups the principal must do, yet keeps him/her in the loop. Consulting teachers magnify the administrators' reach to help struggling beginning and experienced teachers. The principal now has able partners in instructional leadership and can focus his/her time where it is most needed in supervision and evaluation and other aspects of instructional leadership.

For other details, write to us for our Professional Growth Cycle Handbook. We recognize that details are important, but we would like in this article to return to the main theme: what does it take to make inclusion of student results in teacher evaluations serve the broader agenda of a data based culture of continuous improvement for student learning? The point we have tried to make here is that it is possible to design a multiple-year Professional Growth Cycle in which teacher evaluation goes on all the time, not just in episodic spasms, and makes it the responsibility of more than just the principal. We can have systems that reduce paperwork, reduce the frequency of formal teacher evaluation, but actually makes the assessment of teaching effectiveness an every year, all-the-time event that includes teacher colleagues and teachers themselves in a professional way.

Demands of Data Gathering – Sources Beyond Classroom Observation

Readers will see from the sample evaluations above, that the data about the teacher's performance came from more than just classroom observations by administrators. The teacher him/herself was a significant source of data, especially for areas pertaining to one's own professional development and relations with the staff, parents and community.

We use a framework for Teaching and Learning to guide our data collection. The six areas about which we collect data are:

- Expectations: how do we see evidence of a belief in effort-based intelligence show up in Practices, Behaviors, Structures and Staff Talk?
- Curriculum: what is the evidence that the Montgomery County Curriculum is being taught, managed, and adapted for students while maintaining high standards?
- Planning: what is the evidence that teacher planning is precise, flexible, aligned, and based on on-going analysis of student performance?

- Instruction: what is the evidence that there is a repertoire of instructional strategies matched to students appropriately?
- Evidence of Student Learning: what are the artifacts, samples, products and records of student learning in evidence besides grades?
- Professional Learning Community: what is the evidence that we are developing adult cultures of systematic examination of student work, non-defensive self-examination, reaching out to the knowledge base and shared responsibility for student learning? What is the evidence that we create time and structures so these qualities of courageous and supportive conversations can occur with frequency and depth?

With this framework, we have attempted to come back full circle to our opening proposition that the process is as much the point as the measurement of student results. We are asking tough questions about the things that matter, trying new strategies together, and focusing resources where they can do the most good...in each teachers' classroom and the development of an expert teacher for each child.

The assessment movement of the late 1990s made the point that data gathering about how students are doing, and feedback to them about their work must not be infrequent and episodic. So with us as professionals: assessment, self-assessment, and data gathering should be continuous. We are cultivating these habits of practice for the adults in Montgomery County as well as for the students.

Gathering data of the types above is not onerous, but it is a new feature of teacher evaluation in most districts. Therefore, we have offered training to all our evaluators in how to collect it as part of their daily rounds in the school as opposed to add-on chores to their already full days.

Training

Other training is required as well. Administrators and department chairs receive 72 hours of training in: (1) the skills of observing and analyzing teaching; (2) gathering data from multiple sources; (3) writing with a balance of claims, evidence, interpretations, and judgments; (4) differential conferencing; and (5) the importance of Professional Community to better teaching and thus better student results. The courses create a common language and concept system for dialog about teaching practice and are integrated with professional development offerings for teachers. It is important to note, however, that

the purposes of the extensive professional development apparatus (15 full time in-house trainers who provide services to all teachers and administrators in the county) is not to prepare teachers for evaluation (i.e., to arm them to know what evaluators are expecting). The entire approach to the knowledge base is that it defines *repertoires of options* in important areas of performance, not singular “effective” behaviors that evaluators will come looking for with checklists. Capacity for insightful *analysis* of teaching, in all its complexity, is what these PD experiences develop, in both administrators and teachers alike. Beyond instructional strategies, beyond, classroom management, this knowledge base includes learning how to get low performing students to exert effective effort and to believe in themselves. It includes challenging our own beliefs about innate intelligence. And it includes the planning and design skills of good curriculum thinkers, which all teachers must also be. Lest one think 72 hours is an overdose of training, it is just the beginning of career long learning about expert teaching practice. But if we believe all children can learn, *really* believe that, then we must also provide every child with an expert teacher. So readers can see that we are attempting something very big here (i.e., to make real the promise to reach every child with the teaching they need). Including student results in teacher evaluation is but one component, albeit an essential one, of this larger mission.

So therefore, the purpose of the professional development offerings for teachers is to create professional communities of practice. In these communities, the knowledge base on teaching is used as a resource pool in which to dip when one needs something new to change teaching practice in light of student results.

Administrative Leadership That Puts a Premium on Developing Strong Professional Community, Especially:

- shared responsibility for student learning
- continual and systematic examination of student data
- respect for the complexity of teaching
- continuous and strong professional development
- norms of collegiality in the culture of the school

We have taken our lead from the thinking of Newmann and Wehlage (1995), Elmore (1996), Louis (2001), and many others who have consistently pointed to the linear correspondence between professional community and better student results. And why not; strong professional community directly leads to better teaching. And better teach-

ing is the most powerful correlate of student achievement (Sanders 1996; Mendro 1998; Gross 1999).

Our training and supervision of administrators, therefore, focuses on how they facilitate a respectful collegial climate and strengthen these communities among faculty and staff. We conduct annual “school environment surveys” of faculty and staff that are combined with parent and student surveys to constitute a “quality” accountability measure for each school. Ultimately, we believe our evaluation of administrators must hold them accountable for good process as well as good product. Translation: show evidence you are fostering Professional Community in your building and teams; show evidence also that your student results are improving.

We know that we have a long way to go. We have yet to reach the majority of our teaching force with the staff development they desire on expanding repertoires of teaching skills (Studying Skillful Teaching I and II). We are only half-way through developing a evaluation system for administrators that mirrors what we have designed in the teachers’ Professional Growth Cycle (i.e., the emphasis on building Professional Learning Community and improving teaching simultaneous to examination of student results). Yet we are confident we can keep these initiatives going because we are tackling this massive restructuring of teaching with joint ownership by the teachers association and the school department. The principals’ association has a full-time release position for its leadership this year for the first time; we are hoping this will enable our building leaders to enter as full partners in planning this culture change as well.

Labor-Management Partnership

The subtext of this essay on students’ results and teacher evaluation has been a culture change in our county, one that is far from complete. It is a culture change that shows up in allocation of resources, new structures, and new behaviors. It is a change that acknowledges and honors the complexity of teaching; it is a change that fosters courageous conversations, based on data, about how to improve instruction and, thus, student achievement; and it is a culture change of stepping up to the plate and claiming responsibility, joint responsibility, as teachers and administrators for student results. We would have made little progress on this journey, however, had we not had an unusual agreement from the outset, renewed each year and struggled with each year, between school board, teachers’ union, and superintendent that we must share responsibility and continually support

and push one another in the work. The design, implementation, and the evaluation of how we're doing with our new Professional Growth system has been a partnership from day one.

In 1996, a blue ribbon panel of citizens, school board members, administrators and teachers recommended a revision of the teacher evaluation system, which was based on a 1979 model. Research for Better Teaching, Inc. (RBT) of Acton, Massachusetts was hired in April of 1997 through a competitive process to design a new evaluation system for the county. Part of the attraction for RBT was the commitment of the county leaders, both union and administration, to be partners in accountability for student learning and to work actively to transform the workplace culture of the schools. From the outset, three union members from the teachers association and one from the principals' association were on the Steering Committee set up with high-level decision makers from the superintendent's cabinet to oversee the design process. Meeting monthly, the Steering Committee chartered the task as designing a Professional Growth Cycle that would include, but go far beyond, traditional teacher evaluation in its intent and structure. And so it has, including the operation of a full Peer Assistance and Review process (P.A.R.).

Management has taken risks and so has union leadership. As the Board and Superintendent entered a new level of partnership with the union, there was debate and divisiveness on the Board itself. Closeness with the teachers' union became an issue in school board elections. It became divisive within the PTA organization. But in spite of the continued nay-saying by a few, the public seems to prefer teamwork to conflict, and shared responsibility for quality to traditional adversarial roles. Sometimes slim BOE majorities, subjects, previously the exclusive province of management, became the subject of bi-lateral agreements. Weekly leadership meetings began to involve the unions. Important conversations routinely included the leadership of the three employee constituencies.

It has taken a clear articulation of the "new unionist" perspective by MCEA leadership, together with decent improvements in the bread-and-butter concerns of pay and benefits, to maintain the confidence of the rank-and-file. On-line debate has been continuous. But opposition has been isolated to a few individuals. The more significant result has been a new interest in the union from teachers who want to focus on being good teachers and would have been content to let others do the union activism. By gaining a foothold among teachers

seeking an outlet for their professionalism and seeking more professional working conditions, the union has merged the concepts of professional organization and labor union.

Overall, the notion of “leadership” has been redefined. System leadership now includes the leadership of the teachers, administrators, and support staff unions. The notion of school leadership acknowledges that, “anyone, regardless of formal position, may exercise leadership”. We talk of distributive leadership and facilitative leadership, and we are in the process of designing a “career lattice” that will allow teachers to exercise leadership with their peers while remaining in the classroom. All of this is a work in progress, but the important point is that we have crossed a threshold. Responsibility for the quality of teaching and student results will be a shared responsibility. In that context, it is natural to include student results as part of the dialogue with teachers about the quality of their work during their formal evaluation.

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Becoming a data-based professional organization that focuses on student results has been the center of our culture change, along with shared responsibility for those results. In this essay, we have argued that this is the time to include student results in teacher evaluations. But “results” must be understood as far more than test scores. And teacher evaluation must be viewed as an element of a larger “system” focused on improving instruction. That “system” has structures, resources, and leadership to create a professional community with a high degree of ownership and commitment on the part of teachers, where courageous conversations and non-defensive self-examination of practice become the norm.

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President, Research for Better Teaching
– Mark Simon, President,
Montgomery County Education Association
– Jerry Weast, Superintendent,
Montgomery County Public Schools

Our thanks to Dr. Caroline Tripp of Research for Better Teaching who made important contributions to the four sample evaluations in this article.

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