

The Practical Professor

No. 18

Quick and easy tips, questions, and suggestions for improving teaching and learning.

Zero-Based Evaluation

Reflective Practice Series #5

Welcome to the next installment of our Reflective Practice series! This series gives you a variety of ways to become more of a reflective practitioner.

“Zero-Based Evaluation” helps us take a fresh look at the way our evaluation system for a particular course fits with the course’s learning outcomes. Having to provide yourself with a rationale for each type of evaluation often exposes areas that need changing or adapting. An added benefit is that you will have a solid rationale that you can give to students for all evaluated assignments, which will help make your assignments more “transparent” (see *The Practical Professor* No. 17 on Transparent Assignments).

Here is the process:

- **Select a course.**
- **Wipe out every evaluation method you use.**
- **Examine the course outcomes, and if the course is an explicit component of a program or degree, the program or degree outcomes.**
- **Build an evaluation system that measures *only those things that are explicitly identified in the outcome statements – nothing else*. Write a clear rationale specifying exactly how each type of evaluation is the best way to measure student progress toward a specific outcome (or outcomes).**
- **Ask a kind and trusted colleague to honestly review your material and ask skeptical questions (for example, if course outcomes include critical thinking but all of your tests are multiple choice/true-false ...) to help clarify your thinking and approaches.**

Thanks for your interest! Have a great day!

In the next *The Practical Professor*: Ask The Practical Professor Series #4

Also available!

Teaching

A series of practical and innovative teaching tips for college faculty

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