

Peer Assistance and Review for New Teachers: Taking Charge of Our Profession

The AFT has long supported peer assistance and review (PAR) programs, and provides support to locals that want to institute a PAR program. PAR ensures (1) that new teachers get the professional development and support they need from experienced, expert teachers; (2) that only capable, well-prepared teachers who meet high entry standards are offered permanent positions; and (3) that unions and experienced teachers help set the standards for all teachers.

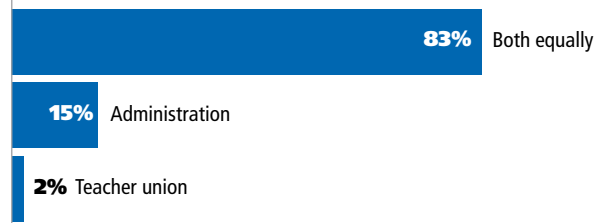
PAR programs must be devised collaboratively by the district and the union. They must be coherent and ongoing, and must encompass hiring and orientation; intensive professional development, support and mentoring; and a final review that determines whether each aspiring novice meets high standards of practice. In addition, PAR programs must include the following characteristics:

- High quality teachers, selected through a fair and quality-conscious process, who are responsible for mentoring and assisting new teachers, preferably on a full-time basis.
- District provided training, time, resources and responsibility for expert teachers to mentor new teachers through at least their probationary period.
- Expert teachers who are responsible for making wise, tough, evidence-based recommendations to decision-makers about whether a new teacher merits continuing employment.
- Recommendations that are based on agreed-upon, transparent, evidence-based professional standards.
- Adequate and sustained budget support guaranteed through the regular district budget.

What AFT Members Think*

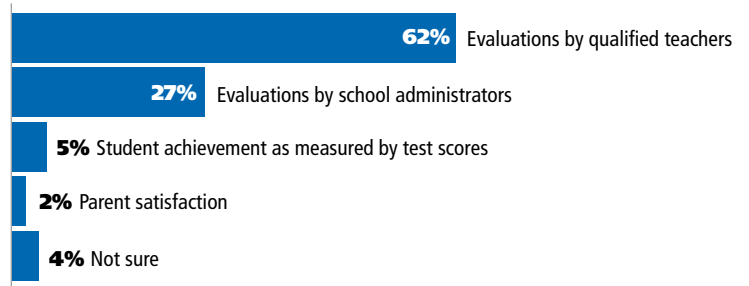
Quality Teaching Should Be A Top Union & Management Priority

Who should have the main responsibility for working to ensure quality teaching in your district?



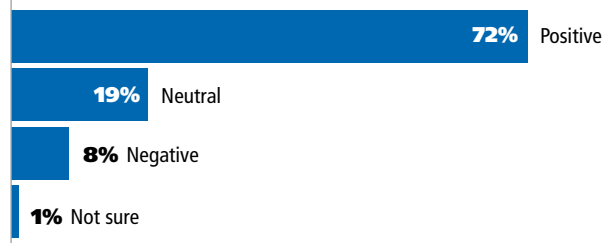
Teachers Prefer To Be Evaluated by Qualified Peers

Which one of the following do you think is the best way to evaluate teachers?



Teachers Positive about PAR for Evaluating and Mentoring New Teachers

What is your general reaction to the idea of PAR for new teachers?



* Source: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., January 2008, 708 AFT Teachers surveyed, error: +/-3.7%

“Peer assistance and review is the first step on the path to becoming a real profession.”

—Dal Lawrence, PAST PRESIDENT,
TOLEDO FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

In Practice

Hamburg Teachers Association and Hamburg Central School District, New York

The Hamburg mentor program provides support, guidance and evaluation of new teachers during their first year of teaching. Mentor teachers serve in a full-time capacity, working with up to 12 teachers during, before and after the school day. The mentor teacher's role includes supporting the first-year teacher in meeting learning standards, providing staff development, and conducting observations and evaluations that determine the new teacher's second-year status. For more information, contact HTA president Cliff Huen: cjhuen@aol.com.

Rochester Teachers Association and Rochester City School District, New York

Rochester's mentor/intern program is one part of a continuum of support and evaluation called the Rochester Career in Teaching Plan, which seeks to give teachers a prominent role in monitoring their profession. The overarching goal of the mentor/intern program is to improve the quality of instruction, with the practical implication of retaining interns who are likely to become competent teachers, and counseling out those who are unsuited for the profession. For more information, contact RTA president Adam Urbanski: urbanski@rochesterteachers.com.

United Educators of San Francisco and San Francisco Unified School District, California

The PAR program in San Francisco is imbedded in the contract. It includes a voluntary-referral component and close, cooperative work between the union and the district. For more information, contact UESF president Dennis Kelly: dkelly@UESF.org.

Toledo Federation of Teachers and Toledo Public Schools, Ohio

The Toledo Plan is an effective teacher-performance tool based on peer coaching and evaluation. This program provides a formula for the professional development of beginning teachers, and an evaluation system that detects and screens out those who show little aptitude for the classroom. For more information, contact TFT past president Dal Lawrence: dallawrenc@aol.com.

Resources

Peer Assistance and Review (Fall 2007)

This article from the AFT's quarterly journal, *American Educator*, describes the history of peer assistance and review from its beginning at the Toledo Federation of Teachers. http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/fall2007/peerreview.htm

Where We Stand: Teacher Quality (June 2003)

This booklet contains resolutions on teacher quality issues, including PAR, that were passed at the 1998, 2000 and 2002 AFT national conventions. www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/TQres.pdf

Peer Assistance and Peer Review: An AFT/NEA Handbook (1998)

Prepared for the AFT/NEA joint conference on teacher quality, this handbook is designed to assist affiliates interested in developing peer assistance and/or peer review programs at their local sites. <http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/parhndbk.pdf>