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# **School-Based Evaluation**

# Evaluation in Education and Human Services

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George F. Madaus, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Daniel L. Stufflebeam, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, U.S.A.

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# **School-Based Evaluation**

*A Guide for Board Members, Superintendents,  
Principals, Department Heads, and Teachers*

**John W. Wick**

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To my dad, who epitomized tough independence. From him I learned to compete, and I learned to avoid the mob. I miss him.

To my mom, whom I know is the source of the compassion I feel for children.

And to Marti, from whom I learned, finally, that love can endure and grow with time.

# Contents

Preface	ix
<b>1</b> <b>An Overview and Some Foundations</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b> <b>The Evaluate-Your-Instruction Process</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3</b> <b>The Evaluation of Productivity, Quality, and Quality-with-Equity in Education</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>4</b> <b>The Learning Event: A High School's Math Program for the College Bound</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>5</b> <b>The Learning Event: the Reading Comprehension Program in a K–8 Elementary School</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>6</b> <b>An Objectives-Driven Example: Certain Language Arts Basic Skills</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>7</b> <b>A Cross-Cutting, Interdisciplinary Learning Event: The Character Development of the Students in a K–12 District</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>8</b> <b>Testing Issues Germane to Evaluating Your Instruction</b>	<b>183</b>

<b>9</b>	
<b>Instructional Monitoring with Maximum Performance Tests</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>10</b>	
<b>Self-Report and Typical Performance Measures</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>Appendix A Mathematics Basic Skills Objective List</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>Appendix B Objectives for Capitalization, Punctuation, Grammar Terms, and Grammar Usage</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>285</b>

## Preface

During the 1962–63 academic year, as a graduate student at the University of Iowa, I enrolled in a beginning tests and measurements course from Professor Leonard Feldt, who was even then a nationally respected scholar in this field. That year was also my inaugural year as a high school teacher; I was employed full-time at nearby Lone Tree High School to teach all the math and most of the science.

The two coinciding experiences planted a question in my mind: “How come the teachers and administrators I deal with in the school each day pay almost no attention to the things I’m learning in this excellent course?” The question eventually evolved into a quest for ways that the measurement aspects of evaluation might be seen as a unifying theme in student performance improvement programs. That quest has been the theme of my professional work.

In 1971, collaborating with Don Beggs, now the Dean of the School of Education at Southern Illinois University, I wrote *Evaluation for Decision-Making in the Schools*. In the preface we wrote of our desire to “. . . function as a bridge between . . .” the practitioner and the quantitative specialists. In 1973 I wrote *Educational Measurement: Where Are We Going and How Will We Know When We Get There*, the title of which conveys its theme. Neither book made anyone’s best-seller list. In 1974, finally realizing that if I wanted to write about school practices I should really experience them, I went on leave from Northwestern University to found and then direct the Department of Research and Evaluation for the Chicago public schools. The leave was extended twice, and I stayed in that position until late 1979. Many of my strong feelings about local control were solidified at that time.

Toward the end of that tenure I undertook the leadership of a team of about 30 authors who developed a nationally standardized testing program,



including achievement, aptitude, and interest tests for students from pre-school through high school. The series, the *Comprehensive Assessment Program*, was published in 1980. The experience provided some first-hand insights into this industry; you will find, sprinkled through this book, some fairly critical comments about what I consider the overselling of standardized tests.

Finally, after returning to Northwestern from Chicago I began teaching more general courses — courses in curriculum, instruction, and the evaluation of instruction. I became convinced that the theorists, the practitioners, and the outcomes people were not talking to each other because they lacked a common language.

The evaluate-your-instruction process is designed to provide the common language.

This book is aimed at the people who make decisions about schooling in a building. I am an unswerving believer in the local control of education — with just enough external monitoring to avoid situations where idiosyncratic foolishness would do damage to students. The book is designed to help board members, superintendents, principals, other administrators, department heads, and teachers build student improvement programs at the local level.

It is impossible to acknowledge all of those who have helped shape my thinking over these years. The evaluate-your-instruction process went through many iterations with graduate students, each of whom contributed ideas. Dr. Roy Turnbaugh, Superintendent of the Geneva Public Schools, has contributed substantially to the way I view instruction. Conversations with my colleague Ben Bloom have been most helpful, and my colleague Jim Hall can be counted on to debunk my wilder ideas. The late John Vaughn, then Executive Director of the North Central Association, provided good feedback on both chapters 2 and 3, and Associate Dean Roxie Smith of the School of Education at Northwestern gave good comments on chapter 7.

I hope the book is useful to people who care enough about education to want to improve it from within. Even a good school can get better. Better districts become the sum of better schools — and the process builds upward.