As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-5), the U.S. Department of Education (2012a) has awarded more than $4.35 billion for Race to the Top (RTT) grants to states that were willing to implement school reform. The grant proposals were required to address educational reform in the areas of improving student outcomes, standards and assessment for students, and teacher and principal evaluations that incorporate student outcome data (U.S. Department of Education, 2012b). In 2010, 11 states (Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee) and the District of Columbia were awarded RTT funds, and in 2011, seven states (Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania) received funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2012b). This editorial addresses the evaluation mandate component of RTT and its implications for school social work. Specifically, we summarize major lessons learned from the evaluation section of the first wave of RTT annual reports (U.S. Department of Education, 2012c) and their implications for school social work.

LESSONS LEARNED

Because there is no published research on the connection between improving educational effectiveness and school social work services, an inductive content analysis method was used to begin to organize data, identify constructs, and build a framework to describe themes extrapolated from the first wave of RTT annual reports that might guide the school social work community’s efforts to be on par with current federal requirements to document performance accountability. Using this method, a review of the year 1 (2010 to 2011) reports for the first 12 RTT grants was completed. Following is a brief summary of the results under the reporting category “Improving Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Based on Performance.” Only information specifically included in the report was tabulated.

Implementation of Evaluation

After the first year of the grant, and based on the details provided in the reports, it is clear that half of the states intended to begin the full implementation phase during the 2011–12 academic year (n = 6). The remaining states (n = 6) would still be focusing on the development and implementation process itself. All state reports mentioned evaluation of teachers (n = 12) and principals (n = 12); however, a few also included plans for evaluating school personnel teaching grade levels or subject areas (for example, keyboarding) that are not included in state testing, referred to as non tested grades or subjects (n = 4). Only one state specifically identified school social workers in its report.

Evaluation Measures

Some states (n = 2) had developed teacher and principal evaluation measures before the application. States that did not have an existing evaluation instrument used a statewide workgroup (n = 3) or an outside consultant (n = 3) to assist in the development of an evaluation measure. Once an evaluation instrument was developed, many states (n = 6) allow school districts to either use the statewide instrument or a state Department of Education–approved alternative.

Components of Evaluation Measure

The extent to which states used different components to evaluate performance was consistent.

Methods of evaluation included observation ($n = 9$), student achievement measure ($n = 9$), student growth measure ($n = 8$), self-assessment ($n = 2$), artifacts/evidence ($n = 1$), and student survey ($n = 1$). Some states mentioned specific weights they will place on different measures: teacher evaluation, 50 percent ($n = 4$); student growth, 50 percent ($n = 2$); student growth, 35 percent ($n = 1$); student achievement, 15 percent ($n = 1$).

Student growth and achievement are measured by change in state test scores in areas such as reading and math. It is based on individual changes from year to year. States define how many years—for example, two years ($n = 1$) or three years ($n = 2$)—of data are required to measure student growth. Use of student growth indicators for nontested grades or subjects was mentioned by a few states ($n = 3$). Some states indicated that school-level data ($n = 2$) and cohort data ($n = 2$), rather than classroom-level data, would be used to evaluate these school personnel.

**Evaluation Training**

There is limited information about the extent to which training for evaluators is provided. Training was mentioned in some reports ($n = 4$), and a certification exam was also mentioned ($n = 1$). One state indicated that evaluation guides are posted on the state Web site. There was even less information provided about who will actually conduct the evaluations. One state noted that the principal, assistant principal, or others in administrative leadership would conduct the evaluations. It is anticipated that year 2 reports will include more detailed information.

**Use of Evaluation Results**

States indicated that they will use the results of the evaluation protocol to determine retention ($n = 4$), termination ($n = 4$), tenure ($n = 3$), compensation ($n = 4$), and contents of the individual professional development plan ($n = 4$).

**IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK**

The lessons learned from reviewing the evaluation section of the RTT Year 1 Grant Reports indicate that school social workers need to focus on five areas: (1) implementation of an evaluation process, (2) development of relevant evaluation measure, (3) identification of components of the evaluation measure and prescribed percentage of these components, (4) the role of student growth and achievement measures, and (5) training and preparation for evaluators of school social workers.

**Implementation of Evaluation**

School social workers and state school social work organizations need to become aware of efforts to develop and implement evaluation processes in their states and districts. Both practitioners and state organizations should become actively involved in the process to ensure its relevance to student instructional support personnel.

**Evaluation Measures**

School social workers must work with state school social work organizations, NASW chapters, and the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) to acquire samples of these rubrics and related assessment tools. Furthermore, it is essential for school social workers to access these existing rubrics and proactively help edit them to reflect the role of school social work in their districts or to endorse existing rubrics.

**Components of Evaluation Measures**

School social workers should be prepared to respond to the requirement that 50 percent or more of the evaluation criteria include student growth and student achievement measures. There needs to be a clear logic model for the type of student data to be included in the performance evaluation, including the question of whether cohort- or school-level data may be used as part of the evaluation criteria.

**Training of Evaluators**

Because many states are in the early stages of the development and implementation process, it is an ideal time for school social workers to indicate their interest in being trained in the evaluation process. Ancillary issues to be explored include whether serving as an evaluator changes one’s employment description, changes the number of schools served, or offers additional remuneration.

**GRADUATE EDUCATION IN SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK**

Included in RTT Request for Proposals is the development of a Teacher Preparation Program Report Card. A couple of states ($n = 2$) indicated
that they intend to publish university preparation program report cards based on the evaluation results of school personnel. Graduate schools of social work may not be aware of this intent, and, therefore, those offering school social work specializations need to align education and licensing competencies in the areas in which school social workers will be evaluated. If these competency areas have not yet been identified, graduate schools of social work should work with practitioners and state school social work organizations to help define the competency areas for the state-endorsed evaluation rubrics.

**NATIONAL EVALUATION OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK TEMPLATE**

There are two main teacher performance evaluation measures (Danielson, 2007; Marzano, 2007). School districts have chosen to either follow these models or develop their own. In a Trends & Resources article, Alvarez and Anderson-Ketchmark (2011) provided an overview of the Danielson (2007) framework. Alvarez and Anderson-Ketchmark (2011) asked the field to consider developing a rubric that was structured like the Danielson framework and then conduct research on the effectiveness of this measure for school social workers. In an effort to align social work services with the culture and climate of schools, the SSWAA, in collaboration with a team of school social work faculty and practitioners, has developed a tool modeled after the Danielson framework that districts and state departments of education can adapt as a school social work performance measure (see Table 1).

The Danielson (2007, 2011) framework evaluation measure adapted for the field is divided into four domains consisting of a number of elements that can be used to determine that a school social worker’s performance is evaluated to be unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, or distinguished. The elements (specific observable/measureable skills) are intentionally broad to allow school social workers and school systems to detail how an element is best demonstrated in a specific practice setting.

Themes visible in each of the four domains are practice in a multitiered framework, use of evidence-informed interventions, use of data for decision making, and involvement of the community and family in service delivery. The first of the four domains is Planning and Preparation. In this domain, the adapted rubric will assess the school social worker’s ability to prepare for the school year and for ongoing changes in the school year. Skills under this domain include conducting a needs assessment, identifying community resources, and being prepared to implement multitiered interventions. The second domain is Contexts for Learning, which encompasses contributions to strengthening the culture and climate of a school to support positive academic outcomes for students. Skill areas assessed under this domain include cultural responsiveness and building rapport with school personnel. The third domain is Service Delivery and Resources and is the most visible domain of school social work. The use of multitiered interventions, specialized services (for example, crisis intervention, consultation), use of data to select interventions, and efficient and effective use of time and school and community resources are assessed in this domain. Finally, the fourth domain is Professional Responsibilities. This domain includes compliance with the NASW Standards for School Social Work Services (2012) and Code of Ethics (NASW, 2008), obtaining and retaining appropriate licensure, accurate documentation in service delivery, and seeking ongoing professional development.

This adaptation of the Danielson framework rubric evaluation measure has been presented at the Annual Program Meetings of the Society for Social Work and Research (a special interest group in school social work); SSWAA; and the SSWAA DC Leadership and Policy Development Institute, where copious feedback was given on the evaluation measure. In each instance, the tool was revised on the basis of comments and critiques offered. Although only the domains are provided in Table 1, it is anticipated that both a draft of the domains and all elements will be distributed for public review by SSWAA in spring 2013.

**CONCLUSION**

In an era of professional accountability, school social workers must take a prominent role in the development and implementation of performance evaluations for their work. School social workers will strengthen their position in school systems when they document their impact on academic and behavioral student outcomes and standardized measures of educational growth and when a national evaluation of school social work services
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a. Conducts multitiered school needs assessment for academic year</td>
<td>2a. Contributes to a safe and healthy school environment</td>
<td>3a. Provides evidence-informed programs and services and monitors progress consistent with the multitiered framework of response to intervention that addresses the needs of individuals, classrooms, and schools to improve academic and behavioral performance</td>
<td>4a. Adheres to the standards and practice requirements set by NASW, the state department of education, and the state social work licensure board as required by the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Identifies community resources for the school</td>
<td>2b. Examines how the historical and current political, social, economic, and cultural climate affect the context for learning</td>
<td>3b. Provides specialized services as needed by the school—for example, crisis intervention, teacher consultation, education and training on psychosocial topics, and special education evaluations as needed</td>
<td>4b. Adheres to the ethics and values of the social work profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c. Assesses school culture and climate</td>
<td>2c. Provides school social work services in a culturally sensitive manner</td>
<td>3c. Empowers students, families, and schools to gain access to and effectively engage with community resources</td>
<td>4c. Uses the NASW Code of Ethics and relevant scholarship to guide ethical decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d. Assesses family engagement in school activities</td>
<td>2d. Addresses diversity and differences by recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of the people served and advocating for policies, programs, and services that build on client strengths</td>
<td>3d. Engages in reflective discussion with school personnel about policy positions, organizational plans, and administrative procedures affecting school success</td>
<td>4d. Maintains ongoing and accurate records and documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e. Identifies scientifically-supported academic and behavioral interventions to address needs of school</td>
<td>2e. Engages in practices supportive of social and economic justice by challenging structural barriers, social inequalities, and educational disparities.</td>
<td>3e. Communicates clearly and accurately in oral and written communication, (demonstrating the ability to actively listen, respect differences, and model civility with students, school personnel, parents/guardians, and community partners)</td>
<td>4e. Maintains confidentiality as prescribed by the profession and state laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1f. Establishes professional collaborations</td>
<td>2f. Establishes rapport and works collaboratively with colleagues such as the school board, school administration, school staff, and community professionals as well as members of the family</td>
<td>3f. Organizes and manages their workload effectively and efficiently to deliver quality work</td>
<td>4f. Pursues continuous enhancement of knowledge and skills through supervision, professional development, and continuing education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1g. Knows current federal, state, and local laws and district policies and procedures that guide school social work practice</td>
<td></td>
<td>3g. Builds collaborative relationships and fosters teamwork within and across the school community, respecting the work of others as critical to school success</td>
<td>4g. Exhibits professional conduct through self-awareness, self-monitoring, and professional accountability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Printed with permission from the School Social Work Association of America.
helps to develop a database useful for public and private grant applications.

REFERENCES

Michelle E. Alvarez, EdD, MSW, is associate professor, Minnesota State University, Mankato. Christine Anlauf Sabatino, PhD, MSW, is associate professor and director, Center for the Advancement of Children, Youth, and Families, Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. Andy J. Frey, PhD, MSW, is associate professor, Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY. David R. Dupper, PhD, MSW, is professor, College of Social Work, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Brenda Lindsey, PhD, MSW, University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. James C. Raines, PhD, MSW, is professor and department chair, Department of Health, Human Services & Public Policy, California State University, Monterey Bay. Frederick Streeck, MSW, is executive director, School Social Work Association of America, Sumner, WA. Anne McInerney, MSW, is lead school social worker, St. Paul Public Schools, St. Paul, MN. Molly Norris, MSW, is a school social worker, Mankato Public Schools, Mankato, MN. Address correspondence to Michelle E. Alvarez, Department of Social Work, Minnesota State University, Mankato, 358 Trifon Science Center North, Mankato, MN 56001; e-mail: michelle.alvarez@mnsu.edu.

NASW PRESS POLICY ON ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

The NASW Press expects authors to adhere to ethical standards for scholarship as articulated in the NASW Code of Ethics and Writing for the NASW Press: Information for Authors. These standards include actions such as:

- taking responsibility and credit only for work they have actually performed
- honestly acknowledging the work of others
- submitting only original work to journals
- fully documenting their own and others’ related work.

If possible breaches of ethical standards have been identified at the review or publication process, the NASW Press may notify the author and bring the ethics issue to the attention of the appropriate professional body or other authority. Peer review confidentiality will not apply where there is evidence of plagiarism.

As reviewed and revised by NASW National Committee on Inquiry (NCOI), May 30, 1997

Approved by NASW Board of Directors, September 1997