

WEBSTER



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CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Colleagues,

Earlier this year, New York State educational law was amended to require significant changes to teachers' Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). Webster, like all other school districts across the state, must revise its own evaluation procedures and contractual language to be in compliance with the new law and the new State Regulations, which should be published by July 1, 2011. In addition, Federal Race to the Top requirements will also have to be addressed.

The new state law puts forth a variety of requirements, but at the same time specifies that the details of how these requirements will actually function must be negotiated between local unions and administrations. Included in the new state law:

- Differentiated ratings: highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective.
- A method of calculating a composite score for teachers in which 40% of its weight must be derived from a combination of "student growth data on state assessments" and other "locally selected measures of student achievement" that must be locally negotiated.
- The content of the other 60% of the weight towards composite scores must be locally negotiated.
- A format for Teacher Improvement Plans consistent with the state regulations must be locally negotiated.
- An appeals process for challenging the substance of the APPR must be locally negotiated.

The actual negotiations for these items cannot begin until the final State Regulations have been issued. Because of the complexity of these issues and their links to contractual language, we expect that the details of these items will be negotiated next year. Until we have agreed upon these changes, our existing APPR remains in effect. In the meantime, we can proceed to lay the necessary foundations for these negotiations by continuing the collaborative work that began several years ago between the Administration and the WTA. This collaboration is now being expanded to include teachers and building administrators around the district. We hope that this collaboration will be viewed as an opportunity for everyone to understand the conceptual framework that we are working within and a chance to offer their input to point out potential problems or opportunities for improvements. The shared goal is to work together to make sure that what is ultimately negotiated is something that works effectively and fairly for all employees of the WCSD.

A brief history of our progress to date:

- Over the past two years, after benchmarking the work of other districts, research and the State documents, a committee of WTA representatives and Administrators agreed to use the Danielson "Framework for Teaching" as the basis for language for our new APPR.

- It was agreed that the Framework provided a common language to describe effective teaching practice in and outside of the classroom. As a team, we agreed that the domains and the rubrics allowed for transparency in stated expectations that is lacking in our current document.
- This research based framework is aligned with State and National Standards for teaching and brings our process into compliance with State requirements.
- Our team also encouraged a collaborative approach of administrative and teacher leadership to guide instruction for all teachers.
- Our team also encouraged a timeline that would allow teachers time to learn and understand the framework: a year of learning.
- Therefore we are now using joint teacher-administrator led cadres to lead five faculty meetings - a year of learning and reflection.
- We also agreed that our administrative team will be provided professional development centered on writing evidence-based observations.
- The focus of the Framework is on instruction and student learning and its concepts are consistent with the work to date of our Professional Learning Communities.

This year, five faculty meetings will be dedicated to familiarizing all staff with the Danielson “Framework for Teaching.” Within those meetings we hope to:

- Engage in a shared discussion of effective teaching.
- Develop a shared understanding of “what” we hope to measure and evaluate, rather than create the details of “how” we will do so.
- Provide a forum for input as we develop a common language and shared expectations for teaching and learning.

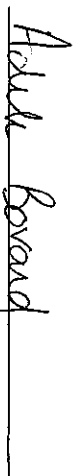
It is important to remember that the work of aligning the teachers’ contract with state and federal requirements and negotiating the final forms and processes that will be used is NOT the work of the teacher cadre and the faculty meetings. Still, we believe that there is no more important discussion than this one. Within Danielson’s Framework, it is noted that research indicates that “the single most important factor affecting student achievement is the teacher.”

Our goal is to develop a shared language and conceptual framework for understanding what good teaching looks like. We also hope to lay the essential groundwork for creating an APPR process that is not only legally compliant with NYS regulations, but, just as important (perhaps more so), a process that allows us all to reflect on our daily practice and how it can benefit our students.

Respectfully,



Steve Turiano – WTA President



Adele Bovard - Superintendent