



Instructionally Speaking...

Teachscape Adopted

On December 19, the Woodbridge Township Board of Education formally adopted Teachscape, Inc. as the district provider for the new teacher practice evaluation instrument. This decision followed a close review of options by a committee of teachers and administrators over the past year. WTEA leaders participated in that review and support the decision of the Board.

Teachscape is basically a technology provider that will service our district with software and support for the new teacher and principal evaluation programs. Their work is based largely on the rubric for teaching practice known as Danielson's *Framework For Teaching*. This comes from research by Charlotte Danielson that identifies aspects of a teacher's responsibilities that promote student learning.

The decision of the Board to take this step is in response to mandates by the State of New Jersey to change the way teachers are evaluated, as well as changes in the New Jersey tenure law. These mandates are generally referred to as the "Excellent Educators for New Jersey" initiative or EE4NJ. In addition to the information previously distributed by the Association with links on wtea.org, members may want to visit the FAQ page on the Department of Education website: http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/faq/faq_eval.htm.

During the months of January through June of 2013, Teachscape is responsible for providing administrators, supervisors and teachers with some initial training. For our members, that will mean becoming familiar with the Danielson rubric and with the new process of teacher evaluation. It may be useful to think of these as two different skill sets. A few words about each—

Danielson—It is not a stretch to say that our school district has been operating without a consensus about what is good teaching. In many ways the central office has provided administrators and supervisors with guidance as to the criteria to use

in evaluating teachers, but it has not always been clear to teachers what an administrator is looking for, and there have always been disagreements about what constitutes best practice. For better or worse, Danielson's framework will address this inconsistency for us in the future. The good news is that the Charlotte Danielson's work in general and the framework specifically are well grounded in research and are widely regarded as supportive of teacher professionalism.

The Teachscape program is also a major departure from the status quo. The fact that we will be moving from "pen and paper" to electronic teacher evaluation data by itself may seem alien to some participants. More significantly, the new program does not rely on the kind of narrative writing we associate with evaluation. It features lists of benchmarks which an observer will determine have or have not been met and the conclusions are recorded quantitatively. There will also be a good deal to learn about how "rebuttal" data from the teacher will be entered into the record.

Teachscape also produces summative evaluations of teachers and plays some role in determinations about whether a teacher's performance for the year is "highly effective", "effective", "partially effective" or "ineffective". WTEA leaders have many questions about this process and we continue to pursue clarifications.

There is a tremendous amount of work to do on the part of everyone to implement this new system of teacher evaluation. We are working with the administration to schedule teacher training by Teachscape within the parameters of the collective bargaining agreement. This first stage of training will require some flexibility by all of us.

As the instructional leaders of WTEA, we have developed this new publication "*Instructionally Speaking...*" to assist in keeping our members up to date. Our members can be assured that we are working to see that the new evaluation program is implemented in a way that improves teaching without compromising reasonable job security and basic principles of fairness.