



Instructionally Speaking...

Evaluation Regulations Proposed

Earlier this month, the New Jersey Department of Education released a set of proposed amendments to the Administrative Code pursuant to TEACHNJ, the evaluation and tenure reform law enacted last year. These regulations provide some of the details we have been waiting for as we prepare for complete implementation of this important legislation in September 2013.

In addition to the draft regulations, the DOE also released a slide presentation that helps clarify a number of issues. We have sent links to both of these documents via email to all WTEA members on our list.

Here are a number of points of information that we think our members will find of value—

Conditions of Observations—Observations will take place under the new evaluation law with greater frequency and new requirements starting in September. All observations seem to require a post-conference between the evaluator and the teacher and will be either 20 minutes or 40 minutes in duration. All teachers will be observed at least three times per year, and non-tenured teachers and teachers with a “corrective action plan” will be observed more often and by multiple observers. These observations will be in addition to supervisory “walk-throughs” which will not be included in the formal evaluation process.

Components of Evaluation—For 2013-2014, 85% of the annual evaluation for teachers in non-tested areas will be based on formal observations and 15% will be based on measures of student achievement. In tested areas (for now, grades 3-8, math and language arts), the evaluation will reflect 50% evaluations, 35% state test (SGP) and 15% other assessments (SGO). In future years, the state will require that all teacher evaluations reflect 50% weight for observations and other measures of performance and 50% for student achievement.

SGP—At this point, state standardized tests will be used only for teachers of math and language arts in grades 3-8. Less than 20% of our teachers fall into this category, but new testing models will include a much larger number of teachers in the future. This form of test data is being referred to as Student Growth Percentile or SGP. This data will be generated by the state based upon a comparison of the test results of students in a teacher’s class with other similar students statewide. (A link to a

site with more information about this has been sent to members.) In some cases the data and the teacher’s annual evaluation will not be finalized until well into the following school year.

SGO—At the beginning of each school year, teachers will set one or more Student Growth Objectives (SGO) with their principal. The final decision about the SGO will be within the authority of the principal. SGOs are measurable goals of student achievement, based on a variety of possible learning assessments. Teachers in tested areas will have at least one SGO, and teachers in other areas will have at least two SGOs. This component of a teacher’s final evaluation will reflect the percentage of students who demonstrate proficiency on the assessment.

Calculation of the Final Evaluation—This is one of our major concerns. Keep in mind that all evaluation components will come down to a number from 1 to 4. Teacher observations will include multiple scores that will be combined mathematically into one score. The SGP and/or SGO scores will also produce separate scores. Then those individual scores will be combined, reflecting the weights for each component. This will result in a fractional number from 1 to 4. The score will be “rounded” in some way to determine if the teacher’s evaluation record will reflect 1-Ineffective, 2-Partially Effective, 3-Effective or 4-Highly Effective. Our initial impression is that the manner in which these ratings will be combined and rounded may set the standard for an “Effective” rating at a very high level.

Consequences of the Final Evaluation—We have discussed this in previous publications to our members. Any teacher who does not receive a final evaluation of “Effective” for a given year will receive a “Corrective Action Plan”. If this rating continues for a second or third consecutive year, tenure charges will be filed.

In a perfect world, the new evaluation and tenure law would result in greater student achievement, and no competent teacher would face negative sanctions. But the world we live in always includes miscalculations, ups and downs in performance, and unfair judgments.

All of our teachers need to prepare diligently for the new evaluation system, as the WTEA puts in place a variety of programs to assist and support our members. More information about these programs will be forthcoming.