



The Evaluation Process and Professional Growth Planning (PGP)

Washington's new evaluation process for school principals is designed for improvement in practice related to specific professional goals. These goals will sometimes require principals to enhance their knowledge and skills through professional development. Traditionally, principal professional development has been conducted informally. Principals become aware of a need for additional knowledge or skills in particular areas and look for some activity—attending a workshop, reading a book, watching a video—that will meet the need.

While this informal approach often works effectively, a more focused process can bring additional benefits, especially when the goal is challenging or the outcome is high-stakes. One tool that is being used more often is the individualized Professional

Growth Plan (PGP), which in Washington plays a formal role in educator preparation programs, the professional certificate process, and many professional development activities.

This section of the User's Guide offers some suggestions and guidelines for developing and implementing PGPs.

The PGP Process

There is no universal format for a PGP, and the process should be approached with a sense of flexibility. Goals that are straightforward or well understood may require a less detailed PGP than those that are complex or unfamiliar. However, the process will always involve these key steps:

1. Identifying needs
2. Setting the goal
3. Identifying the evidence
4. Choosing key strategies
5. Establishing a timeline
6. Identifying necessary supports
7. Implementing

1. Identifying needs.

The need for a Professional Growth Plan (PGP) can come from three sources. These sources each provide a school-based context for the professional goals of the principal.

- **The School or District Improvement Plan.** In order to lead efforts to achieve school or district goals, principals may need to build their knowledge or skills in certain areas. These areas may be identified in the School or District Improvement Plan.
- **The evaluation process.** Discussions between principals and their supervisors during the evaluation process may create a perceived need to develop additional skills in a particular area. These may be goals that are identified by the principal as needing improvement or personal/professional goals that surface within the context of the conversation between supervisor and principal.
- **Personal/professional goals.** Aside from these formal sources, principals may have strong personal commitments to particular elements of their work (e.g., lowering the dropout rate or improving education for children of poverty) and want to become more proficient in those areas.

Because of the time involved in carrying out an effective PGP, it's important to prioritize needs to give attention to those that are most challenging or that have the highest stakes. Selecting a few, key goals is often more meaningful than selecting too many broad goals that are unrelated to specific practices or that cannot be monitored over time. As principals identify their professional learning goals, the following reflective questions may be helpful to consider:

- What are my priorities for professional growth?
- Which of my potential goals can have the biggest impact on improving learning?
- What goals would help me follow up on my most recent evaluation?
- Are there common themes in the needs that I've identified? Can several needs be met in the same PGP?
- How do I achieve the best balance between goals that respond to institutional needs and goals that reflect my own professional priorities?

2. Setting the goal.

Once identified, professional development priorities need to be translated into practical, effective goals. In recent years, many educators have begun using "SMART" goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely) to guide their professional growth planning. As principals and their supervisors develop these goals (whether they use the SMART goal format or not), it is important to consider the following questions:

- Will this goal get me where I need to go?
- Is the goal realistic? Do I have the time needed to accomplish it?
- Will accomplishing this goal make a difference? How will it benefit students?
- If this goal is a follow-up to the evaluation process, does my supervisor agree that it's relevant to the issues we discussed?
- How will I know when the goal is accomplished?
- What will success look like?

3. Identifying the evidence.

An important question to settle at the beginning of the process is what will serve as evidence that the goal has been met. In some cases, the answer may be obvious, especially if the goal is easily quantified. (For example, if the goal is to reduce student absenteeism, the best evidence would be attendance data.) However, for some goals, identifying the appropriate evidence may take considerable thought. If the PGP is connected to the evaluation process, it's also important that your supervisor agrees that the chosen evidence will be appropriate. The following questions may be helpful to consider:

- What currently available data could be used as evidence?
- Is there other data (survey results, for example) that could be created to help measure this goal?
- What other evidence would persuade me and others that the goal has been met?

4. Choosing key strategies.

Once the goal and necessary evidence have been clearly articulated, the next step is developing a workable strategy. This requires careful analysis of the school environment to identify the people, policies, and resources that will either help advance the goal or possibly hinder it, and then formulate appropriate action steps. As principals and supervisors consider the strategies that will work, it may be helpful to ask:

- What do I actually need to do to accomplish this goal? What are the key steps?
- Who needs to be involved? How do I involve them?
- What available resources could I use to help achieve this goal?
- What obstacles (e.g., staff attitudes, limited time, current district policies) might these strategies encounter? How might I overcome those obstacles?

5. Establishing a timeline.

As with any important project, projecting timelines for the various action steps will help keep the process on track. Asking the following questions might be helpful as the principal identifies what steps to take and how long each step might take:

- How much time will be required to achieve this goal?
- What is the best sequence for the actions I need to take?
- What are the checkpoints that will let me know I'm staying on track?

6. Identifying necessary supports.

As noted elsewhere in this User's Guide, an important part of the evaluation and professional growth process is to have conversations about the authority and support needed to meet expectations. Important considerations include:

- What professional resources are available to me (e.g., books, DVDs, workshops, colleagues)?

- Do I have the necessary budgetary support to reach this goal?
- What support do I need from my supervisor (e.g., funding, other resources, permission)?

7. Implementing.

Even with a clearly articulated plan in place, it's important to monitor and periodically assess progress. How frequently a principal assesses his or her goals will vary. Some may want to check progress on a monthly basis while others might want to check progress annually. Whatever the timeline, principals should consider the following questions as they assess strategies:

- Are the strategies working as expected? Are any adjustments necessary?
- Does the timeline still seem realistic?
- Am I collecting the necessary evidence as the project unfolds?