



Instructionally Speaking...

Evaluation Update

The enormous changes in our teacher evaluation program required by law for September 2013 are just getting started. Here is a summary of what has been happening in the past several weeks:

School Improvement Panels Appointed

The District has determined who will serve on the 24 School Improvement Panels (SIP). Each three-member panel includes the school principal, one additional supervisory staff member (a vice principal or district supervisor) and a teacher. The purposes of the panel include oversight of the mentoring process, the evaluation of teaching staff members and professional development activities.

The WTEA collaborated in the decisions about which teachers would serve on each SIP, although the final decisions were made by the administration. It is important to denote that the Association will exercise our right to bar the teacher members of the SIP from direct involvement in evaluation duties. There are many questions to be resolved about how these panels will work. We are actively engaged in finding satisfactory solutions to these questions.

Association Reps have been advised about who will serve on their respective SIP and are free to share that information with our members.

Teachscape Training to Begin

Two training programs offered by Teachscape are about to begin. The first is administrator training, which will be required of all supervisory staff members. In addition, numerous WTEA leaders have been offered the opportunity to participate in administrator training, so that we can gain further insight into how the observation and annual evaluation process will work. In addition, teachers will soon gain access to the teacher-training component of the Teachscape program.

Most of this training seems to be online and video driven. Decisions about the timing and manner of the teacher training are being made at the school building level. However, the law requires that all teachers be thoroughly trained by the end of the current school year. We are working to ensure both compliance with the contract and a complete and meaningful opportunity for teachers to be ready for this program effective September 1.

Annual Evaluation Components

One promising development from the new teacher evaluation program is that administrators and teachers will be working towards a common understanding of what constitutes good teaching. Charlotte Danielson's "Framework For Teaching" has been adopted as that standard. In the past, we have not had a clear and common model of best practice. Properly implemented, the new program offers the opportunity for teachers to reflect on their performance and make appropriate changes to their instruction.

Other major changes to the teacher evaluation program are the introduction of complex metrics and high stakes consequences. Here we have many concerns.

Each teacher's annual evaluation will be a calculation of weighted scores that reflect observation reports, student surveys about teachers, student performance on assessments of different kinds, and the fulfillment of "student achievement goals". A teacher's annual evaluation will be summed up in one of four conclusions: "ineffective", "partially effective", "effective" and "highly effective". This general process is required by the law. The specific weights given to each component of teacher evaluation are being determined by the administration, depending upon whether the teacher's assignment is in a tested area or a non-tested area.

We will have more details to report later on the subject of annual teacher evaluations, including the issue of using student surveys. Frankly, there are far more questions than answers at this point. However, we wish to acknowledge that the administration has been open to collaboration with us in numerous ways to date and has expressed a strong interest in creating a program that emphasizes professional growth.

The "high stakes" implications here are well known to us. Starting in 2013-14, teachers whose annual evaluations in consecutive years are less than "effective" are vulnerable to tenure charges.

Right now, WTEA leaders have set two goals in response to the new system for summative teacher evaluation. First, we want to help ensure that teachers receive "effective" evaluations. Second, we want to prepare for a full program of support for teachers whose evaluations find them short of that standard. Meeting these goals will require that the system be constructed as fairly as possible and that teachers be well prepared for this challenge.