

TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL (TPA): ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND GROWTH*

ABSTRACT

High quality teaching is essential to improving student outcomes and reducing gaps in student achievement. The Teacher Performance Appraisal System provides teachers with meaningful appraisals that encourage professional learning and growth. The process is designed to foster teacher development and identify opportunities for additional support where required. By helping teachers achieve their full potential, the performance appraisal process represents one element of vision of achieving high levels of student performance. The TPA is an integral part of a continuum of professional learning that supports effective teaching, learning, and assessment practices by building on and complementing previous learning in pre-service teacher education programs and the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), as well as learning acquired throughout each individual's teaching career. The TPA system helps strengthen schools as learning communities where teachers have the chance to engage in professional exchanges and collaborative inquiries that foster continuous growth and development. Professional dialogue and collaboration are essential to the creation and maintenance of a healthy school culture. An appraisal system in which both teachers and principals are actively engaged provides a framework for assessing teachers' practices in a way that meets their professional learning needs. The TPA system engages principals and teachers in professional dialogue that deepens their understanding of what it means to be a teacher, as reflected in the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession.

Key words: TPA: Teacher Performance Appraisal, NTIP: New Teacher Induction Program

“What teachers know and can do makes the most difference in what children learn.”

-Linda Darling-Hammond

INTERDUCTION:

“Teacher quality is the single most important school variable influencing student achievement” -(Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2005, p.26), Enhancing achievement and providing a quality educational experience for all students has long been the most important outcome expected of schools. With evidence suggesting that the key role teaching and teachers play in enhancing student achievement is recognised. Given that **“Teacher appraisal can be a key lever for increasing the focus on teaching quality”** (OECD, 2013b, p.9) and that many reforms in the past have failed an understanding of the various aspects of successful performance appraisal is essential. Performance appraisal can be defined as the ongoing process used for identifying, measuring and developing an individual's performance in accordance with an organisation's strategic goals. Appraisal may involve formative aspects that focus on developing performance, such as career development, professional learning and feedback. Summative aspects, on the other hand, evaluate performance for career progression, possible promotion or demotion and termination purposes. When used for both accountability and instructional improvement, performance appraisal that identifies and enhances teaching quality may be considered the ideal quality assurance mechanism. The OECD (2009b) acknowledge that: Raising teaching performance is perhaps the policy direction most likely to lead to substantial gains in student learning.... It is essential to know the strengths of teachers and those aspects of their practice which could be further developed. From this perspective, the institution of teacher evaluation is a vital step in the drive to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning and raise educational standards. As the intensity of change quickens and the emphasis on keeping up with it heightens greater transparency demands that school systems compete in a global economy. An effective performance appraisal system will, ideally, assist in meeting these demands by holding employees' accountable, addressing underperformance and enhancing performance and practice.

KEY CONCEPTS OF THE TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL:

- **Self-assessment** is fundamental to reflective practice that informs on-going professional growth
- **Student Academic Progress** goals and Professional Growth goals are directly related to student outcomes
- **Differentiated supervision** is determined by multiple sources of data and reflective conversations
- **Effective feedback** is on-going and occurs through collaboration based on multiple sources of data.

FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL:

- Reflection and Goal Setting
- Professional Learning and Practice
- Teacher knowledge and skills
- Classroom teaching
- Student achievement
- Feedback and Review

TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK:

Although, depending on whether the teacher is “new” or “experienced”, some components are applied differently and the frequency of appraisal differs the following components are common to the appraisal of both new and experienced teachers:

- Competency statements that describe the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that new and experienced teachers must reflect in their teaching practice.
- Classroom observation of the teacher by the appraising principal, agreed to by both parties. Prior to each observation, the teacher and principal discuss the competencies that will be the focus of the observation.
- Appraisal meetings that promote professional dialogue between the principal and the teacher. A principal must arrange a pre-observation meeting with the teacher to prepare for the classroom observation and a post-observation meeting to discuss what went on during the observation. The meetings provide opportunities for reflection and collaboration to promote growth and improvement.
- A summative report that documents the appraisal process. This report becomes a vehicle for teachers to reflect on the feedback they have received and to identify opportunities for growth. It also provides the means by which principals inform teachers of their TPA rating.
- A rating that reflects a principal’s assessment of a teacher’s overall performance. There are some differences in rating categories for new and experienced teachers.
- A process for providing additional support depending on the outcome of the appraisal.

TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCEDURES:**1. Purpose:**

Purpose For performance appraisals to be both effective and meaningful, the procedures governing them must be sound. Within the structure of the performance appraisal system, principals and teachers should collaborate to find ways of making choices that contribute to a positive outcome. The procedures should hold promise for bringing about improvements in both teaching practice and student achievement. The professional dialogue between principals and teachers should support teachers’ understanding of what they are to do to fulfil the performance appraisal requirements.

2. Requirements:

The information that follows is a summary of the legislative and regulatory requirements and ministry guidelines related to the performance appraisal procedures for new and experienced teachers.

2.1 Overview of Performance Appraisal Steps:

In accordance with the regulations, all performance appraisals must include the following elements:

- A Pre-Observation Meeting;
- A Classroom Observation;
- A Post-Observation Meeting;

- A Summative Report That Includes a Rating of the Teacher's Overall Performance.

2.2 THE PRE-OBSERVATION MEETING:

The teacher and principal must have a pre-observation meeting to prepare for the classroom observation component of the appraisal. The principal must record the date of the pre-observation meeting in the summative report. The principal and the teacher use the pre-observation meeting to:

- Make certain that the expectations for the appraisal process are clearly understood;
- Promote a collegial atmosphere in advance of the classroom observation;
- Identify exactly what is expected during the lesson to be observed;
- Discuss the teacher's plan for the classroom observation period;
- Identify the expectations for student learning that are the focus of the lesson;
- Discuss the unique qualities of the teacher's class of students;
- Discuss how the teacher's performance will be assessed, including a review of the competencies that will form the basis of the teacher's performance appraisal;
- Establish procedures in advance;
- Set the date and time for the classroom observation.

2.3 THE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION:

To assess teachers' skills, knowledge, and attitudes, each appraisal must include at least one classroom observation. For the purposes of the performance appraisal, each teacher must be observed in an instructional setting. With the exception of the teaching assignments summarized below, the classroom observation involves a visit by the principal to the teacher's classroom. However, the definition of "classroom observation" in addresses those circumstances in which a teacher's usual teaching environment is not a classroom. For such teachers, classroom observation includes observation of the teacher in his or her ordinary teaching environment.

2.4 THE POST-OBSERVATION MEETING:

After the classroom observation, the teacher and principal must meet to review the results of the observation and discuss other information relevant to the principal's appraisal of the teacher's performance.

2.5 THE SUMMATIVE REPORT:

The completed Summative Report Form for New Teachers must include:

- A record of meeting and classroom observation dates;
- The principal's appraisal of the teacher's performance, including comments on each of the eight competencies for new teachers.
- The principal's indication of the induction elements in which the new teacher has participated;
- The principal's overall rating of the teacher's performance;
- Growth strategies if the teacher's performance is rated as satisfactory.

2.6 ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS THAT BOARDS MAY ESTABLISH:

A board may establish additional requirements for the performance appraisal of teachers it employs, as long as these requirements do not conflict with the requirements of the provincial performance appraisal system. Examples of additional requirements include:

- Additional competencies to be assessed as part of the teacher performance appraisal.
- Additional standards, methods, processes, timelines, and steps to be followed.
- Provisions for parental and student input on any additional competencies the board establishes. Before providing such input to a teacher, the board must follow legal requirements such as removing information that would identify a parent or student.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL:

- It is based on evidence
- It is highly individualized
- It is a joint activity
- It strives for understanding.

- It creates commitment
- It maximizes self-analysis and self-discovery
- It results in improved performance
- Performance feedback
- Using behaviour based measures
- Identification of performance goals
- Recognize and reward achievement
- Identifying improvement areas
- Confidence and acceptability
- Documentation

CHALLENGES OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL:

- Determining the evaluation criteria
- Creating rating instruments
- Lack of Competence
- Errors in rating and evaluation
- Resistance
- Clear growth paths for talented individuals
- Provide new challenges to rejuvenate careers that have reached the plateau stage
- Empower employees to make decisions without the fear of failing.

CONCLUSION:

It has been argued in this paper that the key to effective appraisal is getting the balance right between assessing performance and assisting personal development. The paper highlights the complexity of evaluating performance appraisal and its impact on teacher effectiveness and acknowledges a need for further research in this area. Bearing in mind that performance appraisal, teacher standards and professional learning are difficult to isolate, these influences need to be considered as “part of a wider, more complex web of factors that impact in significant ways upon the work of teachers, and the learning that happens in schools” (Tuinamuna, 2011, p.79). Teacher appraisal is a mechanism for improving teaching and learning. We all agree that teachers’ professional competence and conscientiousness are the keys to the delivery of quality education in schools. In a well-designed staff appraisal system, the instruments and procedures can constitute valuable professional development for teachers and enable the school management to assess teachers’ performance. The teacher appraisal system assists in recognizing and encouraging good performance, identifying areas for development, and improving overall performance of teachers.

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