



TEACHER EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT Handbook

**An integrated system for advancing teacher growth and student learning,
developed by labor/management Innovation Initiative Teams**



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Peer Assistance and Review (PAR)

An essential component of the TED system is its Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program, which is based on shared labor/management accountability and responsibility for creating a culture to enhance teaching practices and student learning. It is a model that is comprehensive enough to fully integrate evaluation and professional development, yet flexible enough to be customized through collective bargaining at the local level. With New York State standards serving as the roots of the TED system, and the Teacher Practice Rubric comprising its branches, PAR can provide the focused opportunities for all teachers to experience professional growth.

A PAR framework was developed by the labor/management teams from Albany, Hempstead, Marlboro, North Syracuse, Plattsburgh, and Poughkeepsie and subsequently piloted by the project districts. The teams built on the successes of pioneering PAR programs that were created through collective bargaining in Kenmore (1986), Rochester (1986) and Syracuse (2003) and the original PAR program in Toledo, Ohio.

PAR has as its primary purpose to provide an effective mentoring and evaluation process for new teachers and for veteran teachers to enhance their professional growth. PAR is a comprehensive program designed to be forged through collective bargaining at the district level. The elements of PAR must be compatible, complementary, and coherent — an outcome achieved through effective labor/management collaboration.

PAR represents a significant departure from the historical practice of top-down, episodic teacher evaluations. Like any organizational change, it requires the involvement of all stakeholders, and must be well communicated and consistently implemented. While such change is not easy, union leaders and administrators who have experience with PAR say that its benefits quickly become apparent as PAR generates a positive climate of increased support for teacher growth and student learning. PAR is a cultural shift from the traditional and often isolating paradigm of a teacher working alone in a classroom. Instead it establishes a continuum of professional development and support, where beginning teachers are mentored, struggling teachers are coached, and master teachers find their own practice enhanced by the sustained professional dialogue that is fundamental to PAR.

The Innovation Team's model is designed with the following purposes in mind:

- To foster collaboration among professional educators in order to improve teaching and learning
- To ensure quality instruction that will maximize achievement for all students
- To professionalize teaching by ensuring sound tenure decisions
- To increase professional assistance for teachers at all levels throughout their career
- To improve induction support for new teachers and thus increase retention
- To identify experienced teachers who do not meet district standards and provide them with peer review assistance and a review, and
- To help teachers succeed in meeting the district's instructional standards as well as a path to possible non-renewal or dismissal for teachers who do not meet those standards.

How PAR works

The TED model of Peer Assistance and Review is jointly developed through collective bargaining at the local level and managed by a panel of teachers and administrators. The PAR Panel appoints expert Consulting Teachers (CTs) who mentor and subsequently evaluate all new teachers as well as veteran teachers who have been identified as not meeting standards. All evaluations conducted by CTs comply with the locally negotiated evaluation process. PAR also offers a voluntary component for experienced teachers. PAR is designed to serve two, and in some cases three, sub-groups of teachers:

■ **New teachers**

Beginning teachers are supported by the PAR Novice program. The support provided by PAR is essential for those starting their careers, especially those who are entering the classroom after completing an alternative preparation program. Even when new teachers have taught in another district, they can benefit from the support of a PAR Consulting Teacher (CT) to help them learn about the local community, students, and curriculum. Districts should allocate sufficient resources to support all newly appointed teachers with PAR services.

■ **Experienced teachers who are not meeting standards (recommended for implementation after initial year of PAR)**

Experienced teachers who are not meeting the district's standards may be referred to the PAR Intervention program by their evaluator. A district may consider using the PAR Intervention Program to help teachers who are designated as "developing" or "ineffective" under the state's new criteria. This support can be specified as an option in their Teacher Improvement Plan subject to collective bargaining. A teacher on intervention receives intensive support from a CT, who conducts formal evaluations and conveys the teachers' progress to the PAR Panel.

The panel, in turn, assesses the teacher's progress in meeting the district's standards and communicates that assessment to the superintendent.

Teachers Served by PAR

All Districts

- All beginning teachers
- Experienced teachers who are evaluated as "ineffective"

Locally Determined

- Newly hired teachers with experience in other districts
- Experienced teachers who are evaluated as "developing"
- Experienced teachers who request assistance

"What's happening here is a smart, thoughtful approach to teacher evaluation, to use an evaluation system for learning, development and improvement — not gotcha."

Randi Weingarten
AFT President



■ **Experienced teachers who request help (a local option under PAR)**

At certain times during their career, experienced teachers who have otherwise been successful may benefit from the support and guidance of a “highly effective teacher.” A change in teaching assignment, a change in grade level or personal difficulties are some of the circumstances that could temporarily challenge even an experienced teacher. Such teachers also could receive confidential help through the district’s Voluntary PAR program.

The PAR Panel

The PAR Panel is a joint labor/management committee of teachers and administrators. The size of the PAR Panel is determined locally, subject to collective bargaining agreements and district policies. Teachers hold the majority of seats on the panel. The local union president appoints the teacher members of the panel and the district superintendent appoints the administrator members. Appointments are for time-limited terms. The panel is co-chaired by a teacher and an administrator.

The panel oversees the program, refines its practice, and manages its budget. It selects and supervises the CTs. The panel holds regular meetings during which CTs report on teachers’ progress. Based on their review of the CTs’ formal evaluations, the panel recommends to the superintendent whether novice teachers should be reappointed. The panel also reviews the CTs’ formal evaluations of experienced teachers in the Intervention Program and assesses their progress according to the state Teaching Standards. The co-chairs will convey the panel’s assessments to the superintendent, who may recommend the dismissal of teachers who remain underperforming. A two-thirds majority vote will be required for all of the panel’s decisions involving teachers’ performance assessments. All matters considered by the panel will be confidential.

The PAR Panel

All Districts

- Responsible for managing PAR; comprised of teachers and administrators
- Teachers hold a majority of panel positions
- Co-chaired by an administrator and teacher
- Teacher members appointed by the union president; administrators appointed by the superintendent.
- Panel selects and supervises Consulting Teachers; panel reviews all evaluations prepared by CTs and reports to the superintendent about individual teachers’ progress
- A two-thirds majority vote is required for all of the panel’s decisions about performance assessments and any recommendations about re-employment.

Locally Determined

- Whether the panel should have additional responsibilities; How co-chairs share responsibilities
- Panel’s authority to establish additional policies as needed
- Size of panel and length of panel members’ terms

Consulting Teachers (CTs)

The CTs who mentor and evaluate teachers in PAR are the heart of the program, and their work is crucial to the credibility and effectiveness of PAR. Therefore, the CTs role will be carefully defined and the panel will ensure that CTs are carefully selected, trained, and supervised.

The CTs' role: Whether CTs are district-based or school-based, and whether they serve full-time or part-time are locally based decisions that can depend on the size of the district and the demand for CTs in particular subjects and grade levels.

Full-time CTs serve for a three-year term, after which they will be expected to return to the classroom. The term for a part-time CT is locally determined. Individual districts decide whether CTs have the right to return to their original school after completing their term. The panel may decide to initially stagger the terms of full-time CTs so that there will always be experienced CTs to mentor those new to the role. Therefore, when the program is first implemented, a small number of CTs may be asked to remain in their role beyond the standard three-year term.

Each full-time CT has a recommended caseload of 12 to 15 teachers, depending on local resources. Caseloads for part-time CTs are adjusted proportionally. Because extra time is usually required to assist and assess teachers in the Intervention Program, they may be weighted more heavily in a CT's caseload.

The main responsibility of CTs is to work closely with the individual teachers in their assigned caseload. This will involve a range of activities including:

- Establishing rapport with teachers
- Making announced and unannounced visits to observe them teaching
- Offering suggestions for improvement in post-observation conferences
- Developing a growth plan
- Recommending instructional materials and resources
- Helping to trouble-shoot problems within the teacher's school
- Co-planning lessons
- Conducting model lessons
- Arranging for teachers to observe other effective teachers
- Offering ongoing assessments of their progress
- Completing a formal, summative evaluation of their work

In order to be effective, CTs have to carefully manage their time so that all teachers are well served. This may mean dedicating more time to certain teachers as the year proceeds. CTs must also keep detailed records about their teachers' performance, their growth over time, and the specific recommendations and assistance they have been offered.

In some districts, CTs may be asked to assume additional related responsibilities, such as planning and conducting the district's orientation program or sponsoring professional development for new teachers.

Selection: The selection process for CTs must be open, well organized, fair, and rigorous. Applicants must have at least five years of successful teaching experience in the district. Local districts may decide to require more.

Openings for CTs must be widely advertised and described in information sessions. Teachers and administrators should encourage very effective, well-respected teachers to apply. The PAR Panel selects CTs after carefully considering evidence from the following sources:

- The applicant's resume
- Written recommendations from the teacher's building administrator and a union member
- A writing sample completed at a designated time and location
- An interview with the full panel or a sub-committee responsible for selection
- Unannounced classroom observations

Compensation: CTs assume responsibilities beyond those routinely expected of a classroom teacher. In addition, they often spend time well after the regular school day, responding to teachers' questions and maintaining written records. In addition, they may be expected to participate in activities during the summer, such as sponsoring orientation for new teachers or attending training sessions. Therefore, in addition to being released from part or all of their teaching assignment, they may receive additional compensation as a fixed stipend or a percentage of their salary. Whether and how CTs are compensated for additional responsibility and time should be determined locally through the collective bargaining process.

Adult Development and Cognitive Coaching: This will involve understanding adult learning and how to promote reflection and growth among teachers.

Training: CTs selected through a rigorous process will have demonstrated that they are experts in classroom teaching, but they will need additional skills if they are to be effective in their new role. Therefore, the PAR Panel arranges for CTs to receive training from qualified consultants, experienced CTs, or members of the PAR Panel in the following:

Consulting Teachers (CTs)

All Districts

- CTs mentor and evaluate teachers on PAR
- Must have at least five years successful teaching experience in district
- Serve three-year terms, depending on demand
- Are expected to return to the classroom after completing term
- Are selected in open rigorous process based on review of: resume, written recommendations from building administrator and union member, assigned writing sample completed at designated site and time, unannounced classroom observations
- Receive training in: Cognitive coaching and adult development, leadership and teamwork, curriculum implementation, observation, evaluation, and report preparation
- Maintain records and reports
- Caseload of 12-15 teachers per full-time CT
- Work collaboratively with principals
- Are supervised by PAR Panel

Locally Determined

- Additional responsibilities beyond mentoring and evaluation
- Whether roles are district-based or school-based, full-time or part-time
- Whether to require more than five years of experience for CTs
- Whether to stagger length of initial terms to ensure continuity
- Whether to give CTs the right to return to their original school after term is completed
- Whether teachers on Intervention carry extra weight in a CT's caseload
- Whether to require extra time beyond the school year
- Whether CTs receive extra compensation and, if so, whether it is a uniform stipend or percentage of base salary
- Format of supervision by PAR Panel

Leadership and Teamwork: The CT's role typically is new to a district and, therefore, requires those holding it to exercise leadership collaboratively with district administrators and other teacher leaders. CTs need to understand how the district works and how to get things done effectively. They need to develop strong working relationships with the principals of schools where teachers in their caseload work. CTs within the district will also need to learn how to function effectively as a team, learning from one another and explaining their work to others.

Curriculum Implementation: CTs necessarily serve as experts on the local district's curriculum in the subjects and grade levels taught by the PAR teachers in their caseload. They therefore require ongoing training in the curriculum and its revisions.

Conducting and Writing Standards-based Evaluations: CTs must become skilled observers and assessors of classroom practice. This involves understanding the evaluation instrument and how to use it fairly and effectively. CTs should offer teachers specific recommendations for improvement and expect them to improve at a reasonable pace. CTs also should produce clear, detailed reports.

Supervision: CTs are supervised by the PAR Panel in a format that is locally determined. The panel may provide informal feedback for the CTs after reviewing their written and oral reports of teachers

in their caseload. Districts may develop a written evaluation form for all CTs and collect data about their performance by observing the CTs' sessions with PAR teachers. Supervision may be provided by a PAR Pair, composed of a teacher and administrator from the Panel, who meet regularly with individuals or sub-groups of CTs to answer questions and discuss challenges they may encounter. Just as teachers deserve informed and thoughtful feedback, so too, do CTs.

Novice Program

The Novice Program serves all beginning teachers. If funds are available, it may also serve those with teaching experience who are new to the district. The main goal of the Novice Program is to ensure that every new teacher's first year is as successful as possible. During that time, the CT has full responsibility for formally evaluating the teacher's instructional practice.

In keeping with the locally negotiated evaluation instrument, building administrators may participate in assessing aspects of that teacher's performance beyond the classroom, such as the teacher's professional relationships with colleagues. Principals also may conduct informal classroom observations of the novice teachers and discuss those with the CTs.

Throughout the year, the CT and the building administrator should be fully informed about the process and work collaboratively. PAR provides all novice teachers a minimum of 15 classroom visits or observations throughout the year. In addition, novices should be able to contact their CT by phone or email when questions or challenges arise.

New teachers not only receive expert advice as beginners, they also are informed about how well they are progressing and whether the CT has serious concerns about their performance. In the spring, they will be informed of the panel's formal assessment of their performance and any recommendation regarding their future employment.

Normally, novice teachers who do not meet the district's standards during the first year are not reappointed. However, in certain cases where the teacher has had insufficient pre-service preparation and the CT identifies unusual promise, the panel may recommend the teacher for continued employment and a second year in PAR.

Novice Program

All Districts

- Includes all beginning teachers
- CTs provide support and conduct formal evaluations
- All novices receive at least 15 observations or visits per year by a CT
- Principal may conduct informal evaluations
- CTs and principals will work collaboratively and be fully informed of the teachers' progress
- PAR Panel reviews CTs' reports and makes employment recommendations to superintendent, based on two-thirds majority vote
- In normal circumstances, novices who do not meet standards will not be reappointed

Locally Determined

- Whether to include newly-hired teachers who have experience in another district
- Circumstances under which novices may remain on PAR for a second year

Intervention Program for Experienced Teachers

Sometimes even experienced teachers struggle in the classroom. This may result from having been assigned to a new subject or grade level or having encountered personal or health problems. In some cases, teachers will have had long-standing instructional problems that were never identified or addressed. Teachers may automatically be referred to PAR if they receive a rating of “ineffective” or “developing” in a year-end evaluation. Districts may also permit administrators to refer underperforming teachers to PAR. The primary purpose of Intervention is to assist struggling teachers so they can successfully meet the district’s instructional standards.

Teachers who are assigned to Intervention have an improvement plan and receive the full range of assistance and assessment from their CT described above. Experienced teachers on Intervention may be recommended for dismissal if, despite a CT’s assistance, they fail to improve sufficiently. Given the high stakes involved, care must be taken at each step of the intervention process to ensure that due process is provided and sound decisions are made. The panel will review each referral to Intervention under PAR in order to determine if it is appropriate. In deciding whether to place a teacher on PAR, the panel will closely review the teacher’s past evaluations and may request an independent classroom observation by a CT. Local districts may decide to provide an experienced teacher with an appeals process for placement on Intervention. A tenured teacher may remain on Intervention for no longer than one school year. If at that time the teacher does not meet the district’s standards, despite intensive assistance from a CT, the PAR panel will refer its findings to the superintendent, who may recommend the teacher’s dismissal.

Intervention Program for Experienced Teachers

All Districts

- Automatic referral to Intervention of any tenured teacher who receives a rating of “ineffective” on an evaluation
- PAR Panel determines whether a teacher referred to PAR is placed on Intervention
- CT provides intensive assistance and subsequent evaluation of each teacher on Intervention
- Teachers on Intervention receive at least 20 observations or visits per year
- CT prepares evaluation for PAR Panel. Based on a two-thirds majority vote, the Panel reports to the Superintendent, who may recommend dismissal
- Teachers remain on Intervention no longer than one year
- Due process is carefully monitored throughout all steps of Intervention

Locally determined

- Whether teachers who receive a rating of “developing” will be referred to Intervention
- Whether administrators may refer an experienced teacher to PAR
- Whether PAR Panel will assign a CT to conduct an independent assessment before placing a tenured teacher on Intervention.
- Whether the district provides an appeals process for the Panel’s decision to place a teacher on Intervention

While PAR will shine light on struggling teachers who will benefit from support, it's important to stay focused on the significant, positive impact PAR can have on the effectiveness of all teachers and on district morale. PAR recognizes and utilizes highly effective and respected teachers to assess teacher practices and to assist peers, creating sustained professional conversations about best practice. It establishes and models effective labor/management collaboration, furthering collegiality and a focus on continual improvement. Ultimately, PAR energizes and inspires the entire educational community, as evaluations are seen not as an end in themselves, but as a means toward professional growth and enhanced student learning.



Rochester TA's Marie Costanza, director of the Career in Teaching Program, explains how her district's peer assistance program is structured.