

Great Ideas for Great Public Schools

WASHINGTON

Union and district collaborate to raise student achievement

The Seattle Education Association and the Seattle Public School District agreed to a new contract in 2010 that continues their historic, collaborative **Partnership for Closing the Achievement Gap**. As part of this agreement, the union and the school district created a professional growth and evaluation system to help improve teacher practice and boost student achievement. The new approach combines objective and subjective measures of teacher effectiveness. It also demonstrates that the national debate over academic excellence and accountability can be resolved without misusing student test data. Every teacher is part of a professional learning community where best practices are discussed and goals are set.

Philosophy

- The new professional growth and evaluation system creates a framework in which every classroom must have an exceptional teacher—average is no longer good enough.
- Teachers who are not ranked in the top two tiers of the four-step performance scale must improve their skills.
- Good teachers are encouraged to become even better.

How it works

- Each year, each teacher conducts a self-assessment using a standards-based rubric of what constitutes good teaching. The teacher meets with an administrator to review his/her self-assessment and data on school and classroom performance before November 15.
- Together, the teacher and the administrator set goals for professional growth and student achievement, including how student achievement will be measured. Progress may be gauged through multiple measures such as standardized test scores, student journals, and classroom-based assessments.
- Four specific areas of teacher practice are observed: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibility.

- Teachers are no longer rated either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Instead, there are four performance tiers: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and innovative.
- After four years of teaching, every teacher must be at least proficient in all four areas.
- Teachers who are rated unsatisfactory receive \$500 that may be used for training, workshops, release time to observe other classrooms, books, or to bring experts into the classroom to observe and make recommendations. They also receive coaching from a consulting teacher. The goal is to identify teachers who may be struggling and help them build skills so they can meet their students' needs.
- Student test scores can be used to “trigger” conversations with the principal and possibly additional classroom observations and mentoring.

Induction of new teachers

- The existing one-year mentoring program has been transformed into an induction program.
- Teachers new to the profession now get support for three full years instead of just one.
- To help new teachers increase their expertise, the district is doubling the number of available mentors.

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Great Public Schools for Every Student