

Evaluating School Principals

It is important for principals to find ways to continually stay abreast of the best strategies for tackling day-to-day and long-term school issues such as acquiring and allocating resources, maintaining a clearly articulated vision that is focused on student learning, establishing trust and open lines of communication among faculty and staff, and, perhaps most importantly, providing instructional leadership.

Two valuable strategies that can be used to identify areas of improvement for individual administrators are through the use of formative and summative assessments. Formative and summative assessments for administrators serve a multitude of purposes. These assessments should be used by school districts to evaluate and assess potential areas for improvement for individual school principals in order to target professional development needs, and they should be adaptable enough to take into account a principal's workplace contexts.

There are some examples of other benefits that may result from the use of formative and summative principal assessments, including increased accountability of principals, assessment of good instructional leadership practices and behavior, and provision of data that can be used to target support and professional development.

The authors' state important points that both the district and the building-level principals should remember before embarking on the use of formative and summative assessments to improve leadership practices:

1. Assessments should have explicit criteria for evaluation;
2. Assessments should be adaptable to the principal's position or level of experience within his or her career continuum;
3. The content of the assessment should align with the goals or needs of the district;
4. Assessments should be valid and reliable;
5. Assessments should take into account the context of the school;
6. The effectiveness of the evaluation system also should be evaluated;
7. Principal assessments should connect to teacher- and student-level outcomes;
8. Districts should consider the time needed to administer the instrument, the costs, and the ease of use or implementation.

This paper states strategies that should be implemented. First of all, it is important to establish a clear set of expectations and goals for the assessments, including what will be assessed, who will help provide feedback, how the findings of the assessments or evaluations will be used, and the frequency with which assessments will occur. Second, the assessments used should be valid and reliable and help inform principal professional development needs. The third strategy is to link assessments to research-based standards. Finally, it is important to use multiple forms of assessment, and vary the types of data collected to obtain a holistic view of principal performance.

National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. (2010, July). *Evaluating school principals: Tips and tools*. Washington, DC: Melissa Brown-Sims.