

## Electronic Reserves

# WELCOME TO THE ELECTRONIC RESERVES COURSE READINGS

### WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship or research. If electronic transmission of reserve material is used for purposes in excess of what constitutes "fair use" that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

**No Further Transmission or distribution of this material is permitted**

**TITLE:** November 2002: Supervising and Evaluating  
Teachers

**AUTHOR:** Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN, J.D., PhD

**SOURCE:** *NCEA Notes v 36:2*

**PUBLISHER:**

**YEAR:**

**PAGES:** 75-76

# NOVEMBER 2002

## SUPERVISING AND EVALUATING TEACHERS



The school head is legally responsible for both instructional quality and student well-being. Accomplishing these duties requires being present in the classroom. People, problems, and situations facing administrators on a daily basis claim time and attention. Many threats of lawsuits could be avoided if school heads and other administrators simply followed existing policy. An administrator's responsibilities include supervising and evaluating teachers. However, these tasks can be problematic for both the principal and the teacher.

### **Frequency and Format**

A school head who has never taught any grade below sixth, for example, may feel inadequate in a primary teacher's classroom. A high school principal who taught English may feel less than competent in a physics classroom. Regardless, all effective educators will recognize good teaching. If a principal feels unqualified in a certain content area, someone with competence should assist the principal.

Supervision should not be viewed as a punitive activity. Such a view will weaken the relationship between the principal and teacher and the process will not succeed. Supervision as a continual, formative process allows both principal and teacher to grow. Together, they will improve the learning environment of the school by acknowledging strengths and identifying areas for progress.

Evaluation is a summative process. Written observations shared with teachers provide some of the best data for making employment decisions. A principal can use this data to plan and set goals with teachers. Evaluation of teaching performance, then, should be based on more than supervisory data. A principal should seek answers to such questions as "Does this teacher support school policy? Does he or she look after the safety of the children?" These factors should be considered in addition to a teacher's subject matter competence.

All school heads must understand that teachers and administrators work for the students; the students do not attend school to provide these adults with employment. Surely, there is no more sacred responsibility than ensuring that the capable, competent, caring professionals who teach students are given the opportunity for professional development and that all teachers are encouraged and given the

means to become the best professionals they can be.

The handbook should clearly state the school policy on supervision and should identify who is responsible for supervising teachers: the principal, assistant principals, department heads, or others. How often teachers will be supervised and the format for supervision should be clearly defined.

### **Scheduled Versus Unscheduled Visits**

Teachers have a right to know how supervision will be conducted. Supervision and evaluation of teachers are matters of personnel policy. The faculty handbook should clearly delineate policies and procedures so that every teacher knows what to expect. School heads should consider whether the supervisor's visits are scheduled or unscheduled. If the visits are normally scheduled for twice a year, the principal may choose to reserve the right to observe classes at unscheduled times. However, the teacher has a right to know when and how visits will occur. Missing scheduled supervisory visits unnerves teachers. Everyone understands that emergencies happen, but once normalcy returns, administrators should return to their regular supervisory and evaluative cycle.

School heads should determine how the supervisory visit data will be incorporated into an end-of-the-year evaluation and who will have access to this information. Questions to be considered include "Will the evaluation become part of the teacher's permanent file? Does the teacher have an opportunity to respond in writing to the evaluation? Will the teacher's response become part of the evaluation record?" Answers to these questions will lead to a fully developed policy on supervision and evaluation and administrators will be on firm legal ground.

Although most educators would agree that supervision is a formative experience and evaluation is a *summative* one, the distinction becomes blurred in many Catholic schools where one administrator serves as both supervisor and evaluator. Teachers may be reluctant to discuss problems with principals if they suspect that the information could be included later in evaluations. Administrators who wear both hats must be especially sensitive to allow for open dialogue with teachers.

Good practice and civil law demand that administrators supervise and evaluate teachers. Teachers should welcome these opportunities as a means for professional development and legal protection against accusations about their teaching competency. Justice is not served if the principal fails to supervise and evaluate teachers as part of an accurate assessment of their performance. 