

Why Peer Observers and Peer Evaluators?

High-performing teachers are among the most qualified to make judgments about the quality of classroom instruction and the quality of student growth/achievement evidence. Administrators should consider the benefits of implementing possible programs that use faculty as contributors to evaluation programs. Examples of Peer Observation/Assistance/Evaluation in current practice include:

- **PAR (Peer Assistance and Review)** Pioneered in Toledo, Ohio
- **The Memphis Non-Tested Subjects Pilot** Student Growth Evidence Portfolios Scored by Peer Reviewers

Reasons to adopt a model of peer evaluation:

TIME: Administrators do not have time to maintain a high level of expertise in all of the many content areas, maintain evaluator training expectations to be reliable and valid, or even perform all of the evaluations necessary to be able to provide constructive feedback leading to classroom improvement.

TEACHER/UNION BUY-IN: Reliable and valid teacher-driven evaluations that are administered by content-level specialists result in more buy-in from teachers and unions.

COST: It is more cost effective to create positions of peer evaluators and peer observers than it is to promote teachers of specific expertise into an administrative role. In some cases this may just be a change in role vs. a change in pay.

Benefits for Teachers:

VALIDITY: Evaluations are conducted by someone who is an expert in the content area and has classroom experience with that content.

QUALITY FEEDBACK: Useful feedback and support from a fellow teacher who understands and has experienced the challenges of teaching the subject material.

OPPORTUNITY: Increased opportunities for different roles and career ladders within the teaching profession.

CREDIBILITY: Teachers are more likely to respect and listen to a proven and successful teacher.

By including teachers who are content and grade level specialists, administrators will have more time to spend on other job responsibilities with the assurance that teachers are benefiting from effective evaluations with the constructive feedback and support necessary to improve performance. Administrators will also experience more support from teachers and unions when evaluations are viewed as support systems to improve teacher performance rather than a punitive model