

Albemarle County Public Schools

Overview of the Teacher Performance Appraisal

Vision

All learners believe in their power to embrace learning, to excel, and to own their future.

Mission of the Teacher Performance Appraisal

Albemarle County Public Schools' Teacher Performance Appraisal provides a systematic structure to build and ensure a culture of professional learners committed to meeting the educational needs of all students.

Core Beliefs about Teacher Performance Appraisal

Albemarle County Public Schools' Teacher Performance Appraisal system is grounded on three core beliefs about teaching and learning:

- Teachers have a profound impact on student achievement;
- Professional growth is essential to developing and maintaining both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and skills; and
- Professional relationships enhance commitment to continuous improvement and professional growth

Connecting the Teacher Performance Appraisal, Framework for Quality Learning, Professional Learning Community Model, and the Division's Strategic Plan



Figure 1

...educators transform professional learning into action "when they read, write, observe, use various thinking strategies, listen, speak, and practice new behaviors in ways that deepen understanding, affect beliefs, produce new habits of mind and behavior, and are combined in ways that alter practice. Such professional learning produces complex, intelligent behavior in all teachers and leaders and continuously enhances their professional judgment." (Dennis Sparks, 2004)

What teachers know about teaching, learning, their students, their content, and the decisions they make on a daily basis are the greatest factors in determining how well students learn and to what extent that learning occurs. When teachers

work in collaboration through structures and systems indicative of a *Professional Learning Community*, teachers are more likely to engage in authentic professional learning, resulting in higher levels of learning for all students. Collaborative inquiry, analysis, and reflection are central to quality professional learning among Albemarle County educators.

Implementation of the *Framework for Quality Learning Model* will only occur through the commitment of all educators to professional growth that produces deep understanding,

transforms mental models, and produces a continuous stream of goal-focused actions (Dennis Sparks, 2004). Sparks challenges educators with three requests –

- *Elaborate what you are learning in various ways (**deep understanding**)*
- *Examine your assumptions and beliefs (**transformational learning**)*
- *Ask: What's the next action? (**translate knowledge into action**)*

The curricular, assessment, and instructional models defined and described in the Framework for Quality Learning link to the Domains, Standards, and Key Elements in the Teacher Performance Appraisal. Albemarle County educators attempt to create professional learning contexts that cause teachers to apply the best available knowledge and skills within and across schools. By creating opportunities for teachers to connect with one another in meaningful ways through structures that support development of Professional Learning Communities, teachers begin to work together to clarify questions posed by Richard & Rebecca DuFour and Robert Eaker –

- *What is it we want all students to learn?*
- *How will we know when each student has mastered the essential learning?*
- *How will we respond when a student experiences initial difficulty in learning?*
- *How will we deepen the learning for students who have already mastered essential knowledge and skills?*

Meaningful and varied formats for teachers to center their conversations with one another around student learning extends their capacity to create, communicate, organize, and act on knowledge about teaching and learning (David Perkins, 2004). Just as young people learn in different ways, so do educators learn in different professional formats that serve various purposes (Susan Loucks-Horsley, 2000).

The Albemarle County Public Schools Teacher Performance Appraisal acknowledges that, in order to be successful, educators must work within a culture of professional learners committed to meeting the educational needs of all students. As such, three core beliefs about teaching and learning are foundational to the Teacher Performance Appraisal system:

- Teachers have a profound impact on student achievement.
- Professional growth is essential to developing and maintaining both content knowledge and pedagogical skills.
- Professional relationships enhance continuous improvement and professional growth.

Key Concepts of the Teacher Performance Appraisal

The Teacher Performance Appraisal is built upon several *key concepts*:

- *Self-assessment* is fundamental to *reflective practice* that informs on-going *professional growth*
- *Professional growth* goals are directly related to student outcomes

- *Differentiated supervision* is determined by *multiple sources of data and reflective conversations*
- *Effective feedback* is on-going and occurs through *collaboration based on multiple sources of data*.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is fundamental to reflective practice that informs on-going professional growth. The Teacher Performance Appraisal includes performance rubrics designed to guide self-assessment and reflection based on professional practice. The Teacher Performance Appraisal is based on six domains of teaching: knowledge of students; knowledge of content; planning, delivery and assessment of instruction; safe, effective learning environment; communication and collaboration; and, professionalism. Each of the domains is comprised of standards that outline foundations and expectations for high-quality teaching and learning. These domains reflect current Virginia Department of Education Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers. Each of the standards is divided into a number of key elements in order to communicate clear expectations for professional practice within the standard. Recognizing that teachers vary in their professional expertise based on training and professional experience, teacher performance is assessed on a continuum ranging from *Applies* to *Integrates* to *Innovates*. Teachers working on these ranges meet the county-wide expectations for acceptable performance. Teachers performing below the *Applies* level enter into a performance improvement procedure.

Applies: Implies that the teacher works at an emerging stage in the identified area
Integrates: Implies that the teacher works with an advanced degree of competence that sets the standard for the profession
Innovates: Implies that the teacher works at a level that demonstrates a deep understanding and serves as a model for practice

Professional Growth Goals

Professional growth goals are directly related to student outcomes. The Teacher Performance Appraisal utilizes a SMART Goal structure as a specific tool to sustain the efforts of continuous improvement. The SMART Goal process requires that we monitor and adjust our actions as needed in the service of student outcomes such as habits of mind, higher order thinking, and academic achievement.

Differentiated Supervision: The Performance Appraisal Supervision Continuum

Differentiated supervision is determined by multiple sources of data and reflective conversations. Teachers bring varied levels of expertise to their work with students, regardless of their experience levels. Teachers' reflection on their own knowledge and instructional practice - guided by research-based rubrics that describe a continuum of best practices - is central to the formative Teacher Performance Appraisal process. Through goal-setting conferences, tenured teachers work collaboratively with principals to establish growth goals and to identify strategies to meet those goals. Principal-teacher interaction, as well as the principal's supervisory approach, is adjusted along the Performance Appraisal Supervision Continuum as new formative information or data becomes available during the process.

At the final performance appraisal meeting, the teacher and principal reflect on and discuss growth and goal attainment. The principal and teacher once again determine the supervisory approach that will guide interaction with the teacher for the next year's appraisal cycle.



Figure 2

- **Collaborative/Teacher Determined:** The principal functions as a facilitator in this approach that fosters interaction through which the teacher reflects, draws conclusions, and constructs or develops his or her own ideas. Outcomes should result from the teacher's autonomous decisions, but the teacher may use peers as key "critical friends" to support the growth process. This approach works best with experienced, knowledgeable teachers or those less experienced teachers who are self-directed and well on their way to developing expert practices.
- **Collaborative Balanced/Principal and Teacher Determined:** This model extends from shared decision-making and works best with teachers who are shifting from Applies to Integrates practice. Through reflective interaction, the principal encourages the teacher to develop his or her own ideas to maximize ownership while using brainstorming and problem solving to determine mutually accepted next steps. Disagreement may occur through the principal's fostering of challenge and risk taking by the teacher.
- **Directed Information/Principal Directed:** This approach is used primarily with a teacher who must develop the knowledge, expertise, or confidence essential for collaborative discourse. This teacher seeks advice or needs directions from a principal who can provide expert information and experienced guidance. In this model the principal will initiate suggestions and propose alternatives then encourage the teacher to revise, refine, or innovate with his or her own ideas.
- **Directed Control/Performance Improvement Plan:** The principal makes decisions and tells the teacher how to proceed. This model is suited to performance improvement plan, in which a teacher needs focused direction from the principal regarding areas that require improvement.

Effective Feedback/Multiple Data Sources

Effective feedback is on-going and occurs through collaboration. Teaching is a complex endeavor. Attempting to capture the essence of one's performance as a teacher through a single source of data is ineffective at best. By establishing multiple sources of data about one's performance as a teacher, we hope to better inform the teacher appraisal process through collaborative inquiry, analysis, and reflection around a variety of performance indicators. The collection of data from these multiple sources informs the recursive feedback process that leads to next steps for continuous improvement.

Data Source	Description
Learning Walks	A Learning Walk is a researched-based tool that provides principals and teachers opportunities to reflect on what students are learning, learning strategies, student interaction with the content, and student engagement.
Observations	Observations can be announced or unannounced, but the observer should have some understanding of the context for the observation, usually through a pre-conference or conversation, and there should be prompt feedback about the observation during a review conference. It is equally important to consider the various roles assumed outside the classroom that also contribute to overall performance. Therefore, observations of performance should include other aspects of the teacher's responsibilities such as his or her performance in meetings, work with colleagues, and writings.
Professional Presentation	During each recertification cycle for continuing contract teachers, teachers may make a presentation to a group of colleagues as part of the Teacher Performance Appraisal process. The teacher will address selected domains sharing his/her best work and experiences in each.
Results-Driven Goals	Goals result in an explicit plan to increase student learning. Documentation supports the accomplishment of professional goals.
Self-Assessment	Self-assessment is an important foundation for the discussion of performance appraisal, the writing of professional goals, and professional development. It provides an opportunity for teachers to define the areas in which they perceive themselves to have strengths and those areas in which they would like to focus efforts to grow and develop.
Work Samples	Teachers may elect to demonstrate goal attainment over time through a body of evidence. Choices include a work sample review, a professional presentation to colleagues, a conference presentation or a published article.

How Teachers Matter

Every now and then, as poet Seamus Heaney said, “hope and history rhyme.” We don’t know whether this is really such a time, but we are convinced that schools could with reasonable effort make them rhyme. It takes a whole village to raise one child, but it takes a system to raise every child.” (Michael Fullen, Peter Hill, and Carmel Crévola, 2006)

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