

TReaching® Tips



by Educational Support Services, Inc.

Eliezer Vilinsky, M.A. Miryam Vilinsky, M.Ed.

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“Please Evaluate Me,” Said the Teacher.

THE ISSUE: Judging from the amount of attention the topic receives in several popular periodicals, evaluating educators is a very sensitive issue. Much of the sensitivity is probably due to the fact that hiring and firing practices and the granting of government monies are directly related to how well teachers teach and how well learners learn. If teachers wish to keep their jobs and to enable schools to have the resources to pay them, they need to meet performance standards. Of course, there are educators who consider their jobs and salaries second to their altruistic goal of educating young minds and preparing them for the world of tomorrow. Not everybody is in education for the money, but you still can't practice your passion if you aren't granted a forum in which to practice it. The big question is: what is the best form of teacher evaluation? Which method of professional assessment tells most accurately about how well a teacher teaches?

THE WOW FACTOR: At least one system of teacher assessment has received very high kudos, not only from educational administrators who need to evaluate teachers, but also from teachers themselves. The system we speak of has sprouted from the ground in the state of Tennessee. Don't take our "sprouted from the ground" expression lightly. This is a from-the-ground-up, grass roots development, born from the efforts of teachers.

Currently, the Tennessee evaluation system has been implemented to assess fine arts instruction, including graphic arts and music. Fine arts instructors in Tennessee wanted to create an evaluation system that fits their type of instruction. The assessment utilizes a portfolio approach.

Portfolio assessment typically tracks progress over time. A teacher's portfolio contains a collection of samples of work that shows how students' work advanced over the course of the school year. Tennessee teachers must submit samples representing a cross-section of low, middle, and highly capable students.

OUR TAKE ON THIS ISSUE: LEAP is successful because it has applied a tried and true method to the social skills training of children with autism by surrounding them with socially adept peers. Be impressed by the outcome of this application, but do not limit the method's success to children with autism or to social skills training in general. Don't be afraid to apply this good stuff to other settings in order to benefit children with other types of needs. The model described above calls for surrounding needy kids with healthy kids, or underdeveloped kids with well-developed kids. Fact: this formula applies universally to all learning.

NOW THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE AND OUR VIEW, TURN THE PAGE TO LEARN SPECIFIC STEPS TO FOLLOW.