

Principal Points Submission on Peer Validators

March 17, 2015

Dear Principals,

I know you and your teams have all spent a great deal of time and effort this year on the effective evaluation of your school-based staff. As a result of your efforts, teachers are receiving more observations earlier in the year. In fact, over 60% of our teachers have at least two or more observations, compared to only 40% at this same time last year. These observations provide more of our educators with more opportunities for real-time feedback and reflection on their practice. In addition, almost half of our other school-based staff received a mid-year review for the first time this year. All of this work has begun to drive us to our goal of dramatically transforming teaching in each classroom and the expectations for professional growth for all of your team members. Thank you for all the work you've done so far on this front!

As we head into the remaining months of the school year, similar to the past two years, we are kicking off the peer validation phase of evaluation. Peer validators will be in schools starting next week and will be in buildings through June, so I wanted to take time now to provide a brief overview of the purpose and approach to peer validation.

What is peer validation? Peer validation is a component in the teacher contract that allows a third party to observe a teacher for the purpose of providing independent review of the teacher's practice and offering relevant feedback. We see peer validation as an opportunity to support both our teachers and our school leaders by both norming our observation practices, ensuring our teachers receive accurate and evidence-based feedback on their classroom performance, and ensuring the validity of our evaluation system.

Which teachers will receive validation observations? Teachers across all performance levels will receive validations using a combination of the peer validators from The ReVision Learning Partnership as well as Special Assistant for Teacher Quality (SATQs), and Assistant Superintendents. Most teachers will be selected for peer validation but, as a reminder, your School Improvement Panel (SIP) may request a peer validator for a specific teacher by emailing evaluations@nps.k12.nj.us and putting "Peer Validator Request" in the subject line. (Depending on the number of requests, we may not be able to grant all requests.)

Who are the Peer Validators? After consulting with the Peer Oversight Committee, the district conducted a competitive bid process to select the best organization to conduct peer validation. After consulting with the Newark Teachers Union (NTU), we selected the same organization that provided Peer Validation as last year — The ReVision Learning Partnership (www.revisionlearning.com). ReVision Learning, comprised of former teachers and administrators who specialize in peer observations in an urban school district setting, has a depth of experience in conducting this work to the satisfaction of both management and labor. More importantly, both teachers and administrators alike expressed satisfaction with their work over the past two years in NPS. In addition to ReVision Learning, teachers may receive observations and visits from district administrators, including Special Assistants for Teacher Quality and Assistant Superintendents, or other school administrators.

When will this process occur? Peer validators will start observing teachers Monday, March 23rd through June.

What will the process for peer validation look like this spring? The process is the same as last year. Peer validators will visit classrooms, unannounced, to observe selected teachers. We ask that you not participate in the observation itself to preserve its independence. You will receive a copy of the observation summary report that is shared with the teachers and can join the post-observation conference if the teacher agrees to your participation in the meeting.

How will this impact the rating I gave a teacher? Principal and district leadership will, together, retain ultimate decision-making authority over educator ratings on annual evaluations. To the extent there is disagreement between the peer validator's rating and previous ratings the teacher has received, the Assistant Superintendents and SATQs will support you in rectifying the two points of view.

Please reach out to your Assistant Superintendent and/or the Talent Office at evaluations@nps.k12.nj.us with questions you have on the implementation of peer validation, or any questions that you have on the evaluation process. Thank you for all the hard work that you do for our teachers and our children of Newark!

Sincerely,
Vanessa Rodriguez
Chief Talent Officer