he evaluation and the professional development of teachers and administrators are two sides of the same coin. Both are the essential currency schools have to improve teachers’ practice and students’ learning, but schools often spend this currency unwisely. Too often, evaluations are a source of tension and conflict, even a necessary evil. Professional development is often viewed as an irrelevant add-on that is linked only nominally to improving student achievement.

I believe that all teachers and administrators wish for an evaluation process that focuses on improvement—instead of just uncovering shortcomings. The evaluation process should be directly tied to both the individual goals of staff members and the school’s goals. Sadly, most teachers, particularly new teachers, see evaluation only as part of an improvement process, rather than central to it. Principals also want a professional development structure that respects opportunities for teacher growth. Moreover, most school leaders wish that their job responsibilities allowed them to focus more on teaching and learning rather than playing fire marshal, facilities or operations expert, or security chief.

At the larger organizational level, district-based professional development activities usually jump from one priority to another in response to shifting community demands, the superintendent’s latest hobbyhorse, or budget concerns. This year, it might be a new math curriculum; next

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year, literacy; the following year, eliminating the achievement gap and understanding issues of race. It is rare for one year's professional development activity to be connected to the next year's; rarely is the focus sustained for more than nine months.

A district's priorities with regard to professional development can run the risk of being, at best, irrelevant, and at worst, in conflict with an individual school's priorities. Most hard-working teachers crave professional development that focuses on improving their skills in a tangible way that will lead to visible results in their own classrooms. For example, one teacher may want to learn how to adapt a college-level music history text for his 10th-graders. Another may want to help a diverse group of 9th-graders understand Orwell's *Animal Farm* so everyone—beginning and advanced readers—is challenged and engaged.

Principals have a desire for an evaluation structure that respects opportunities for teacher growth. However, for principals the workload is heavy and varied. Many principals must evaluate as many as 60 teachers annually, and the current climate of high-stakes testing requires principals to become psychometricians. One of my colleagues spends every waking moment poring over student standardized test results, trying to plot how to raise scores in his school. Another is burdened by a secretary who believes she should be running the school because she has been there longer. Much of this principal's time is spent trying to ameliorate their rocky relationship. Along with these demands, principals are expected to also have time to focus on supervision and evaluation.

At the Boston Arts Academy (BAA), Boston's first public high school for the visual and performing arts, we have added several components to the process that was implemented at Fenway. BAA's leadership team meets each June and sets schoolwide goals for the following year. These goals grow out of the work we do in retreats; written reflections; faculty member discussions; and the school's statements of mission, vision, and values. Over time, BAA's goals have changed in emphasis or focus, but three schoolwide goals have remained consistent.

### Setting Schoolwide Goals

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The first goal is a passionate commitment for scholarship as well as for the arts. We call this commitment “seriousness of purpose” and we refer to our students as artist-scholars. The hyphen in artist-scholar is significant; it connotes a connection, a continuum, as opposed to a slash (/), which would indicate a difference. The second goal is increasing teaching skills in mixed level, or heterogeneous, classrooms. The third goal is promoting equity—increasing our ability to better understand and combat the dominant ideologies (e.g., racism, sexism) in our culture, classrooms, and teaching.

### Connecting Professional Development

Each teacher at BAA develops individual goals that complement the schoolwide goals. Teachers may also create a goal that uniquely reflects their own professional or personal journeys. Twice a year, at midyear and the end of year, teachers submit written reflections on their progress toward implementing or attaining goals. The assistant headmaster and I meet with as many of the 60 faculty and staff members as our schedules permit to discuss their reflections.

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The processes of professional development and evaluation at BAA grew out my experiences at Fenway High School in Boston, where I worked for 14 years as codirector. At Fenway, all teachers named two professional development goals and one personal goal for the year. The codirectors met with each of Fenway's teachers twice a year to check on their progress toward these goals. A biannual leadership survey assessed the leadership successes and challenges of the codirectors as well as our individual strengths and areas that needed improvement. Other board members, student government representatives, parent council members, and faculty members also had an opportunity to rate the codirectors on a scale of 1 to 5 in a variety of areas.
Each year, I incorporate some of the reflections from teachers into a short document that we revisit in August as part of our professional development work. I look for themes in the teachers’ reflections as well as similarities and differences. This connects the entire process of goal development, reflection, and professional development and makes it self-informing and iterative.

Members of the leadership team are intimately involved in these discussions because they make professional development choices about how we spend our most limited resource: time. In some ways, this process is circular and feeds on itself. As teachers get comfortable with the curriculum, their questions tend to become more in-depth. Instead of simply asking, “How will I find the time to create these new units?” teachers begin to ask, “How can I get my students to do more abstract thinking rather than just asking me to give straightforward answers?”

Evaluating Teachers
As part of the evaluation process, teachers meet in pairs at the beginning of the school year and complete two short written observations of their professional development partners (PDP). These PDP observations are intended to examine and support teachers’ professional development goals. Ideally, the partners also meet before and after the observation to prepare for the experience and debrief afterward. By pairing across disciplines, teachers also see different pedagogies, ways of approaching content, and ways of interacting with students. This PDP process is not evaluative, and it encourages faculty members to have an open-door policy for their peers. Each year, two faculty meetings and a weekend retreat are also reserved specifically for work on professional development goals.

Since BAA’s founding in 1998, we have discussed the need for an improved evaluation tool that more closely links to our PDP process and professional development goals and reflections. Every few years, unionized faculty members are required to have a Boston Public Schools (BPS) evaluation using a BPS form. We respect the value of using the BPS district’s tool to protect our teachers if they move to another school.

Setting an Example
Each August, in collaboration with the BAA board chair, I set annual goals for myself. These goals always include the schoolwide goals along with my plans for implementation and evaluation. At BAA, my first goal is to provide faculty and staff members with professional development activities that support schoolwide goals. As headmaster, I both initiate and support these activities. This goal has remained constant for the past seven years. For the 2004–2005 school year, the goal was to provide faculty members with the following professional development opportunities:

• A graduate-level course for credit with a professor of reading to enhance our faculty members’ understanding of functional and cultural literacy
• The time to attend meetings, retreats, workshops, and conferences that focus on BAA’s schoolwide goals.

In addition, BAA created opportunities for faculty members to obtain special education certification. I specified that 50% of our faculty members would make significant progress toward this goal during the school year, and I purposely quantified this goal to ensure that the board was aware of the importance of investing in professional development. Further, quantified goals help us objectively evaluate our success by showing the actual numbers of teachers who finish the graduate course, obtain certification, and commit to the dual role of general and special educator.

My second goal is student progress. Specifically, a database will track our students from their initial application to
BAA through college graduation. This is an enormous undertaking and may not be completed in one academic year. Still, our success depends on our ability to tell our story to outsiders in more than anecdotes. In a time of shrinking resources and increased accountability, we must specifically and quantifiably show our students’ successes, challenges, attrition rates, and college acceptance and completion rates.

My third goal involves work with the board on such issues as fundraising; facilities; and, most important, our strategic plan.

The fourth goal is strong communication with the current leaders, who include board members and committees, faculty members, and parents. In addition, I want to continue to develop leadership capacity in the faculty, provide mentoring and support to beginning teachers, and provide opportunities for staff members to evaluate and offer input into decision-making structures.

My fifth, and final, goal looks inward at my own professional development: writing and publishing articles, making conference presentations, and teaching at the university level.

A few years ago, my goals included finishing the process of writing bylaws. This wasn’t really a process I could control because it involved pro bono work done by volunteer attorneys. However, I wanted to let the board know that this was an essential part of our school’s development. The bylaws are now in place and this is an important step in guaranteeing the school’s future existence and vitality.

Each year in late August, I share my annual goals with the entire faculty and staff for two reasons: to offer them a framework for writing their own goals and to keep my vision and leadership as transparent as possible. Everyone in the community should know what I consider important and how I am shaping the school’s vision and use of resources.

Evaluating the School Leader
The process of evaluating the headmaster closely parallels the teacher-evaluation process. In early May, I write a critique of my progress toward implementing my goals. The board chair, with the governing council, conducts a survey of constituent groups to comment on and evaluate my progress. The parent representative on the governing council surveys the other parent council representatives, the student representative to the council surveys his peers, and the teacher representative surveys her colleagues.

The board chair asks other board members directly for their input. While comments are filtering back to the chair, I arrange a comprehensive meeting to review my self-evaluation with the chair. I go over any questions the chair might have, clarify my ideas, and even redraft my self-evaluation on the basis of this discussion if necessary. In June, the chair collates all the comments from the constituent groups and completes a written evaluation incorporating the feedback and my self-evaluation.

Before the evaluation is submitted to the school superintendent, I have the opportunity to read it and make comments. The chair is under no obligation to include my feedback, but usually he or she does. By early July, the evaluation is submitted to the superintendent. The superintendent’s response includes confirmation of the headmaster’s contract renewal. This time line may seem late. In fact, if the board chair was concerned about my performance, the superintendent would need to be notified in mid-March to allow for my potential removal as headmaster.

Receiving Feedback From Teachers
I have worried that this evaluation process does not allow for a complete examination of my performance and, in particular, does not give faculty and staff members enough opportunity to critique my work. In BAA’s fourth year, 2001–2002, I asked a former faculty member to conduct an extensive survey of my performance. Teachers could respond anonymously if they wished. Faculty members rated my performance in leadership, communication, personnel management, accessibility, decision making, and vision. Two pages of open-ended questions followed about the assets and drawbacks of my leadership and focus. Although the former faculty member did an admirable job collating the responses into a 20-page document, I found it quite overwhelming. The comments that were signed were a bit more helpful, but the decontextualized, anonymous critiques were less useful. Perhaps we asked too many open-ended questions.

After talking to the board chair, I agreed to pilot a different approach to getting feedback on my performance. In each of the midyear meetings with teachers, I would ask three questions: What is one area in which you would like me to better support you? What is an aspect of my leadership that you have appreciated? What is an area that you would like me to focus on more? Because beginning teachers

Boston Arts Academy

| Location: Boston, MA |
| Grades: 9-12 |
| Enrollment: 392 students |
| Community: Urban alternative school |
| Demographic: 48% Black, 26% White, 25% Hispanic, 1% Asian |
may feel awkward about saying critical things to me, it has been helpful to provide them with examples of what others have said.

Most teachers have been open and willing to share their concerns and wishes. I have found this a very constructive process and I’m considering ways of summarizing these conversations and critiques for my board chair. I remain concerned, however, about a need for a more anonymous and concise instrument to give faculty members the opportunity to provide feedback without fear of reprisal.

Linking Evaluation and Professional Development

As the keeper of the evaluation process, I also take seriously my responsibility for educating my board chair about the time line and its components. Because the position of board chair rotates every two years, we need to codify the process to avoid reinventing the wheel every few years. The chair needs to understand the interrelationship between school-wide goals and how these goals are developed and agreed upon. Teachers’ professional development goals and my own goals and evaluation process need to be linked and similar.

As we mature as a school, I hope that our community handbook will include a section on faculty professional development and evaluation, as well as a section on board roles and responsibilities that includes an explanation of the process of evaluating the headmaster.

I believe that an evaluation process that is regularly critiqued will become more instrumental in improving everyone’s job performance. Such a process will also help us clarify why we focus on certain professional development activities. Codifying these processes ingrains them in our culture and makes them easily accessible. When professional development and evaluation are closely linked and clearly explained and defined, our ultimate goal—improved student achievement—will become more attainable.