PEER REVIEW OVERVIEW (updated September, 2015)
by Stefan Cohen, CIT Director

PEER ASSISTANCE and REVIEW (PAR)

Peer Review has always been part of Rochester's Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) and represents some of the highest principles of teacher professionalism and teacher leadership. As practiced in our Career in Teaching program, our Lead Teacher-Mentors use the same framework and rubric language that is used in teacher evaluation. Mentors have a significant evaluative role when recommending Interns for continued employment and at other points on the CIT Career Ladder. As part of our negotiated APPR Agreement, Peer Review formally builds these principles into the structure of our teacher evaluation process with the goal of improving instruction and supporting student learning.

PEER REVIEW DEFINED

Peer Review in the RCSD is the process of Lead Teacher-Mentor/Peer Reviewers conducting classroom observations of teachers in their field followed by rich learning-focused conferences, providing verbal and written feedback, and assigning ratings as part of the teacher evaluation process. The extensive evidence collected by Peer Reviewers is recorded in "Informal" and "Formal Observations." Peer Reviewer ratings are part of the 60 "points" assigned to the "Performance" component of APPR (sometimes referred to as "Professional Practice Review" or "Evidence of Teacher Practice" component). At least 31 of the 60 points in the "Performance" component must be based on the ratings of a trained Administrator supervisor.
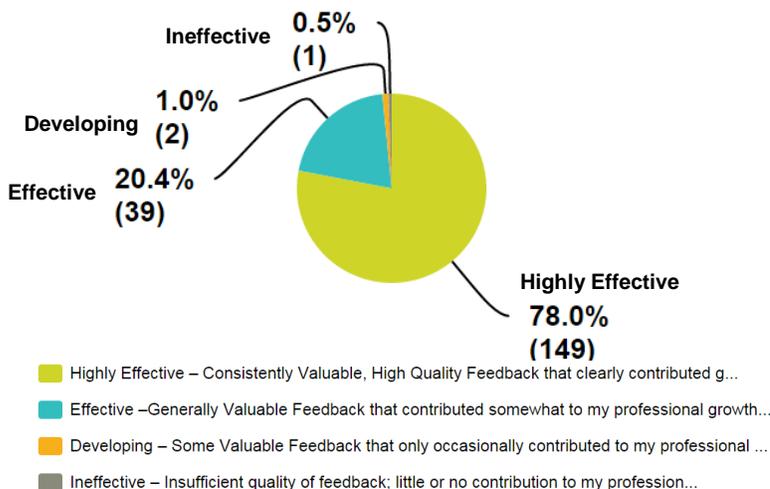
SELECTION OF PEER REVIEWERS

In Rochester, Peer Reviewers are selected from our corps of trained Lead Teacher-Mentors. This provides credibility to Peer Reviewers, since Lead Teacher-Mentors are vetted and selected by the collaborative CIT Governing Panel made up of teachers and administrators. This also ensures that Peer Reviewers are well-trained in the Learning-focused Conversation skills that are the heart of an effective evaluation system with professional growth as its goal. In addition to their selection and training as mentors, Peer Reviewers must be recommended for this role by the CIT Governing Panel and successfully complete the Teachscape Proficiency Focus Assessment. Peer Reviewers must have a solid understanding of the Danielson Teachscape rubrics and apply them to the observation and evaluation process with minimal bias in order to provide constructive feedback and fair, accurate ratings for teachers.

PEER REVIEW RESEARCH and DATA

Research by Susan Moore Johnson and others suggest that a well-designed Peer Review program that is built on trust, communication, and credibility allows subject matter expertise, classroom perspective, and teacher leadership to become part of the evaluation process. Our own survey data from 2014-2015 supports that view:

Overall, how would you rate the quality of your Peer Review experience this year?

Answered: 191 Skipped: 2

- Ineffective 0.5% (1)
- Developing 1.0% (2)
- Effective 20.4% (39)
- Highly Effective 78.0% (149)

- Highly Effective – Consistently Valuable, High Quality Feedback that clearly contributed g...
- Effective –Generally Valuable Feedback that contributed somewhat to my professional growth...
- Developing – Some Valuable Feedback that only occasionally contributed to my professional ...
- Ineffective – Insufficient quality of feedback; little or no contribution to my profession...

COMMENTS:

"I can honestly say that my teaching has improved as a result of the constructive feedback and conversations we had."

"Our conversations inspired me to grow as a teacher. I was able to see where I could improve, how I could use class routines in a way that encouraged student ownership of the classroom."

"All interactions I had with my Peer Reviewer were respectful and constructive. I felt that my Peer Reviewer fairly evaluated my work, and offered constructive feedback that has helped me in the classroom."

"Although we did not always agree, my peer evaluator professionally and with much consideration pointed out areas of weakness and provided suggests (strategies and methods) to improve practice."

"I love having a peer reviewer! There are things that he sees that other reviewers do not because they are not teachers, or haven't been in a long time. I always feel like he "gets it" and offers the best recommendations and suggestions."

"The peer reviewer understood my certification area and because of that the suggestions were better aligned with the needs of my classroom."

"My peer reviewer is an amazing asset and an integral part of my development as an educator!"

More information at www.rcsdk12.org/CIT.