



*A Community of Learners*

## **INFORMATIONAL MEMO: Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) Planning Progress**

December 16, 2014

TO: The Winnetka Public Schools Board of Education  
Superintendent Trisha Kocanda

FROM: Maureen Hager, *Director of Human Resources*

### **Background of PERA**

In response to the requirement to prepare for the 2016 implementation of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), the District has repurposed the Teacher Evaluation Committee. The Committee is charged with becoming familiar with the Act's requirements, investigating methods to comply with the Act in concert with our beliefs about quality instructional experiences for our students, and developing a set of recommendations for the PERA Joint Committee which is required to be functioning no later than November 1, 2015.

The most defining aspect of PERA for District 36 is the requirement to include measures of student growth as 30% of the performance evaluation criteria for the evaluation of teachers. Professional practice must represent *at least* 50% of the performance evaluation rating but can represent up to 70% of the performance evaluation rating. As with all other aspects of the Act, the District's Joint Committee will determine the specific percentages and parameters of the plan.

Measures of student performance are defined as assessments that are classified as Type I (nationally normed), Type II (used across the district at a grade or department level), or Type III (developed and used by an individual teacher). Each district's Plan must identify a Joint Committee charged with identifying those assessments that will be available to measure student achievement.

### **Work of the Teacher Evaluation Committee to Date**

Prior to the start of the school year, Committee members met on August 13 and 14 and completed training with a consultant from the DuPage Regional Office of Education.

This more intensive training provided a common understanding for committee members to do their work this year.

To familiarize all staff who will be subject to the requirements of PERA, the Teacher Evaluation Committee wrote and produced a production entitled “Un-PERA-lyzed” for the September 29, 2014, early dismissal day. This light-hearted look at an otherwise complicated and potentially anxiety-producing change to professional evaluation was an effective way to introduce PERA to our teaching staff.

In addition to training, the Teacher Evaluation Committee has met three times. It will continue to meet an additional three times to study PERA, pilot assessments, and develop recommendations to pass to the Joint Committee to inform their decision making next year.

In addition to these discussions, teacher evaluation was also the topic of the December 2, 2014, Administrator Academy hosted by the District. At this Academy, the administrative team was joined by a number of members of the teaching staff who also hold Type 75 administrative licenses and who are required to participate in an Administrator Academy once during their five-year certification cycle. The presenter focused on a critical aspect of student learning – student engagement – and involved the group in methods to incorporate measures of student engagement in effective instructional evaluation. The group of teachers and administrators gained a great deal from this interaction and improved the inter-rater reliability among evaluators. Principals will present key learnings to their staff. In addition, the administrators committed to scoring videos of teachers at every administrator team meeting to continue to improve inter-rater reliability.

### **Emerging Themes**

The Teacher Evaluation Committee has embraced the student assessment requirement as an opportunity to identify what we believe about assessment, how assessment can help enhance what a teacher does in the classroom, and how to make PERA “right” for the District 36 school community. The committee’s approach has been to embrace what is already happening that is in concert with PERA regulations and to determine how those aspects of PERA under the control of the district can be designed to support good instruction.

In both the Teacher Evaluation Committee meetings and in the Administrator Academy environment, a second theme has emerged. Teachers are open to working collaboratively with administration to improve instruction and raise the level of student engagement. Many teachers aware of the process have inquired as to how their administrator can manage his or her time sufficiently to do all that is required of administrators to complete effective evaluations. In addition, the decrease of administrative time in the middle school environments has caused the staff to ask if the Associate Principal role could be restored to full time at both schools. Although it is rare

that teachers request more administrative resources, the teaching staff has requested this multiple times in multiple environments.

### **Next Steps**

The Teacher Evaluation Committee is scheduled to reconvene an additional three times following winter break. After this work is completed, recommendations regarding the evaluation process and appropriate assessments will be passed on to the Joint Committee. The Teacher Evaluation Committee will be disbanded and a plan will be designed and voted on by the Joint Committee for implementation in the 2016-17 school year.