

Certified Employee Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program Washoe County School District



Overview of the PAR Program

The purpose of the joint Washoe County School District (WCSD)/Washoe Education Association (WEA) Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program is to assist all teachers to meet standards for effective teaching. It provides intensive individualized support for experienced teachers who have been identified as performing below WCSD standards of effectiveness and to provide support for first year probationary teachers new to the teaching profession. As a result, the PAR program is the WCSD mechanism for maintaining system wide quality control and ensuring that all WCSD teachers are “Effective” or “Highly Effective” in the WCSD standards of performance. In addition to all first year probationary teachers who are new to the teaching profession, post-probationary teachers who are rated “Ineffective” or “Developing” and require a Focused Assistance Plan (FAP) will be eligible for assistance to improve their instructional practice through the PAR process.

The design of the PAR program is a result of educational best practices from districts across the United States, research based development, and the collaborative work between the WEA and the WCSD. The PAR program is one element of a Professional Growth System (PGS) in place to continuously improve teacher instruction. The focus of the PAR program is to improve instruction by intensive support of novice and underperforming teachers. Thus, the WCSD administration and WEA, as partners in the establishment and implementation of the PAR program, strive to support the recommendations of the PAR Panel to the Superintendent regarding the employment status of teachers in the program.



For post-probationary teachers the “Ineffective” or “Developing” rating given by the supervising administrator during the formal evaluation process and subsequent referral to the PAR program indicates the teacher is performing below the district’s expectations in accordance with the Professional Growth System. Participation in the PAR program for teachers who receive the “Ineffective” rating is mandatory. Referral to the PAR program for teachers who receive the “Developing” rating is to be determined by their supervising administrator. Should a teacher receive a “Developing” rating for a second consecutive year on the annual evaluation, and are not currently in the PAR process, participation is mandatory. All first year probationary teachers who are new to the teaching profession will be included in the PAR program to receive support at the onset of their teaching career.

The PAR program consists of two components: The PAR Panel and Consulting Teachers (CTs). The Panel consists of an equal number of teachers recommended by WEA and approved by the Superintendent, and administrators as recommended by the Washoe Schools Principals’ Association (WSPA) and approved by the Superintendent. CTs provide direct instructional support to client teachers and collect data through peer observations. Based on the data and information gathered through the program, the Panel makes recommendations that may include continued use, and possible revision, of the FAP throughout the year, recommendations for a second year in PAR, a return to a the regular cycle of evaluation, or recommendations to the Superintendent regarding contract renewal.

The PAR Panel

The PAR Panel consists of ten members: Five teacher representatives and five district administrators. Panel members are accountable to their respective groups or organizations to insure organizational and institutional support of the PAR program. The Executive Director of Human Resources will sit on the Panel to facilitate all hearings, ensure all procedures are properly adhered to, communicate all recommendations to those involved, and ensure a

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high level of confidentiality is maintained. Two process observers, approved by the Superintendent, will sit on the Panel. One process observer will be a staff representative of the WEA and the other from the Office of Human Resources, Labor Relations, or designee. Process observers will not participate in developing recommendations or communicate with the CT or supervising administrator. Process observers are included on the Panel to ensure all procedures of the system are followed in a fair and consistent manner. Any findings they may encounter with the system will be reported to the Executive Director of HR for consideration and resolution. The Panel members will serve three year terms that are staggered to ensure consistency in the program. The Panel sends its recommendations, through the Director of PBS or administrative facilitator, to the CT, the supervising administrator, the Area Superintendent, the client teacher, if appropriate, and directly to the Superintendent, who reviews and makes all final decisions on matters related to the client teacher's contract status.

Consulting Teachers

CTs are experienced teaching professionals who are coordinated by the CT administrator. A rigorous selection process ensures they are outstanding teaching professionals and are able to communicate their knowledge and strategies about best practices and adult learners. The CT administrator provides training to develop and refine their observation and analysis of teaching skills.



The Role of the Supervising Administrator and Other Staff Related to the PAR Program

Principals, assistant principals, site facilitators, site mentors and other district support staff all have important roles in professional growth and support of teachers. The PAR program enhances the system by creating an additional, intensive support program for novice and under-performing teachers. The role of the CT in the PAR program is complementary to the roles of school based personnel. Supervising administrators remain responsible for the evaluations of all teachers.

The CT shares peer observation notes and reviews various reports including final summative reports with the supervising administrator. Information the CT will share with the supervising administrator will be factual evidence and artifacts based on the FAP and related to goals created from the evaluation and PGS. However, the documentation and written reports of the CT and the evaluation by the administrator are independent of each other.

While the client teacher is in the PAR program, the supervising administrator continues to supervise the teacher. The supervising administrator observes, provides feedback, coordinates school support, responds to parent concerns, etc. Communication and coordination among the CT, the supervising administrator, other district support and members of the school's instructional leadership team are essential. Such collaboration will ensure the client teacher receives complementary, consistent messages about expectations and instructional improvements from all who are providing support. These messages should include information about areas of concern on the part of the CT and/or administration and the possible consequences of these areas of concern resulting in an "Ineffective" or "Developing" evaluation. The documentation of the CT and the evaluation by the supervising administrator are independent of each other and as such are both provided to the PAR Panel.

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As needed, the client teacher will be invited by the Panel to appear before the Panel to provide additional information. When the client teacher is asked to appear, she/he has the choice to meet with the Panel individually or meet with the Panel accompanied by representation. Upon completion of the hearing the Panel will deliberate with only Panel members present.

The final recommendation report submitted to the Superintendent will be written by the Panel using information provided by the supervising administrator, CT, and client teacher, when applicable.

The supervising administrator will be asked to complete a feedback survey on the performance of each CT working in his/her building and forward that survey to the administrator in charge of the CTs. This is in addition to the survey that each client teacher completes to provide feedback on the performance of his/her CT.



Teachers Served by the PAR Program

The following categories of teachers will be included in or referred to the PAR Program:

- Post-probationary teachers who have received an “Ineffective” evaluation will be placed on a FAP and will be included; or
- Post-probationary teachers who have received a “Developing” evaluation, who have been placed on a FAP as determined by their supervising administrator may be referred; or
- Post-probationary teachers who receive a “Developing” evaluation for a second consecutive year, who are not already in PAR, will be placed on a FAP and will be included; or
- First year probationary teachers who are new to the teaching profession will be included.

The PAR Process

When a post-probationary teacher who is not currently in the PAR program is given an “Ineffective” rating on the annual summative evaluation, the supervising administrator notifies the Executive Director of HR and the supervising Area Superintendent that the teacher will be placed on a FAP, the teacher will be assigned to a CT, and placed into the PAR program. A FAP will be developed in collaboration with the supervising administrator, CT, and client teacher. When a post-probationary teacher is given a “Developing” rating on the annual summative evaluation, and the teacher is to be placed on a FAP at the discretion of the supervising administrator, the supervising administrator and teacher will work towards instructional improvement based on the FAP for a six week time period. If after the six week time period the supervising administrator feels instructional practice has not sufficiently improved, the supervising administrator may initiate a PAR referral to the Executive Director of HR with the approval of the Area Superintendent. Upon inclusion into PAR a CT will be assigned to the client teacher. When a post-probationary teacher, who is not currently in PAR, is given a “Developing” rating on the

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annual summative evaluation for a second consecutive year, the supervising administrator notifies the Executive Director of HR and the supervising Area Superintendent that the teacher will be placed on a FAP, the teacher will be assigned to a CT, and placed into the PAR program. A FAP will be developed in collaboration with the supervising administrator, CT, and client teacher. All first year probationary teachers new to the teaching profession will be assigned a CT and included in the PAR program. A FAP is not necessary for first year probationary teachers, unless deemed appropriate by the supervising administrator.

The Panel convenes following each of the three formal observation periods, to review reports given by the CT and principal or supervising administrator on the status of the client teachers who have been deemed by the supervising administrator and CT as not sufficiently progressing at the time of the hearing(s). The Panel then develops recommendations to assist in the improvement of instructional practice of the client teacher when deemed necessary.



The CT

- Reviews the most recent evaluation and solicits additional information as appropriate;
- Meets with the supervising administrator and the client teacher for initial case review;
- Collaborates with supervising administrator and client teacher to design FAP;
- Meets regularly with client teacher;
- Meets monthly with supervising administrator to discuss progress of client teacher;
- Plans and implements an intensive program of intervention and/or support, which includes completing a minimum of two peer observations with pre and post conferences per semester, ongoing communication with the client teacher and principal, analysis of student data, demonstrated lessons, etc.;
- Accompanies client teachers during observations of model classrooms;
- Provides quarterly review reports and a final summative report at the end of the support period to the supervising administrator, client teacher, Area Superintendent, and the CT administrator, as well as to the Panel based upon the teacher performance standards; and
- Makes a recommendation to the Panel as to whether the client is meeting standard or not based on evidence collected.



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The Supervising Administrator

- Completes all required observations and evaluations of client teacher;
- Collaborates with client teacher and CT to design FAP;
- Meets regularly with client teacher;
- Meets monthly with CT to discuss progress of client teacher;
- Provides all required evaluations to the client teacher, Area Superintendent, and Panel based upon the teacher performance standards; and
- Makes a recommendation to the Panel which may include returning to the regular cycle of evaluation, continuing with a second year of PAR support, return to probationary status, or nonrenewal.

The PAR Panel

- Reviews all cases referred to the Panel as a result of the evaluation process;
- Reviews the supervising administrator's evaluation and hears updates on client teacher;
- Hears preliminary review reports on new referrals from supervising administrators;
- Meets with CTs and supervising administrators to review reports/evaluations and receive updates on client teachers in PAR;
- Advises CTs regarding supports to client teachers;

- Recommends possible adjustments to FAP based on evidence heard from CT and supervising administrator;
- Reviews concerns of participating client teachers, CTs, or supervising administrator regarding the PAR program;
- Makes one of the following recommendations to the Superintendent based on CT reports, the supervising administrator's evaluation, and other supporting data;
 - Successful completion of the PAR program and return to the regular cycle of evaluation;
 - An additional year of PAR assistance; or
 - Return to probationary status or nonrenewal of contract.
- Notifies the Executive Director of HR of recommendations who will in turn notify the client teacher, supervising administrator, CT, CT administrator, Area Superintendent, Chief of Human Resources, and Superintendent of the outcome of the hearing; and
- Works with the administrator in charge of CTs to meet needs of PAR Panel.

Employee discipline concerns are addressed separately from the PAR process.

Focused Assistance Plan

The Focused Assistance Plan or FAP is a detailed and comprehensive plan outlining the assistance to be provided at the onset of the client teachers' inclusion into the PAR program. The elements of the FAP include: Expectations or goals that relate to deficiencies noted in the evaluation, dates and types of notifications that were provided to the teacher about these deficiencies, strategies to achieve the expectations, assessment measures to indicate success, a timeline to implement the plan, and resources for the teacher to assist in working through the plan.

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Overage

Final evaluations must be completed by the third Monday in April. Post-probationary client teachers in the PAR Program are not permitted to voluntarily overage to another school. A client teacher in the PAR program may apply for transfer according to the conditions and procedures of the WEA Negotiated Agreement.

PAR Support Timelines

The normal period of support in the PAR program is from the beginning of May to the third Monday in April. There are cases in which the Panel will agree to a longer or shorter period of time. The decision to shorten or lengthen the time frame is based on mitigating circumstances and the recommendations of the supervising administrator and CT. These decisions will be considered on a case by case basis.

If a client teacher in the PAR program tenders his/her resignation to Human Resources to be effective at the end of the school year, the CT will cease normal data gathering (peer observation reports, summative reports) but will continue to provide support to the client teacher as requested by the client teacher or supervising administrator. Submission of a notification of intent to retire at the end of the school year will not affect the data gathering or support provided by the CT nor will it affect the Panel's processes.



Recommendations

Effective or Highly Effective

When the supervising administrator rates the client teacher "Effective" or "Highly Effective" after a period of PAR support, the Panel may request documentation from the CT to support this rating. The supervising administrator may also be asked to provide further documentation. With this information, the Panel makes a final recommendation that the client teacher will return to the regular cycle of evaluation. The client teacher will be notified of the decision within ten days of the Panel reaching a decision.

Ineffective or Developing

When the supervising administrator rates the client teacher "Ineffective" or "Developing" after a period of PAR support, the supervising administrator will present the case to the Panel. This will occur at the regular spring meeting for client teachers. The Panel may request documentation from the CT to support this rating. The supervising administrator may also be asked to provide further documentation. With this information, the Panel will make a tentative recommendation that the client teacher will return for a second year of PAR. A recommendation for a potential nonrenewal of contract would be made at the February Panel meeting based on evidence provided.

The Executive Director of HR will notify the client teacher, supervising administrator, Area Superintendent, CT, CT administrator, Chief of Human Resources, and Superintendent in writing of the Panel's recommendation within ten days of the Panel reaching a decision. The notice to the client teacher and supervising administrator will include the information on the process to appeal the tentative recommendation, including a date by which the client teacher or supervising administrator must request to present the appeal to the Panel.

Reversion to Probation: NRS 391.730

Pursuant to NRS 391.730 any post-probationary certified employee whose final summative evaluation is rated as less than "Effective" for two

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consecutive years will be deemed probationary and thus serve a three-year probationary period.

Prior to a final decision on whether or not the employee will revert to probationary status, the employee will have the right to request a pre-deprivation/due process hearing. The employee must contact the Executive Director of HR in order to request a pre-deprivation/due process hearing. The employee must request a pre-deprivation/due process hearing **within five calendar days** from the date the April evaluation is received. At the pre-deprivation/due process hearing, the employee will have the right to have a representative present and the right to present objections to and reasons why they should not be reverted to Probationary Status based upon your two consecutive less than "Effective" performance evaluations. In the event you fail to request the pre-deprivation/due process hearing as delineated above, you will waive your right to a pre-deprivation/due process hearing.

Case for an Alternate Observer

If a first year probationary or off-cycle employee, who is receiving three formal observations in the school year, receives evidence from the first and/or second formal observation that indicates "Developing" or "Ineffective" performance, the employee may request the third formal observation be completed by an alternate observer. The client teacher would contact the Executive Director of HR to begin this process.



Second Year in the PAR Program

The Panel uses the following criteria when considering a second consecutive year in the PAR program:

1. The client teacher demonstrated emerging skills and potential to be successful;
2. There were external circumstances that made it difficult for the client teacher to be successful (class schedule, no classroom, etc.); or
3. The client teacher is not certified or not teaching in his/her area of certification.

If a teacher is placed in the PAR program for a second consecutive year, input will be sought from the supervising administrator and the previous CT regarding the assignment of a CT for the second year. Factors that will be considered are the years of experience of the CT, the certification areas, subject knowledge and expertise of the CT, and the specific needs of the client teacher. The assignment of the CT is recommended by the administrator in charge of CTs and affirmed by the Panel. The decision of the Panel to continue a client teacher in the PAR program for a second consecutive year may not be appealed.

The Appeal Process

In any instance in which the client teacher or supervising administrator wishes to appeal the tentative recommendation of the Panel of change in contract status, both the client teacher and supervising administrator involved will each be invited to make a presentation before the Panel.

Supervising Administrator Appeal Presentations

The supervising administrator may appeal the tentative recommendation of nonrenewal or return to the regular cycle of evaluation at a Panel meeting. The presentation will be scheduled for thirty minutes. The first half of the allotted time is a presentation of evidence to support the supervising administrators' evaluation. The second half of the allotted time is used for questions from the Panel. The principal may bring written documentation based on the standards to support his/her point of view and will give copies to each Panel member. All documentation presented to the Panel shall have been shared with the client teacher in advance of the meeting. The supervising administrator is expected to present in these cases.

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She/he may be accompanied by another administrator or designee as appropriate.



Teacher Appeal Presentations

The client teacher may appeal the recommendation of nonrenewal at a Panel meeting. The presentation is scheduled for thirty minutes. The first half of the allotted time is a presentation of evidence to support the client teacher's view of his/her performance. The second half of the allotted time is used for questions from the Panel. The teacher may bring written documentation based on the standards to support his/her point of view and will give copies to each Panel member. The teacher may contact a WEA staff representative for assistance. The teacher may be accompanied by a WEA staff representative, an attorney, or other guest but these guests may not speak during the proceedings.

Final Recommendations

The Panel discusses the case following appeal presentations and reconsiders its tentative recommendation without the presence of either the client teacher or the administration. The Executive Director of HR notifies the client teacher and supervising administrator in writing of the Panel's final recommendation to the Superintendent within ten days of the Panel reaching a decision.

If neither the client teacher nor the supervising administrator appeal the Panel's tentative recommendation, that recommendation becomes the final recommendation.

Client teachers may appeal the Panel's final recommendation regarding contract status to the Superintendent.

Medical or Emergency Leave While in the PAR Program

If a client teacher goes on medical or emergency leave while in the PAR program, the remediation days prior to leave will be counted, and the plan will continue upon the return of the employee to active service.

Data Gathering Involved in the PAR Program

Supervising administrator, CTs and client teachers involved in the PAR program should gather data throughout the year. Presentations to the Panel are strengthened by such data. When possible, test results should include comparable data for like classes or teachers in order to provide context in which to interpret data.

Follow Up to Successful Release from the PAR Program

In the year following successful release from the PAR program, the teacher has the right to request follow up assistance from a CT. That request must be in writing to the administrator in charge of CTs.

If the teacher's skills are rated "Ineffective" or "Developing" in the next school year, the Panel will reopen the case. The principal will be asked to provide documentation and evidence from the formal evaluation process leading to the "Ineffective" or "Developing" rating to the Panel meeting in the spring. The supervising administrator will make a recommendation to the Panel as to re-inclusion of the teacher in the PAR program and method of support including the FAP.