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Using Peer Review Evaluation as a Possible Source of Evidence in Teacher Evaluation

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Ohio Revised Code 3319.112 (D)(4) directs the Ohio Department of Education to provide "guidance to districts on how information from student surveys, student portfolios, peer review evaluations, teacher self-evaluations, and other components determined appropriate by the district may be used as part of the evaluation process." This document provides guidance regarding teacher peer review evaluations, which are a set of observations, meeting notes, and other documents based on the work a peer does with the teacher being evaluated. Included in this document are examples of how peer review evaluations are used in teacher evaluation systems around the country, the benefits and limitations of their use and steps for the design of a system that uses the peer review evaluation as a possible source of evidence in teacher evaluation.

Scope of Guidance

This guidance document includes information on two approaches to peer review evaluations. Before using either approach, it may be necessary to review your collective bargaining agreement.

- **Approach 1: Peer reviewers are used as part of performance evaluations for all teachers.** Peers observe teachers' classroom practices as part of performance evaluations that occur on a regular basis, usually annually. Peer reviewers conduct observations and provide feedback in post-observation conferences. Peer reviewers also provide a final summative evaluation rating based on a review of collected artifacts from those observations.

  – Peer reviewers usually apply for the position and participate in training on both the process and their responsibilities to other teachers (i.e., giving performance feedback).

- **Approach 2: Consulting teachers are used as part of aligned peer assistance and review (PAR) programs for novice and/or struggling teachers.** The PAR program is designed to support and evaluate novice or struggling teachers within a school.

  – In the PAR program, mentor-teachers (usually referred to as consulting teachers) conduct observations of teacher practice and provide coaching and mentoring support to those teachers throughout the school year.

  – Consulting teachers usually apply for the position and participate in training on both the process and their responsibilities as a mentor.

  – The consulting teacher presents midyear and end-of-year recommendations to a PAR panel composed of both union and district leadership. The PAR panel must then decide if it wishes to retain or dismiss the teacher.

– Districts may align an existing PAR program to a performance evaluation system used for all teachers by using evidence gathered through PAR (such as observations) as part of a teacher's regular performance evaluation.

In addition, this guidance document provides considerations for creating a peer observation system, selecting peer reviewers or mentor teachers, and examples of districts implementing peer reviews as part of teacher evaluations in other states.

Peer review may be used as evidence for the following components of teacher performance taken from the Ohio Teacher Performance Evaluation Rubric 2.0.

ORGANIZATIONAL AREA: INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT					
Domains	**Components**				
		Ineffective	**Developing**	**Skilled**	**Accomplished**
LESSON DELIVERY (Standard 2: Content, Standard 3: Assessment, Standard 4: Instruction, Standard 5: Learning Environment, Standard 6: Collaboration and Communication) *Possible Sources of Evidence: pre-conference, post-conference, formal observation, classroom walk-throughs/informal observations, peer review*	**Communi-cation with students** Element 2.2 Element 4.3 Element 4.6 Element 6.1	The teacher does not communicate learning goals and expectations for mastery and does not model exemplary performance to students. Students cannot discern learning goals. Differentiated learning goals are not used.	The teacher inconsistently communicates learning goals, expectations for mastery and models of exemplary performance to students. There is limited use of differentiated learning goals.	The teacher is consistent and effective in communicating appropriate, needs-based, differentiated learning goals, expectations for mastery and models of exemplary performance to students.	The teacher is consistent and effective in communicating differentiated learning goals (such as needs based, interest based, strength based), expectations for mastery and models of exemplary performance to students through multiple communication techniques.
		The teacher does not demonstrate content knowledge by using content-specific, developmentally appropriate language or content-specific strategies. There is no student engagement.	The teacher demonstrates some content knowledge by using limited content-specific, developmentally appropriate language and limited content-specific strategies. Students demonstrate little engagement in the lesson.	The teacher consistently demonstrates content knowledge by using content-specific, developmentally appropriate language and content-specific strategies to engage students. The teacher's communication strategies and questioning techniques check for understanding and encourage higher-level thinking.	The teacher consistently demonstrates content knowledge by using content-specific, developmentally appropriate language and content-specific strategies to engage students. The teacher's communication strategies and questioning techniques engage students in higher-level and creative thinking and stimulate student-to-student interactions.
		The teacher does not give students feedback.	Feedback to students is general, occasional or limited and may not always support student learning.	The teacher gives students substantive, specific and timely feedback to support their learning.	The teacher gives students substantive, specific and timely feedback to support individual student learning. The teacher gives students opportunities to engage in self-assessment, provide feedback to each other and reflect on their own strengths and challenges.

	Monitoring student understanding Element 3.2 Element 3.3	The teacher fails to monitor and address student confusion and misconceptions.	The teacher inconsistently monitors or incorrectly addresses student confusion and misconceptions.	The teacher consistently monitors and addresses common student confusion and misconceptions by presenting information in multiple formats and clarifying content as he or she sees challenges.	The teacher consistently monitors, addresses, articulates and anticipates individual student confusion or misconceptions by presenting information in multiple formats and clarifying content as he or she sees challenges.
LESSON DELIVERY (continued)	Student-centered learning Element 3.5 Element 4.5 Element 4.6 Element 5.3 Element 5.4	Learning is entirely teacher directed. Students are not participating in learning activities.	Learning is primarily teacher directed. Students participate in whole class learning activities.	Learning is a balance between teacher-directed instruction and student-directed interaction as students apply their knowledge and skills as developmentally appropriate. The teacher effectively combines collaborative and whole class learning opportunities to maximize student learning.	Learning is primarily self-directed with the teacher in the role of facilitator encouraging students to apply their knowledge and skills as developmentally appropriate. The teacher encourages students to persist in the learning tasks. The teacher effectively combines independent, collaborative and whole class learning opportunities to maximize student learning.
		There are no opportunities for student choice about what will be learned and how learning will be demonstrated. There is no evidence of differentiated instructional strategies or resources.	There are few opportunities for student choice about what will be learned and how learning will be demonstrated. The teacher uses limited differentiated instructional strategies or resources.	Teacher gives opportunities for student choice about student learning paths or ways to demonstrate their learning. Teacher uses differentiated instructional strategies and resources for groups of students.	Teacher routinely promotes opportunities for students to actively take part in developing goals toward mastery, and students are responsible for deciding how to demonstrate their learning. Instructional strategies, pacing and resources are differentiated to make the lesson accessible and challenging for all students, while supporting the various learning needs of individual students.

ORGANIZATIONAL AREA: INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

DOMAINS	Components	Ineffective	Developing	Skilled	Accomplished
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT (Standard 1: Students, Standard 5: Learning Environment) *Possible Sources of Evidence:* *pre-conference, post-conference, formal observation, classroom walk-throughs/informal observations, peer review, student surveys*	**Classroom routines and procedures** Element 5.5	The teacher has not established routines and procedures. Effective transitions are not evident, resulting in a significant loss of instructional time and frequent off-task behavior.	The teacher establishes routines and procedures but uses them inconsistently. Transitions are sometimes ineffective, resulting in a loss of instructional time. Off-task behavior is sometimes evident. The teacher makes decisions about classroom operations.	The teacher consistently uses routines, procedures and transitions that effectively maximize instructional time. On-task behavior is evident. Students assume appropriate levels of responsibility for effective operation of the classroom.	The teacher and students have collaboratively established consistent use of routines, procedures and transitions that are effective in maximizing instructional time. On-task behavior is evident and ensured by students. Students initiate responsibility for effective operation of the classroom.
	Classroom climate and cultural competency Element 1.4 Element 5.1 Element 5.2	There is no evidence of rapport or expectations for respectful, supportive and caring interactions with and among students and the teacher.	There is some evidence of rapport and expectations for respectful, supportive and caring interactions with and among students and the teacher.	There is consistent evidence of rapport and expectations for respectful, supportive and caring interactions with and among students and the teacher.	The teacher intentionally creates a classroom environment that shows consistent evidence of rapport and expectations for respectful, supportive and caring interactions with and among students and the teacher.
		There is no demonstration of regard for student perspectives, experiences and culture. The teacher does not address needs related to student sense of well-being.	There is inconsistent demonstration of regard for student perspectives, experiences and culture. The teacher is aware of needs related to student sense of well-being but does not address them effectively.	There is demonstration of regard for student perspectives, experiences and culture. The teacher models expectations and behaviors that create a positive climate of openness, respect and care. The teacher anticipates and effectively addresses needs related to student sense of well-being.	There is demonstration of regard for student perspectives, experiences and culture. The teacher models expectations and behaviors that create a positive climate of openness, respect and care. The teacher anticipates and effectively addresses needs related to student sense of well-being. The teacher seeks and is receptive to the thoughts and opinions of individual students and the class. When appropriate, the teacher includes other school professionals and/or community resources to ensure all students are recognized and valued.

ORGANIZATIONAL AREA: PROFESSIONALISM					
Domains	**Components**				
		Ineffective	Developing	Skilled	Accomplished
PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES (Standard 6: Collaboration and Communication, Standard 7: Professional Responsibility and Growth) *Possible Sources of Evidence: Professional Growth Plan or Improvement Plan, pre-conference, post-conference, artifacts, self-assessment, peer review*	**Communication and collaboration with families** Element 6.1 Element 6.2	The teacher does not communicate with students and families.	The teacher inconsistently or unsuccessfully uses communication and engagement strategies with students and families. These do not contribute adequately to student learning, well-being and development.	The teacher uses effective and appropriate communication and engagement strategies with students and families, resulting in partnerships that contribute to student learning, well-being and development.	The teacher uses multiple effective and appropriate communication and engagement strategies with individual students and families. These ongoing strategies promote two-way communication, active participation and partnerships that contribute to each student's learning, well-being and development.
	Communication and collaboration with colleagues Element 6.3	The teacher does not communicate and/or collaborate with colleagues.	The teacher inconsistently or unsuccessfully communicates and/or collaborates with colleagues, resulting in limited improvement of professional practice.	The teacher effectively communicates and collaborates with colleagues to examine instructional practice and analyze patterns in student work and student data to identify and implement targeted strategies for improving professional practice.	The teacher initiates effective communication and collaboration with colleagues outside the classroom, resulting in improvements in student learning, individual practice, school practice and/or the teaching profession.
	District policies and professional responsibilities Element 7.1	The teacher demonstrates a lack of understanding and regard for district policies, state and federal regulations, and the Licensure Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators.	The teacher demonstrates minimal understanding of district policies, state and federal regulations, and the Licensure Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators.	The teacher demonstrates understanding by following district policies, state and federal regulations, and the Licensure Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators.	The teacher demonstrates understanding by following district policies, state and federal regulations, and the Licensure Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators. The teacher exemplifies effective leadership characteristics beyond the classroom. The teacher helps shape policy at the school, district or state level.
	Professional learning Element 7.2 Element 7.3	The teacher sets short-term and long-term professional goals but fails to monitor progress or take action to meet the goals.	The teacher sets and monitors short-term and long-term professional goals but fails to take appropriate action to meet the goals.	The teacher sets short-term and long-term professional goals and monitors progress in meeting them based on self-reflection and data analysis. The teacher takes appropriate action to meet the goals.	The teacher consistently pursues best practices and sets, monitors and reflects on progress toward meeting short-term and long-term professional goals based on data analysis to improve student learning. The teacher takes appropriate action to meet the goals. The teacher collaborates with colleagues and others to share best practices.

Selecting Peer Reviewers

Approach 1: Peer Reviewers in Teacher Performance Evaluations

As outlined above, any teacher could elect to be evaluated through the peer reviewer evaluation system. In this model, a peer reviewer may be a teacher with any title, but is often a teacher serving in a leadership capacity as an instructional leader, as a mentor or in another specialized role. Peer reviewers may or may not serve as classroom teachers during the school year in which they are conducting observations; however, they must have served as teachers for a significant period in the past and must meet other criteria for the position. A peer reviewer should not serve in an administrative or direct supervisory role but may have some responsibility over other teachers based on the position. For example, a teacher who leads a professional learning community or grade-level team may serve as a peer reviewer, whereas a full-time department head may not be appropriate as a peer reviewer. For teachers in dual or hybrid teaching and leadership positions (especially those in smaller schools or districts), it may or may not be appropriate to serve as a peer reviewer given the existing culture of collaboration and feedback.

It is important for peer reviewers to receive training specific to their responsibilities, such as choosing and scheduling observation sessions, using the observation framework, reviewing artifacts and providing constructive feedback. Principals or other administrators—not peer observers—should have responsibility for summative performance evaluations, although the evidence gathered by peer reviewers is still included in the summative rating. The evidence that is gathered by peer reviewers to be used as part of a summative evaluation should be in written form and include data from the observation, rubrics or observation forms, scoring, feedback or next steps. All of these documents will become part of the artifact set that is used when assigning a final summative score for evaluation. One decision point to consider is whether every teacher observation and meeting document that a peer reviewer has needs to be included in the set of artifacts for final submission, or if only a select set of those documents needs to be included.

To focus the work that a peer reviewer does with the teacher being evaluated, it is recommended that the observations, meetings and other work are aligned with the professional practice framework used in the district, and it should align with the standards for Ohio educators. By aligning the work of the peer reviewer to these standards, districts can better ensure the reliability of observations by increasing the number of observers and observations of practice by the peer observers (Ho & Kane, 2013). Teachers also recognize that having peer reviewers contribute to teacher performance evaluations, in addition to an administrative observer, provides the following benefits (Sullivan, 2012):

- Higher teacher confidence that the evaluation system is both fair and supportive rather than punitive.

- An increased level of collegiality and common purpose between teachers across a system.

- Potentially higher retention rates of teaching staff.

- Increased alignment between teachers and administrators on expectations for classroom teachers.

It is important to consider what types of peer reviewers are most compatible with the district's existing culture, structure and goals. Decisions should be made about how reviewers support the evaluation process on the following dimensions (Osta & Grodsky, 2012):

- Contribute to support and evaluation **or** evaluation alone.

- Conduct informal observations, formal observations, **or** both.

- Gather evidence on some **or** all aspects of practice.

- Work exclusively in one school, across the district, **or** across districts.

- Work with specific types of teachers (e.g., specific grades or subjects; veteran, novice, struggling) **or** all teachers generally.

- Serve as peer reviewers part-time **or** full-time.

Districts in Ohio might consider having a specific career track for teacher-leaders who are interested in becoming peer reviewers. These teachers could receive evaluator training that is aligned with the evaluator training received by administrators. The district could base selection criteria on appropriate professional skills by hiring peer reviewers who have had a minimum number of years successfully teaching in the district, evidenced by high effectiveness ratings or

other criteria, and who demonstrate leadership, collegiality, communication skills and knowledge of pedagogy.

Approach 2: Consulting Teachers' Observations in Aligned PAR Programs

Background

Districts across the country began relying on PAR programs in the 1980s to support instructional improvement. Some districts have chosen to align their PAR program with their performance evaluation system, using consulting teachers as peer observers in performance evaluations. A PAR program is a professional induction and support system that is jointly controlled by the local union and district administrators. PAR programs involve a panel of union representatives (teachers or staff) and district administrators, usually with a slight union majority, and expert consulting teachers who serve as mentors. Principals may be asked to refer struggling teachers based on professional judgment and/or evaluation results. Teachers in the PAR program receive support through activities such as observation, modeling, coaching and guided study with their consulting teacher. The consulting teacher also conducts a formal evaluation of the teacher and presents recommendations to the PAR panel. Recommendations may include dismissal, continued PAR participation or successful completion of the program. Consulting teachers in PAR differ from those who are assigned to assist teachers on a remediation plan; PAR consulting teachers only work with teachers enrolled in the PAR program, and these teachers may or may not have a remediation plan, depending on the design of the PAR program. PAR programs vary widely based on the teachers served (novice, struggling, or both), the role of school administrators and alignment to districtwide performance evaluations. Different PAR programs have different criteria for consulting teacher positions, but consulting teachers usually apply for the position and submit a portfolio demonstrating their teaching expertise, positive staff relationships and communication skills.

PAR programs have many benefits, including the following (Goldstein, 2007; Payay, 2011):

- Emphasis on improving teaching quality

- Savings through the retention of effective educators and reductions in contested dismissals

- Practice-focused professional development and specific, high-quality feedback for teachers

- Meaningful union involvement in ensuring teaching quality

- Leadership opportunities for effective teachers

PAR programs, where they are implemented, usually have strong support from teachers, union leaders and district leaders. Teachers especially tend to see PAR programs as fair and effective because they allow teachers to be involved in all steps of the process. In order to implement a PAR program effectively, districts should take the following challenges into account:

- PAR programs require a significant initial investment, as they may cost anywhere from $1,500 to $10,000 for each teacher enrolled (Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2012). These costs can be offset or mitigated, however, by increased retention rates because each teacher who leaves can cost the district approximately $5,000 to nearly $18,000 to replace (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007).

- PAR programs can help build positive relationships between districts and unions, but they also require active cooperation among school administrators, district administrators and union leaders.

- Peer review elevates the level of dialogue on teaching and learning. Although peer review may be controversial for experienced teachers if their peer reviewer has recently worked as a fellow classroom teacher at the same school, PAR programs that assign consulting teachers with care may avoid this issue.

Prior to the recent widespread changes in teacher evaluation policies, PAR programs were sometimes aligned to district performance evaluation systems, but they more often functioned separately. Some districts that have long-established PAR programs have not moved to integrate their PAR program into updated evaluation systems that include high-quality student data or more frequent evaluations. Aligning the district PAR program (or similar mentoring or induction program) to performance evaluations can help support novice teachers in becoming proficient and by providing remediation for teachers who have areas that need improvement. Many of the PAR programs reviewed for this document had the following features:

- Include formal processes for sharing formative and summative feedback based on the same practice standards as performance evaluations.

- Have a clear and rigorous process for selecting consulting teachers based on evaluation results and other qualifications. Consulting teachers and peer observers may have similar roles and responsibilities, or even serve in a dual role in smaller districts.

Recommendations to Districts on Peer Review Evaluations

Based on reviews of the literature and of programs from other states and districts, the Ohio Department of Education has identified the following recommendations for districts that choose to include peer review as additional evidence in the OTES 2.0 process:

- Make the selection process for peer reviewers rigorous and based on multiple sources of data including but not limited to:
    - Peer recommendations
    - Administrator recommendations
    - Observation(s) of classroom practice and review of planning documents
    - Structured interviews
    - Successful completion of evaluator training
- Identify possible training programs for potential peer reviewers.
- Evaluate the capacity to support reviewers/mentors who might need release time from their current teaching positions
- Work with building-level administrators and the teacher association to ensure clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the peer reviewers
- Define clearly the expectations for the number of classroom visits and pre- and post-visit conferences that peer reviewers will make for each of the teachers they are evaluating
- Limit the overall caseload for peer reviewers to ensure that, based on their other duties, they are able to complete the required observations and follow-up conferences.
- Consider the addition of a program coordinator who can work on the selection process as well as match peer reviewers with the teachers with whom they will work.
- Include all stakeholders in communications about the peer review evaluation model and process, including teachers, administrators and district staff.
- Consider and clarify how teachers are selected for the peer review process and make this selection process transparent.

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