

## **Teacher Talk Submission on Peer Validators**

### **March 17, 2015**

Dear Teachers:

As we head into the spring, I know we are all focused on ensuring our students are on track to mastery of the standards. At the same time, many of us are also focused on ensuring that you are all receiving ongoing and balanced feedback as part of the overall teacher evaluation system.

This year, more opportunities for feedback have occurred than ever before. We hope that your observations and reflections with your administrators have provided you with an opportunity to receive helpful feedback. We are excited by this ongoing commitment to reflect on our practice as we all push toward better outcomes for our students.

As the evaluation process moves forward, we also continue to ensure an evaluation system that is fair, consistent, and includes teacher voice in the process. To this end, the peer validation process begins next week. As a reminder, 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. We believe that peer validation helps to ensure the evaluation process is fair and provides another opportunity to empower and support teachers.

**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 for the past two years —The ReVision Learning Partnership ([www.revisionlearning.com](http://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 last year in NPS.

As always, in addition to ReVision Learning, you may also receive observations and validation visits from district administrators, including Special Assistants for Teacher Quality, or other school administrators.

**What will the process for peer validation look like this spring?** The process is the same as last year. Starting Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> and continuing through June, peer validators will visit classrooms to observe selected teachers. Below are answers to questions that we anticipate you may have at this point.

***Will I get observed by a peer validator?*** All teachers may receive a validation observation. The district has selected teachers who have received various ratings across the spectrum, with an emphasis on Ineffective and Effective teachers to ensure we are norming at both ends of the spectrum. Additionally, if a teacher receives an Ineffective on their Annual Evaluation or if a SIP feels a teacher needs additional support, the SIP may request a peer validator by emailing [evaluations@nps.k12.nj.us](mailto: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.)

***Will I know in advance if I'm going to receive a validation observation?*** No. All validation observations will be unannounced. Therefore, there will be no pre-conference for these

observations. To preserve the integrity of the process, principals will also not know when observations will take place.

***How will the peer validation observation be different than my other observation(s)?***

The observations themselves will not be different. Peer validators will evaluate teacher practice on the same rubric and forms that NPS evaluators use—the NPS Framework for Effective Teaching and BloomBoard—in order to provide you with consistent language in their feedback.

***Will I meet with the peer validator after the observation?*** Yes, the peer validator will schedule a post-observation conference with you (most likely to occur within one to three business days) where s/he will review evidence gathered during the observation and discuss your strengths and growth areas as observed in that lesson. Your principal will receive a copy of the peer validator's completed observation summary.

***Will my supervisor participate in the observation or post-observation conference?***

Neither your principal nor any other school-based administrator will attend the validation observation. However, an Assistant Superintendent or Special Assistant for Teacher Quality may attend an observation with ReVision Learning as well as the post-observation conference to ensure the accuracy of the peer validator. (In addition to ReVision Learning, an Assistant Superintendent or SATQ may also do a validation visit themselves.) Your supervisor will be invited to attend your post-observation conference; they are there simply to listen and learn what feedback the peer validator provides. However, if you do not want your supervisor there, you can request that they not participate in the post-observation conference by informing the peer validator.

***How will you ensure the peer validators are independent but aware of the NPS***

***Framework?*** All peer validators have received training from the district on the content of the NPS Framework for Effective Teaching. However, to ensure independence of perspective, peer validators will not see any information on you or your previous ratings before visiting your classroom. We have also asked that principals and other school-level administrators *not* meet with the peer validator prior to the observation.

***How will this impact the rating I received from my supervisor?*** The peer validators' ratings will not replace previous observation or mid-year ratings but rather serve as another point in the discussion about what an appropriate annual evaluation rating should be. Principals and district leadership together will retain ultimate decision-making authority over annual ratings.

We hope this message helps to address any questions that you have about the process. If not, please reach out to me directly or the Talent Office at [evaluations@nps.k12.nj.us](mailto:evaluations@nps.k12.nj.us) if you have questions. Thank you again for all the hard work that you do for our children of Newark!

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