

LEARNING FROM
OHIO'S BEST TEACHERS:
A HOMEGROWN MODEL
TO IMPROVE OUR SCHOOLS

A REPORT FROM
POLICY MATTERS OHIO

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Teacher effectiveness is recognized as a key piece of any effort to improve teaching and learning. Increasingly, support for teachers that's embedded in their work in the classroom is seen as the best way to ensure that a qualified educator stands at the front of each classroom.

Four Ohio districts – Brunswick, Cincinnati, Columbus and Toledo – have extensive experience with groundbreaking programs that seek to professionalize teaching and improve teacher quality. Commonly known as Peer Assistance and Review, or PAR, this approach began in Toledo in 1981.

PAR provides stipends to teacher leaders who are released from full-time classroom duties to mentor and evaluate new teachers. The program also supports those with more experience who are struggling to meet the needs of their students.

This study by Policy Matters Ohio seeks to bring PAR to the attention of state policymakers and other stakeholders. This model is particularly relevant as the administration of Gov. Ted Strickland focuses its attention on improving Ohio's public education system; in his state of the state speech this year, the Governor highlighted the need to learn from Ohio's best teachers, those who know "what works best in the classroom." PAR, with its reliance on teacher leaders, provides just this opportunity.

Well-designed peer assistance and review programs:

- Release effective, well-trained teachers from classroom duties for up to three years so they can work intensively to mentor new hires and underperforming veteran teachers;
- Include an evaluation component, so teachers who don't make the grade can be dismissed;
- Provide targeted professional development to teachers who need it most;
- Are governed cooperatively by administrators and teacher union leaders;
- Lay the groundwork for further collaborative efforts to improve teaching and learning.

Peer assistance and review programs are used in about 70 districts around the country, most of them in Ohio, Connecticut and California.

Research is beginning to show that strong support for teachers in the classroom, like that provided by PAR programs in Ohio, can reduce teacher turnover and associated costs and may boost student achievement.

- A 2004 study found that 27 percent of new public school teachers either changed schools or left teaching altogether after their first year, and that strong support systems can reduce such turnover by 30 percent or more;
- Another study estimated the costs of such turnover are as high as nearly \$18,000 per teacher, including expenditures for recruitment, training and transfers;

- Research also suggests that beginning teachers who receive strong support are more likely to have classes that do better in reading.

Based on data provided by the four Ohio districts with peer assistance and review programs, Policy Matters estimated that the cost for each teacher served ranged from about \$3,300 to more than \$9,000. Compared to the direct financial cost of replacing teachers who might stay in teaching with adequate support or the cost to student learning of keeping underperforming teachers in a classroom with no help, PAR can be a cost-effective way to improve teacher effectiveness.

All new teachers are required to enroll in the program; non-first-year teachers are referred to the program by administrators and others. Anywhere from 1 to 5 percent of all veteran teachers in a district may be enrolled in PAR in any given year, according to data supplied by two districts; a significant number of those teachers leave the district while in PAR or are dismissed because of the program. Between 6 and 8 percent of new teachers who go through PAR programs at these four Ohio districts were either dismissed or chose to leave their districts.

While implementing or encouraging PAR more broadly across the state will by no means address all issues confronting public schools, such programs should be viewed as a model of an effective collaborative approach to school improvement.

Policy Matters recommends that the Strickland administration work with the Ohio Department of Education to develop a voluntary pilot program for districts where administrators and teachers want to work together to implement peer assistance and review.

The state should provide grants to districts that show evidence of being able to implement effective programs. At least one grant should go to a consortium of smaller districts that may have trouble implementing PAR programs on their own.

It may seem unrealistic to call for a new program like PAR when state and local budgets are being squeezed. But the state can redirect its own funds and seek seed money from the federal government and private foundation sources.

The timing is right for such an effort. There is a broad consensus that effective support for teachers is an essential component of improved teaching and learning. PAR can be part of the solution.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher quality and effectiveness are at the heart of the debate about improving student outcomes in the nation's public K-12 schools, especially as pressure from federal education law has increased over the past several years.

Ohio has not been immune to the sense of urgency around school improvement. State legislators and governors have struggled with Ohio Supreme Court rulings that found the state's school funding system unconstitutional. For his part, Gov. Ted Strickland has framed his approach to education by outlining six "core principles" that he says will guide his administration's efforts to reform education, including funding. One principle focuses on the need to learn from the state's best teachers, those who know "what works best in the classroom."¹

In fact, there is a core group of Ohio teacher leaders who possess solid knowledge and experience and know how to share it with their colleagues, and policymakers, across the state. In the 1980s, administrators and teachers in three Ohio school districts – Toledo, Cincinnati and Columbus – pioneered an approach to teacher support and evaluation commonly known as Peer Assistance and Review, or PAR.² Brunswick, in Northeast Ohio, started PAR in 2000, and Cleveland is implementing a new program this year. Such teacher leaders can and should be a part of how Ohio addresses the need to improve teacher quality and effectiveness.

Peer assistance and review programs are in about 70 districts around the country, most of them in Ohio, Connecticut and California.³ Other programs of note are in Rochester, New York; Montgomery County, Maryland; and Poway, California.

These programs release experienced teachers from classroom duties for up to three years so they can work intensively with new hires and underperforming teachers, often visiting classrooms at least weekly. In each case, PAR is a joint effort that requires administrators at the school and district levels to work closely with teachers and teacher union officials. PAR provides opportunities for experienced teachers to take on new responsibilities and earn extra pay without permanently leaving the classroom. As the word 'review' implies, PAR also includes an evaluation component that can lead to the dismissal of teachers who don't make the grade. Finally, teachers and officials at districts that

¹ From the governor's 2008 State of the State speech, available online at

www.governor.ohio.gov/GovernorsOffice/StateoftheState/StateoftheState2008/tabid/108/Default.aspx

Strickland's speech reads in part: "Great teachers can be a resource not only for their students but for their fellow educators. We should support these teachers by giving them the freedom to stay in the classroom and still be rewarded for sharing their expertise with their peers. We lose a lot of new teachers – as many as half of all new teachers leave the profession in the first 5 years – but we can help keep these talented people by giving them better access to senior colleagues."

² Peer assistance and review is a common name, used regularly in Toledo, Columbus and Brunswick; in Cincinnati, the program is called the Peer Assistance and Evaluation Program.

³ According to a National Public Radio story about PAR broadcast June 9, 2008. The complete audio file is available at www.npr.org/templates/player/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=91327130&m=91327095

have ongoing experience with PAR say these leadership roles for teachers and the cooperation it takes to run PAR have opened doors to new joint efforts to improve teaching and learning.

This study highlights Ohio's PAR programs, seeking to bring them to the attention of policymakers at a time when concerns about teacher quality and effectiveness are at the forefront of school improvement strategies. While implementing or encouraging PAR more broadly across the state will by no means address all issues confronting public schools, such programs should be viewed as an important element of a collaborative approach to school improvement.

The need to focus on teaching is backed up by research, which has shown that after a child's family background, effective teachers have the greatest impact on student learning.⁴ The case for strong "induction" programs that help orient and provide intensive support to new teachers, as PAR does, is bolstered by evidence that a teacher's classroom performance during the first two years may be a more reliable indicator of future effectiveness than teacher certification.⁵ Finally, research is beginning to show that new teacher support can boost teacher retention and may have a positive effect on student achievement.⁶

COMMON PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The programs highlighted in this report have common origins, modeled to varying degrees on PAR in Toledo, the first program in the country. Shared elements of PAR include:

- Consulting teachers (CTs) receive extra pay to serve up to three years supporting and evaluating new hires and struggling teachers, after which they return to the classroom;
- These teacher leaders must meet minimum experience and training requirements to serve as CTs. An effort is made to match grade levels and subject areas between each CT and the teachers they assist and evaluate;
- Each district requires that teachers new to the district enroll in PAR, but they also include teachers who have been referred by administrators, union representatives, or others. New teachers generally participate for one year, although their time in the program can be extended. Experienced teachers can enter the program at any time during the school year and stay until a final recommendation is made;

⁴ Numerous studies have shown a correlation between teacher effectiveness and student achievement, including: Rivkin, S., Hanushek, E., and Kain, J. *Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement*. Available online at <http://edpro.stanford.edu/Hanushek/admin/pages/files/uploads/teachers.econometrica.pdf>; see also Rockoff, J. *The Impact of Individual Teachers on Student Achievement: Evidence from Panel Data*, March 2003. Available online at <http://129.3.20.41/eps/pe/papers/0304/0304002.pdf>

⁵ Kane, T., Rockoff, J., Staiger, D. What Does Certification Tell Us About Teacher Effectiveness? Evidence from New York City, March 2006. Available at www.dartmouth.edu/~dstaiger/Papers/nyc%20fellows%20march%202006.pdf

⁶ See two reports published by the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz: *Mentoring New Teachers to Increase Retention – A Look at Research (December 2005)* and *Does New Teacher Support Affect Student Achievement – Some Early Research Findings (January 2006)*. Available online at http://newteachercenter.org/research_articles.php

- After a series of observations, debriefings, evaluations and other contacts between the CT and the teacher, the consulting teacher makes a recommendation to the governance panel that the teacher either continue with the district in good standing, stay in the program for more assistance, or that his or her employment with the district be ended.
- Goal-setting agreements are used to define areas in which a teacher needs to improve, and to spell out what must be done to achieve improvement goals. In some cases, these agreements become guiding elements of the evaluation process.
- Each district uses an evaluation rubric that defines practices an effective teacher should be able to demonstrate; three districts key support and evaluations to the PRAXIS III assessments new teachers have to take to get a five-year Ohio teacher license or the related components of instruction developed by Charlotte Danielson, who helped create PRAXIS and continues to publish extensively on teaching;⁷
- Joint administration-union panels oversee PAR and review recommendations made by CTs. At minimum, a majority vote is required by the panel to dismiss a teacher (see table 1);
- If a teacher is recommended for dismissal, the final decision is made by the district superintendent or a designee. Employees retain due process rights under the local collective bargaining agreement.

Table 1: Basic facts about Peer Assistance and Review in four Ohio districts

	Year started	Provisions in Contract	Governing Panel Composition	2007-2008 student enrollment
Toledo	1981	All districts include at least major PAR outlines in collective bargaining agreement between union and administration	4 district appointees; 5 union appointees	27,200
Cincinnati	1985		5 district appointees; 5 union appointees	33,781
Columbus	1985		3 district appointees; 4 union appointees	52,894
Brunswick	2000		3 district appointees; 3 union appointees	7,327

Source on enrollment: Ohio Department of Education

A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1981, Toledo became the first school district in the country to implement a teacher-led assistance and evaluation program. Then-president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers, Dal Lawrence, developed the proposal, taking as a model the internship system used to train new doctors, with its emphasis on oversight and mentoring by more experienced doctors. His frustration with a lack of

⁷ Brunswick, Columbus and Toledo base evaluation and support on the work of Danielson, who wrote *Enhancing Professional Practice: a Framework for Teaching* (2007 – Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). Danielson also helped develop PRAXIS assessments, see Table 8 for a description of four assessment domains.

support for new teachers and the absence of a meaningful teacher evaluation system prompted his efforts to create a new model.⁸

Lawrence was able to sell union members on the idea, but couldn't get district administrators to bite until, during difficult contract negotiations in 1981, he agreed to include struggling veteran teachers in the program.⁹

Columbus and Cincinnati implemented PAR in 1985, after joint labor-management committees in each school district developed plans modeled after Toledo's program. Officials in Brunswick, a much smaller suburban district near Cleveland, began its program in 2000 after visiting Columbus and Rochester, New York, and drawing on experiences in Toledo and Cincinnati.¹⁰ A program in Cleveland began in 1989, but was cut for budget reasons in 1996; the district is implementing a new program this fall using federal and state funds targeted to providing merit pay for teachers.

Table 2: A Peer Assistance and Review glossary

Intern – a teacher new to the district who is required to go through PAR, also known in some districts as an entry-year teacher

Intervention teacher – a teacher who has been with the district for two or more years and is referred to PAR by an administrator or union representative for support and evaluation

Self-referral – a non-first year teacher who asks to go through PAR because of a new teaching assignment or with other cause related to classroom performance; such teachers are generally not subject to evaluation in PAR, unless they continue to struggle with classroom duties

Consulting teacher (CT) – an experienced teacher who meets requirements to serve as a mentor and evaluator of fellow teachers through PAR

ARGUMENTS FOR PAR

PAR is intensive new teacher support that includes an evaluation component – The main strength of peer assistance and review is that it relies on the expertise of teachers to support other teachers in the classroom, linking that support to targeted professional development.

⁸ Interview, June 27, 2008.

⁹ Ruenzel, David. Peer Pressure, *Teacher Magazine*, November 1, 1999.

¹⁰ The Brunswick and Columbus teacher unions are affiliated with the National Education Association; the unions in Toledo and Cincinnati are affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers.

Much attention to PAR focuses on numbers of teachers who are dismissed on the recommendation of their peers. While effective teacher evaluation is certainly an important factor for those concerned with improving teacher quality, such attention often misses PAR's strength as an intensive induction program that can provide almost daily contact with a mentor.

PAR supplements or replaces what are widely acknowledged as ineffective evaluation systems that rely on overworked administrators who often lack time and training to do more than perform so-called "drive-by" evaluations of teachers. Even when such evaluations happen, they are often perfunctory and superficial, and include little or no follow-up on the part of administrators who conduct them.¹¹

PAR can be used to support and evaluate teachers in all subjects and grade levels – Student achievement on standardized tests is increasingly seen by many as the best way to determine how well a teacher is doing her or his job. There are vigorous debates about the merits of such measures of teacher quality. Further, unless additional standardized assessments are put in place, this approach automatically leaves out teachers in untested grade levels and those teaching untested subjects like art, music and foreign language.

This argument for PAR is strengthened by efforts to match CTs and supported teachers based on grade level and subject matter; this provides a level of expertise that can be lacking among principals who are not likely to be able to provide such a match for most teachers in their schools.

Does not diminish the role of the principal as school leader – A savvy principal can still serve as instructional leader in his or her school, working with teachers individually or in teams to devise approaches to improving instruction. In a well-implemented PAR system, CTs consult with principals even as their work frees up the administrator for other duties.

Responsibility for evaluation is taken on collectively – Although individual consulting teachers are responsible for working with new hires and struggling veteran teachers, their work and recommendations are reviewed by a board that represents both labor and management, effectively incorporating a process that can guard against the subjectivity of any one person's evaluation determining a teacher's future.

PAR is built on a cooperative union-management relationship that can foster other collaborative efforts – Teachers and administrators interviewed emphasized that experience with PAR prepared the way for other efforts to professionalize and strengthen teaching and learning.

¹¹ Much has been written about the cursory nature of most teacher evaluations. Sources used in the writing of this report included: Klupinski, S. and Finer, C. *Evaluating Teachers*, Catalyst Ohio, September 2007; and Toch, T. and Rothman, R., *Rush to Judgment: Teacher Evaluation in Public Education*, January 2008; Mathers, C., Oliva, M. and Laine, S. *Improving Instruction Through Effective Teacher Evaluation: Options for State and Districts*, February 2008.

Research shows effective teacher support can improve teaching and learning – Programs that provide mentoring and other support have the potential to reduce teacher turnover and associated costs to schools. Studies also suggest effective support can boost student achievement.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST PAR

PAR may be tough to implement without a strong district-union relationship – For the most part, districts that have implemented PAR in Ohio have been able to build on previously existing trust that enabled administrators and teacher union leaders to agree on and then sell the idea to teachers, principals and school board members.

Such a collaborative relationship may be needed to overcome the resistance of teachers and administrators to what amounts to a radical change in roles and relationships. Leaders on both sides of the labor-management divide must trust each other enough to spend their political capital to put the program in place and get the buy-in from teachers and administrators needed to make it effective. Implementing PAR is likely not the first step a school system can take toward professionalizing and improving teaching; solid groundwork must be laid first.

PAR may be difficult to implement in small districts – Brunswick, with about 7,300 students, is the smallest Ohio district with a peer assistance and review program. More than half of Ohio's school districts have fewer than 2,000 students. Such smaller districts, with perhaps only one small high school and only one or two elementary and middle schools, may find it more difficult to match teachers by grade level and subject area, and find CTs who are able to make tough decisions about teachers they know.

Comparatively few teachers are dismissed through PAR – Critics say that while PAR may provide good support and orientation for new teachers, it doesn't do enough to weed out underperforming teachers, especially among those who already have tenure. They often cite the low numbers of veteran teachers dismissed through PAR compared to those who go through the program and to the overall number of teachers in a district. (See table 7.) Of course, others could argue that the program, by increasing retention, helps address teacher shortages, reduces replacement costs, and helps new teachers find the skills they need to remain in a challenging profession.

Some critics also cite what they say is an inherent conflict when union members evaluate teachers whose rights, and tenure, their unions are obligated to protect. Although many state-level teacher unions and the national unions have endorsed and support PAR (as have the Ohio Federation of Teachers and the Ohio Education Association), some union leaders at the state and local levels have voiced concerns about what they see as conflicting roles for union members.

LESSONS LEARNED: PAR IN CALIFORNIA

In 2000, California education reform under Gov. Gray Davis included a statewide PAR program, but the effort quickly ran into trouble. Problems arose from a lack of communication from the state about how programs should be structured, a lack of dedicated funding, the nature of the state's mandate to implement PAR, and a lack of labor-management agreement on the program, according to people involved in planning an implementation of the California program.¹²

Communication – Clear sense from policymakers as to what model programs look like.

Cooperation – teacher unions and administrators at the state level must endorse and support any plan; at the local district level, both sides must embrace the concept and work together on development and implementation.

Funding – Initial funding from non-local sources must support at least planning, start up and the first few years of local PAR programs; continued support is critical.

Pilot projects – a broad statewide mandate is unlikely to produce desired results; a pilot that requires districts and local unions to submit proposals is the best first step.

HOW MUCH DOES PAR COST?

Peer assistance and review programs cannot be implemented without a financial commitment on the part of the school district. The most significant expense is release time for teachers who serve as consulting teachers – other teachers are hired or shifted into their classrooms for the three-year period CTs are working in the PAR program. Other costs include: additional compensation, or stipends, for CTs because of the extra time and responsibility they take on; training and materials; mileage; and administrative oversight.

Table 3: Stipends for Consulting Teachers (CTs)

- Brunswick – 15 percent of district base salary (\$4,895 in 2007-08)
 - Cincinnati – \$6,500; less if CT has not achieved the highest rung in district's Career Ladder
 - Columbus and Toledo – 20 percent of base salary (\$7,355 in Columbus; \$4,905 in Toledo)
- Source: Information and documents on stipends supplied by individual districts

¹² Interviewed were Don Raczk, former president of the Poway Federation of Teachers; Charlotte Kutzner, PAR program coordinator in the Poway, California, school district; Susan Burr, executive director of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association; and Adam Urbanski, president of the Rochester Teachers Association, who consulted with California officials planning PAR.

In Brunswick, the smallest Ohio PAR district with the fewest consulting teachers, release time for three full-time equivalent positions (two full-time CTs, one half-time CT, and a half-time coordinator) cost the district approximately \$130,000 for the 2007-08 school year, according to district officials. These experienced teachers are generally replaced in the classroom by younger teachers who make less money; this figure is calculated using the 2007-08 base salary for a teacher with a bachelor's degree and no prior experience – \$32,632 plus 33 percent of the salary to cover benefits such as health insurance. The total budget calculated by Policy Matters based on data supplied by the district was \$157,473. (See table 4.)

The state provides some funds that can be used for PAR through the Ohio Entry Year program, implemented statewide in 2002. Entry Year was designed as a “formal support program, including mentoring, to foster professional growth of the individual and to prepare them for the performance-based assessment required for the five-year professional license (currently Praxis III).”¹³ It provides districts \$800 for support for each beginning teacher who holds a provisional license and seeks a five-year renewable license. The PAR programs in Ohio are able to use these funds to offset some costs.

Since PAR programs take in all teachers new to the district, whether or not they are new to teaching, not all the interns going through PAR generate state entry-year funds. In Brunswick, for example, 22 teachers qualified last year out of 45 interns, generating \$17,600 the district was able to use to pay for services, materials and CT stipends. Similarly, the Columbus program was able to tap into about \$80,000 in Entry Year money, out of an overall budget of \$1.7 million.

Entry Year mentoring and support is a requirement for all beginning teachers at Ohio districts, but each district can determine how it provides those mandated services. Aside from the higher level of mentoring, support and professional development services the PAR model is able to provide, Entry Year differs significantly in at least one other regard – unlike PAR, it does not allow districts to include an evaluation component that is linked to assistance to new teachers.

PAR advocates justify the significant costs involved in maintaining the programs as an investment in improved teaching and learning for their school districts, often pointing to the weak evaluation and induction systems they replaced. The programs also integrate support, observation, feedback, evaluation and professional development in ways that less-structured new teacher support generally does not. Finally, PAR is seen as a way to recognize the skills of the district's best teachers and keep them in the classroom, where they return full-time with fresh insight into their own teaching after helping train and support other teachers. (National studies on turnover and costs suggest PAR may be

¹³ From Ohio's Entry Year Teacher Program Overview on the Ohio Department of Education website: www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEPrimary.aspx?page=2&TopicRelationID=853

a cost-effective way to reduce new teacher turnover and improve student achievement – see the next section, Research review.)

Table 4 provides a snapshot of costs each district reported for PAR programs, including release time and stipends for consulting teachers, administrative salaries, materials, and expenses. All districts provided comparable figures for the number of intern and intervention teachers served, but budget information provided by each district varied significantly. Costs included in data released by some districts may not have been included in data released by other districts. Also, districts view costs in significantly different ways. In Cincinnati, for example, costs to provide release time for CTs are calculated using the average district salary of \$60,000 plus \$30,000 in benefits, while in Brunswick the base salary – \$32,632 last year plus benefits – is used. As a result, these figures should not be directly compared; see notes below the table for an explanation of how figures were calculated.

Table 4: Summary of costs

	Annual per-teacher cost**	Total annual budget	Teachers served*
Brunswick	\$ 3,350	\$ 157,473	47
Columbus	\$ 9,300	\$ 1,720,539	185
Cincinnati	\$ 9,995	\$ 1,169,467	117
Toledo	\$ 5,000	\$ 600,000	120

*Number of teachers for Cincinnati is for 2008-09, other district totals are for 2007-08

** As noted in paragraph preceding chart, districts reported costs slightly differently so annual costs should not be directly compared

Brunswick provided information on components of its program budget, which was used by Policy Matters to estimate a total budget and per-teacher cost.

Columbus provided an overall program budget for the 2008-09 school year; since the budget had changed only minimally from the previous year, the district's human resources director said it was appropriate to use the current-year budget with the previous year's total number of teachers served.

Cincinnati provided budgets for several years including 2008-09. These combined the district's Peer Assistance and Evaluation Program with its Teacher Evaluation System, but according to the administrator of teacher programs, 64 percent goes for consulting teachers and expenses for PAEP. Cincinnati CTs also assess all teachers who undergo a comprehensive, five-year evaluation; the district provided a breakdown of new hires and other teachers served by CTs in PAEP.

Toledo was unable to provide budget data requested for this report, although it did provide information on the number of interns and intervention teachers for 2007-08. The \$5,000 per-teacher cost was taken from a January 2008 report that included information on Toledo's PAR program.¹⁴

RESEARCH REVIEW

Research suggests that strong teacher support, especially for new teachers, can reduce teacher turnover, boost student achievement, and save schools significant costs related to turnover.

A 2004 study by Thomas Smith and Richard Ingersoll found that 27 percent of new public school teachers in 1999-2000 either changed schools (16 percent) at the end of their first year or left teaching altogether (11 percent). According to the authors, turnover rates varied by size of school and concentration of poverty, but not by location (urban, suburban, rural).¹⁵

A study by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) on the cost of teacher turnover included data on all teachers (not just new teachers) leaving five districts in a one-year period, from 2002-03 to 2003-04. Table 5 summarizes data for the three districts in that study that are most comparable to the Ohio districts included in this Policy Matters study – Chicago Public Schools, Milwaukee Public Schools and Granville County Schools, a suburban district in North Carolina. Because the PAR program is primarily focused on new teachers or struggling teachers, we would expect much higher turnover for PAR-eligible teachers who do not go through PAR than for the pool of all teachers in the chart below.

Table 5: Percent of all teachers leaving district after one year, 2002-03 to 2003-04

	Percent leaving	Approximate turnover cost per teacher
Chicago Public Schools	19.1	\$18,000
Milwaukee Public Schools	11.6	\$15,000
Granville County Schools (NC)	14.8	\$10,000

Source: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future

In calculating the costs of teacher turnover, the NCTAF study highlighted the need for better support and training of teachers, especially in low-income, high-minority schools. The report estimated a range of turnover costs, from about \$10,000 per teacher in Granville County to just over \$15,000 in

¹⁴ Toch, T. and Rothman, R. Education Sector. Rush to Judgment: Teacher Evaluation in Public Education, January 2008.

¹⁵ Smith, T., Ingersoll, R. Fall 2004 *What Are the Effects of Induction and Mentoring on Beginning Teacher Turnover?* Published in the American Educational Research Journal.

Milwaukee and nearly \$18,000 per teacher in Chicago; NCTAF estimated annual cost of turnover in Chicago at more than \$86 million. This included the cost to replace teachers who change schools and districts as well as those who leave teaching (a broader category than the one represented in Table 5, which shows just those leaving the district). Included in the calculations were cost categories such as recruitment and advertising, administrative processing, training, transfers and the impact on student learning.¹⁶

It must also be noted that some costs can be difficult to quantify, such as the potential of high rates of turnover to undermine organizational stability, coherence and morale.¹⁷

In their 2004 study, Smith and Ingersoll report that providing a teacher with a mentor who teaches in the same subject area reduced the risk of that teacher leaving at the end of the year by about 30 percent. Support that includes components beyond mentoring can reduce turnover more, depending on the type of additional help offered, according to the report.¹⁸

Finally, the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz, reports that initial findings from studies of the effect of new teacher support on student achievement suggest that “beginning teachers who receive comprehensive induction support for two years are more likely to have classes that achieve reading gains than those that do not receive this support.”¹⁹

Most researchers who look at the effectiveness of strong mentoring and support programs in reducing new teacher turnover and improving student achievement acknowledge the need for more study of the issue; similarly, more research is needed on the cost of teacher turnover. Nevertheless, a growing body of research suggests that strong new-teacher support, like the PAR programs in Ohio, can be a cost-effective approach to improving teaching and learning.

TURNOVER IN OHIO PAR DISTRICTS

Of the districts included in this report, only Brunswick and Toledo were able to provide limited data on the number of new teachers who have stayed in the district after going through the PAR program.

Brunswick did not track retention before it implemented PAR in 2000, making a direct comparison of turnover with and without PAR in that district impossible.

¹⁶ Barnes, G., Crowe, E., Schaefer, B. 2007. *The Cost of Teacher Turnover in Five School Districts: A Pilot Study*. The National Center for Teaching and Americas' Future.

¹⁷ Smith and Ingersoll, 2004.

¹⁸ Smith and Ingersoll, 2004.

¹⁹ Strong, M. 2006. *Does New Teacher Support Affect Student Achievement?* The New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Available online at www.newteachercenter.org/pdfs/NTCResearchBrief.06-01.pdf

Table 6 shows the number of Brunswick teachers still with the district out of each cohort of new teachers entering the district since PAR was implemented. For example, fewer than 26 percent of teachers who started in Brunswick at the beginning of the 2000-01 school year had left the district by the end of the 2007-08 school year. By contrast, Table 5 shows that in three of the districts highlighted in the NCTAF study, one-year turnover for all teachers (not just new teachers) leaving the district ranged from just under 12 percent (Milwaukee) to nearly 20 percent (Chicago).

Table 6: Brunswick school district turnover for new teachers participating in PAR

Year	Teachers successfully completing PAR	Number leaving	Percent leaving
2000-01	66	17	25.8%
2001-02	42	8	19%
2002-03	20	3	15%
2003-04	18	4	22.2%
2004-05	17	2	11.8%
2005-06	15	1	6.7%
2006-07	31	1	3.2%
2007-08	41	1	2.4%
Total	250	37	14.8%

Source: Brunswick City School District, as of the end of the 2007-08 school year.

Data provided by Toledo came from an internal report written in 1993 based on intern teacher surveys during the first ten years of PAR in that district. The report notes that intern retention “increases consistently” from the program’s early years. First-year turnover among teachers who successfully completed PAR dropped from about 30 percent in the period from 1982 to 1985 to about 17 percent in 1987-88. By 1990, rates had dropped as low as 13 percent. The report’s authors conclude, however, that they could not “assign cause/effect relationship” to PAR for the decreasing turnover. Furthermore, the authors note that turnover numbers for Toledo at the time did not differ significantly from national figures. The district did not have similar data for more recent years.²⁰

National data from districts most comparable to Ohio’s PAR districts are highlighted in Table 5, but direct comparisons between these districts and Brunswick or Toledo should be made with caution. The national study used a different methodology and included all teachers not just new teachers. Further, we know that other factors, like district composition, affect turnover. Brunswick, for example, is a low-poverty district with only 17.5 percent economically disadvantaged students; the

²⁰ *Intern Survey*, published in May 1993, provided by Dal Lawrence, Toledo Federation of Teachers.

Ohio Department of Education rated Brunswick schools “excellent with distinction” for the 2007-08 school year; and the numbers of new teachers involved in Brunswick are relatively low, especially in recent years. Brunswick also has seen a gradual enrollment growth. Many urban districts have seen significant enrollment drops as residents have moved away, as charter schools have opened, and as school vouchers have become available; these developments have led to teacher layoffs that generally hit less experienced teachers first.

PEER REVIEW BY THE NUMBERS

Information on the number of teachers served by PAR programs, and the number dismissed because of PAR evaluations, in some ways highlights the most controversial aspects of the programs. Critics contend the numbers show how few ineffective teachers are dismissed through PAR. Advocates say arguing about numbers misses the point of such programs, which is to support and improve the classroom practices of new and underperforming teachers; they also say criticism of PAR on these grounds assumes that some other, more effective support and evaluation system already exists.²¹

All four districts provided data on the number of teachers served through PAR, some cumulatively for the life of the program, others for more recent years. Table 7 summarizes information for both interns and intervention teachers. (Toledo provided no information regarding intervention teachers who have gone through PAR.) The higher percentages of intervention teachers leaving can be explained by the fact that teachers who are not in their first year must be referred to the program and are likely to already be struggling in the classroom, while all new teachers automatically go through PAR in these districts, whether or not they show a particular need for support.

If PAR is primarily seen as a program that should remove ineffective teachers from the classroom, it can be argued that it does so for only a very small percentage of the overall number of teachers, especially when it comes to those not in their first year. For example, over a 22-year period in Columbus, 352 veteran teachers – an average of 16 each year – have gone through the program, with an average of one-fourth of each year's participants being dismissed, leaving while in the program, or not being renewed. (See Table 7.)

However, if the program is seen as a way to support struggling teachers and help them become more effective, the results can be viewed much more positively. Columbus PAR, for example, served 154 new teachers and 31 more experienced teachers in 2007-08. The intensive one-on-one mentoring and

²¹ For a look at how this argument plays out, see the November 1999 article *Peer Pressure* in *Teacher Magazine* by David Ruenzel. In this take on PAR in Toledo, union opponent Myron Lieberman criticizes the program and PAR in general, while Dal Lawrence of the Toledo Federation of Teachers defends it. The article is available online at <http://www.teachermagazine.org/tm/articles/1999/11/01/03peer.h11.html>

feedback, along with the targeted professional development these teachers received in PAR, goes well beyond any assistance they would receive without the program.

Table 7: Number of teachers evaluated in PAR

	Number of teachers	Number leaving district*	Percent leaving
Brunswick (2000-01 to 2007-08)			
Interns	266	17	6.4%
Interventions	23	7	30.4%
Columbus (1986-87 to 2007-08)			
Interns	8,624	592	6.9%
Interventions	352	89	25.3%
Toledo (1981-82 to 2006-07)			
Interns**	3,953	321	8.1%

* This includes teachers who were not renewed as employees by districts because of their PAR evaluation, those who resigned during or at the end of their time in PAR, and those dismissed while in PAR.

**Toledo did not provide data for intervention teachers.

	Number of teachers	Terminations/ non-renewals	Percent terminated/ non-renewed
Cincinnati (2003-04 to 2007-08)			
All teachers***	530	33	6.2%

***While Cincinnati provided the most precise data on teachers terminated or non-renewed because of PAR, it did not distinguish between interns and interventions who were dismissed or non-renewed.

TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERSPECTIVES

Putting PAR in place

By most accounts, establishing a PAR program is easier when there is a level of trust between administrators and teachers. Then-president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers Dal Lawrence recounted his struggles to get district officials to agree to the plan in 1981 – it was tough to get them to give up what they saw as the administrative responsibility to evaluate teachers. Toledo's program came in during what Lawrence described as contentious negotiations, which may make the first program an exception to the rule that trust is needed.

Nevertheless, it's clear that groundwork needs to be well-laid to prepare the way for a program such as PAR that changes roles in a school system so dramatically.

In Brunswick, both the union and management have an option to withdraw at the end of each school year; Brunswick officials mentioned this as a key element that made PAR palatable. “It is a program that if it’s not monitored and not run the way it should be run, if one group tries to dominate over the other group, it can lead to problems. Both sides can make that decision” to opt out, said Connie Eskesen, a former Brunswick teacher who was a union leader when the district implemented its PAR program.²² She added that neither side seriously considered that option during her time with the district.

The process of laying the foundation for the program in Brunswick included visits by PAR committee members to every school for joint meetings of teachers and administrators. Meetings just with teachers were held to address their concerns separately. “We spent several months doing that before the [union] vote,” Eskesen recalled. “A lot of principals had as many apprehensions as [union] members. It’s not a program that someone can jump into quickly. It took a year and a half to put things together.”

Kim Tomashefski, a high school principal when PAR was implemented in Brunswick and now an assistant superintendent, acknowledged administrator misgivings about giving up responsibility for personnel evaluations to bargaining unit members. It helped ease those concerns that principals are still able to give input to the CT, and can submit their perspective in writing to the PAR panel, she said.

Another advantage, Tomashefski noted, was that as a principal dealing with first-year teachers, PAR “gave me the ability to be more of mentor or coach, instead of an evaluator. They could accept that I was just popping in, but it wasn’t going to appear in a written evaluation.”²³

A planned buyout for teachers was the main reason Brunswick began considering PAR. A major selling point was the anticipated turnover and concerns about bringing in a huge cohort of new teachers without a strong support system. The 2000-01 school year, the program’s first, saw an influx of 72 interns, the most ever to go through PAR in the 390-teacher district; in its second year, the program served 45 new teachers.

Crystal Ellis, an elementary school principal in Toledo when PAR was implemented there, said he immediately recognized the value of the program, since he often found it difficult to evaluate and support as many as five or six new teachers each year, in addition to running the school. Ellis acknowledged that not all principals felt the same way. “They felt encroachment, they wanted to be in total charge,” he explained.²⁴

²² Telephone interview, June 28, 2008. Eskesen now works as a regional PRAXIS III coordinator.

²³ Telephone interview, June 27, 2008.

²⁴ Telephone interview, June 25, 2008.

In the end, Toledo principals are not left out of the process during the first year, Ellis said, because they track attendance and work with teachers on discipline, and they remain responsible for evaluation after the first year. (After working as a teacher and as principal at the elementary, junior high and high school levels, Ellis served as deputy superintendent and, from 1990 to 1996, as superintendent. He later came out of retirement, and now works as chief of staff.)

Consulting teacher requirements

Selection criteria for CTs vary from district to district, but include common themes such as a minimum number of years teaching in district schools, recognized proficiency or excellence in classroom teaching, strong communication skills and knowledge of classroom management and instruction techniques.

In addition to such criteria, each district has defined a process that requires reference letters from other teachers, principals and supervisors. Applicant interviews with the PAR governance panel play a key role in the selection of consulting teachers.

Teachers who aspire to the CT role in Cincinnati must achieve lead teacher status in the district's career ladder system, which relies on evaluations based on the four PRAXIS domains that cover planning and preparation, classroom environment, teaching for learning, and professionalism.²⁵ Teachers applying for lead teacher status must submit a written application "providing evidence of professional leadership abilities" as defined in the fourth domain. References are then interviewed and applicant teachers go through a comprehensive evaluation based on all four domains. Scores of four, the most possible, are required in Domains 2 and 3 (classroom environment and instruction), with scores of three acceptable in the other two domains.²⁶ National Board Certification can be used in place of a comprehensive evaluation, although like other lead teachers, those who are board-certified must go through a comprehensive evaluation every five years to continue as lead teachers.²⁷ Once classified as a lead teacher, applicants must be interviewed by the peer review panel to become CTs. They then undergo an intensive three-day training required for anyone who evaluates teachers in the district. (For more on the four domains, see table 8.)

Significantly, CTs in Cincinnati also are required to serve at least one year back in the classroom after their work with the PAR program ends. "You can't take the job as a stepping stone into management," said Tim Kraus, president of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers. This affects who gets into program as consulting teacher, Kraus explained. "We're looking for committed educators who are willing to take this role for a three-year period before they go back to the classroom, [people

²⁵ If a lead teacher with the needed subject matter expertise can't be found, a non-lead teacher may become a consulting teacher for Cincinnati's Peer Assistance and Evaluation Program.

²⁶ Interview, Tim Kraus, president, Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, September 11, 2008.

²⁷ The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards requires candidates for certification to meet standards through "intensive study, expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer review." See www.nbpts.org/.

who are] doing it because they want to make a contribution to the district and see doing the job as way to better themselves as teachers.”²⁸

Brunswick uses a similar framework for selecting and training CTs, so all principals and teachers in a mentoring or evaluation role use the four domains associated with Danielson's work and PRAXIS III.

“Just because you can teach doesn't mean you can mentor,” asserted Connie Eskesen, the former Brunswick union leader.²⁹ One of the challenges Brunswick faced, she said, was getting mentors into the “mindset that they had tough choices to make.... I remember the first one or two [dismissals] that we did, it was really tough on those mentors.”

In Columbus, the program works to get a mix of CTs, so not all are veteran teachers who retire after three years in PAR, according to Melissa Dudley, who served last year as lead CT in that district and is now back in the classroom teaching 9th-grade science. This can help interns who have learned about up-to-date teaching methods in school. Younger CTs may be more aware of the latest research and be able to relate better to interns, she says. “There's nothing wrong with veterans,” she noted, because they often bring their own wisdom and patience to the role. “It's good to have a mix.”³⁰

“We choose people willing to make tough decisions,” said Rhonda Johnson, president of the Columbus Education Association.³¹ “This is probably the most professional position in the school district,” noting that the interview process can be “grueling.” Training continues once the school year starts, Johnson explained: each week, Columbus CTs are also required to attend a half day of professional development with a faculty member from Ohio State University. CTs who have been on the job for a couple years mentor teachers new to the role.

²⁸ Telephone interview, June 3, 2008.

²⁹ Telephone interview, June 28, 2008. Eskesen now works as a regional PRAXIS III coordinator.

³⁰ Telephone interview, June 27, 2008.

³¹ Telephone interview, June 27, 2008.

Table 8: A guide to PRAXIS III and the work of Charlotte Danielson

Ohio requires that teachers pass the PRAXIS III assessment to get a five-year professional teaching license. Charlotte Danielson helped create the PRAXIS criteria for effective teaching while at the Education Testing Service, and developed them further in her book *Enhancing Professional Practice: a Framework for Teaching*. Her work is used extensively by three of the districts in their peer assistance and review programs. Danielson's four domains with 22 criteria are outlined here.

Domain 1: Planning and preparation

- Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy
- Demonstrating knowledge of students
- Setting instructional goals
- Demonstrating knowledge of resources
- Designing coherent instruction
- Assessing student learning

Domain 2: The classroom environment

- Creating an environment of respect and rapport
- Establishing a culture for learning
- Managing classroom procedures
- Managing student behavior
- Organizing physical space

Domain C: Instruction

- Communicating clearly and accurately
- Using questions and discussion
- Engaging students in learning
- Providing feedback to students
- Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness

Domain D: Teacher professionalism

- Reflecting on teaching
- Maintaining accurate records
- Communicating to the school and district
- Contributing to the school and district
- Growing and developing professionally
- Showing professionalism

Source for domains and criteria: Entry Year Evaluation Information, Brunswick City School District

PAR for interns

PAR programs are set up, ideally, to allow consulting teachers to develop a relationship with the teachers they are assisting. But the districts vary in how much time CTs are supposed to spend observing, evaluating and interacting with new teachers, some of whom come to the district with no experience, others of whom may arrive after several years in the classroom at another district.

The Brunswick program aims for CTs to do a minimum of 21 classroom observations, plus debriefing sessions, between the start of school and March. Additional visits allow them to troubleshoot problems or simply talk over ideas; they may also arrange for the intern to observe a veteran teacher in the classroom or even teach a demonstration class themselves. By the end of March, CTs present their recommendation for each teacher – for continued employment with the district or dismissal – to the PAR governance panel, which must approve the consulting teacher's recommendation. Dismissals approved by the panel are sent to the superintendent for a final decision.

PAR helps new teachers “get up to speed with what district expectations are much faster,” said Brunswick's Tomashefski. Since the district tries to keep up with current initiatives in education, it's essential that new teachers are brought up to date, she explained.³²

The district tries to match CTs and new teachers by grade level and subject area. “The year begins with a mentoring focus,” explained Paula Hodson, Brunswick's PAR coordinator. “When the teacher gets into a difficult situation, we go into goal setting, and communication has to be amped up” with teachers, their principals and union representatives. Still, with PAR, “we are more confident hiring BA zero teachers,” said Hodson, referring to teachers with a bachelor's degree and no full-time teaching experience.

One new special education teacher, David Telischak, said his consulting teacher touched base before the school year began but told Telischak to invite him to the class the first time. “That was nice, because it gave me a couple days to get myself together, to get to know the kids,” explained Telischak. “After the first semester he could drop in, students were comfortable with him. He made good suggestions on field trips, guest speakers ... things we [new teachers] think about, but we're not sure how to make it happen. He also arranged for me to observe veteran math and social studies teachers.”

Fewer official contacts between CTs and teachers are required in Cincinnati – a minimum of two formal and two informal observations are supposed to take place before winter break – but interns are encouraged to call CTs with any questions or help they need.³³ If, by January, interns don't score at the basic level on assessments – two out of a possible four in planning/preparation, classroom environment, and instruction – they must undergo another round of four observations in January and

³² Interview, June 27, 2008.

³³ Phone interview with Julia Indalecio, teacher programs manager, and Angel Roddy, teacher evaluation system facilitator for Cincinnati Public Schools, June 11, 2008.

February. If they still can't score at a basic level, their consulting teachers can recommend them for dismissal.

All interns observe veterans or have CTs model lessons for them in Cincinnati; they also meet after informal observations to discuss strengths and areas that need improvement.

In Columbus there's been a change from when PAR began, noted Melissa Dudley, the former lead CT there. "I don't hear as much moaning and groaning about the process, they know it's there." Also, Dudley explained that since many teachers are "middle-class, suburban white females – I think they like the support [because teaching here] is different from what they grew up with. They may want to teach in urban schools, but until you get here" you don't know what it's going to be like, Dudley said.

PAR for intervention teachers

Intervention for veteran teachers is perhaps one of the more controversial aspects of PAR. Some critics say PAR programs don't do enough to weed out ineffective teachers, while even some teacher union advocates say that putting teachers in what is seen by many as an administrative role with power over colleagues is inappropriate. While the national teacher unions have endorsed PAR, there is not universal agreement about the benefits of PAR among all state and local union leaders.

In all four districts reviewed for this study, the primary focus of PAR is on induction for teachers new to the district. By the numbers, the vast majority of teachers who've gone through PAR in Ohio were in their first year in a new district; nevertheless, the programs now have significant experience intervening to help, and sometimes dismiss, struggling teachers who are not new to the district. (See table 7 for a summary of teachers served by PAR.)

In Brunswick, novice or veteran teachers receiving one unsatisfactory mark on an evaluation go before the six-person PAR panel, where five votes are needed to place them into the program. If such teachers are accepted, they go through the same process as interns, and can be dismissed at any time on the recommendation of a CT and the panel, which meets at least four times each school year.

In Cincinnati, principals can refer teachers to PAR, but it can be a "tedious process to get someone on intervention," explained Julia Indalecio, teacher programs manager for the district. She works with principals to help them through what she calls a "cumbersome" process that is watched closely by a strong union. "If you don't cross every 't', it's thrown out without being heard," Indalecio said.³⁴

Teachers with five or more years in Cincinnati have to score at a proficient level – three out of four – on all four areas of the district's comprehensive evaluation to be successfully released from PAR. Indalecio said that for the most part, teachers who don't score proficient will be recommended for

³⁴ Telephone interview, September 26, 2008.

dismissal, given the cost of extending a teacher's time in PAR and the fact that they can likely be replaced by a new teacher at a lower salary.

Melissa Dudley, the Columbus lead teacher, noted that dealing with veterans in PAR is different than working with interns, in part because teachers with more time in the district are usually in conflict with a building administrator. "We're not just sending them out, the goal is to try to give them a chance to grow and change." Veterans are often in the program because of catastrophic life changes, such as a death in the family or divorce, or because they've been shuffled around from building to building, Dudley explained. "You really have to try, first and foremost, to do the thing that's best for students. Sometimes they are asked to resign or are let go. You can also find them the right place, a different building or principal."

PAR strengthens professional development

PAR programs in all the districts reviewed require professional development for new and intervention teachers in the program. Teachers and administrators also noted that teachers who have worked as CTs form a core of those running in-service training for teachers outside of PAR as well.

In Toledo, three mandatory workshops for interns cover classroom management, technology such as the grading system, and other subjects depending on the needs of teachers, according to Audrey Fox, a third-year CT who served as liaison between union leaders and administrators.

The experience teachers get as CTs training other teachers also benefits the district beyond the PAR program, explained Fox and former union president Dal Lawrence. "Almost all of our professional development is delivered by former consultants (CTs)," Lawrence said.³⁵

Similarly, in Brunswick PAR is the primary training resource for new teachers. "They can do other professional development, but they must do [PAR trainings]," said Paula Hodson.

The Cincinnati program offers from seven to nine mandatory two-hour sessions a year for new hires; intervention teachers are "strongly encouraged to attend" the after-school trainings. These practicums cover a variety of topics, such as pacing of lessons and creating a learning environment, and are scheduled at the beginning of the year so teachers know what will be covered.

³⁵ Email message, June 16, 2008.

PAR lays the groundwork for other collaborative efforts

Across the board, teachers and administrators from these four districts pointed out how their PAR programs have prepared the way for other programs focused on improving teaching and learning.

“Toledo now has an alternative compensation plan that would not have been possible without the intern [PAR] experience,” according to Lawrence. “Around 1987, we started to plan how we could use the talents of the consulting teachers who had returned to the classroom.” A federal grant provided funds to plan a “career ladder” gives extra compensation for teachers meeting certain requirements. Applicants to the program were mostly former CTs, although that wasn’t a requirement, said Lawrence.

“After seven or eight years we had about 40 teachers involved. The old supervisors began to disappear and the ladder people replaced them, not in a supervisory way, but as an accomplished colleague delivering new or better ways to teach.”³⁶

The union and district continued to develop the career ladder, and it eventually became the Toledo Review and Alternative Compensation System. TRACS, as it is commonly known, is a three-tiered program that provides additional compensation for teachers who: participate in targeted professional development (tier one); are part of a team or school that meets specific goals in boosting student achievement (tier two); or demonstrate an ability to raise student scores on their own, accept additional responsibilities or accept a difficult-to-fill teaching assignment (tier three). The district and Toledo Federation of Teachers agreed to TRACS in 2001 contract negotiations; it was implemented in the 2002-03 school year. (Tier three was not funded until 2006, through a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant.)³⁷

“The peer review program was the start of really tapping into teachers helping teachers,” said Toledo’s Audrey Fox. “The peer review process was the eye opener. Wow! This doesn’t have to be an upper-level [administrative] thing; teachers do know how to help other teachers.”

In many ways, Cincinnati’s Teacher Evaluation System also grew out of that district’s experience with PAR, according to union president Tim Kraus. The new program began in 2001 and the district has been phasing it in since. The program includes comprehensive evaluations of teachers every five years, mostly by peer evaluators. Principals continue to conduct annual evaluations and can recommend more intensive intervention for a teacher under the comprehensive system. Like Cincinnati’s PAR program and its related career ladder, the comprehensive evaluation system is run

³⁶ Email message, June 17, 2008.

³⁷ The Teacher Incentive Fund is a program of the U.S. Department of Education that awards grants to districts and state education departments to pilot performance pay for teachers. For more information, go to www.ed.gov/programs/teacherincentive/index.html

jointly by a district-union governance panel. Teachers rejected one element of the program – tying teacher paychecks to the new evaluations – shortly after it was implemented.

Conflicts related to PAR

Peer assistance and review has helped create stronger, more cooperative relationships between teacher unions and district administrations, but that doesn't mean PAR is always without conflict. Some of that conflict happens at top leadership levels; other trouble comes up at the school level, sometimes centered on one individual.

Toledo provides an example of how contentious labor-management disagreements can affect PAR. Dal Lawrence canceled the program for the 1995-96 school year “because we had difficult negotiations and settled for a small raise,” recounted the former union president. After the contract was settled, principals were given \$500 in extra pay to transport state tests to the central administration office, which Lawrence saw as an end run around an agreement to give equal raises across the board.³⁸

With PAR no longer in place, principals were once again responsible for first-year evaluations, something neither principals nor teachers were happy about, recalled then-superintendent Crystal Ellis. In the end, Lawrence and Ellis reached agreement, and PAR started back up the following year.

At the individual level, “Peer assistance is loaded with conflicts,” noted Cincinnati union president Tim Kraus. “Anytime you have peers evaluate you, those people who take on the role of evaluators have a fine line to walk. They are in a quasi-management situation” and have to keep in mind that they are still part of the bargaining unit, Kraus explained.

Union leaders in Brunswick recounted their recent experience with a difficult relationship between a consulting teacher who was seen as overly harsh and an intern who felt that the consulting teacher was not supportive enough. The intern contested the advice given by the CT, and sought advice from other teachers. PAR rules allowed the intern to request another CT, which helped resolve the problem.³⁹

When disagreements come up between CTs and teachers they work with, PAR panel members always want to hear from a building principal and to hear more from the CT, according to Brunswick's PAR coordinator, Paula Hodson. An intern whose contract wasn't renewed last year had trouble setting and meeting goals, Hodson recounted, prompting meetings that included Hodson, the building principal, the CT and the intern.⁴⁰

³⁸ Email message, June 16, 2008.

³⁹ Interview with Marsha Curtis and Tom Rounds, president and vice president of the Brunswick Education Association, May 5, 2008.

⁴⁰ Interview, May 20, 2008.

A recent example of such a dispute in Toledo centered on a PAR intervention teacher who was dismissed on the recommendation of his consulting teacher. Interviewed for a story about PAR aired on National Public Radio in June, special education teacher Joshua Singer said his CT held the good relationship he had with his students against him. “We never had a good relationship, either personally or professionally,” recounted Singer. “We didn’t see things philosophically on the same level.” The teacher considered suing the district, saying he deserved another chance, but then just decided to leave, according to the report.”⁴¹

Relationships between interns and CTs usually work well, said Columbus union president Rhonda Johnson, “but to be honest, when a teacher is enrolled in intervention, they are not always delighted. Often the intervention [teacher] is resistant, they don’t know why they are there, their feelings are hurt. It’s up to the PAR consulting teacher to establish a relationship.”⁴²

⁴¹ The complete audio file for this story by NPR’s Claudio Sanchez, which aired June 9, 2008, is available online at www.npr.org/templates/player/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=91327130&m=91327095

⁴² Telephone interview, June 2008.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Public schools in Ohio, as elsewhere, continue to struggle with efforts to ensure that highly qualified, effective teachers stand at the front of every classroom. While not a panacea, effective peer assistance and review programs can help professionalize teaching and open the doors to improved teaching and learning.

When well-implemented as cooperative efforts between teacher unions and district management, such programs can connect teachers to the support they need to ensure more effective classroom teaching. Using a system first developed in Ohio would tap into a wealth of existing expertise.

In the short term, the Strickland administration should work with the Ohio Department of Education to develop a PAR pilot, requesting proposals from districts where administrators and teachers want to work together to develop local programs. The state should provide grants, above current Entry Year Program funds, to districts that show evidence of being able to implement effective programs. At least one grant should go to a consortium of smaller districts that may have trouble implementing PAR programs on their own.

These grants should cover a year of research and planning, as well as start-up costs once programs are implemented. They could also provide support for statewide PAR meetings and networking that will help programs confront inevitable bumps in the road. Ideally, ongoing funding for PAR should come from state and federal funds targeted for support, mentoring and evaluation of teachers. Unless this happens, however, districts volunteering for a PAR pilot may be required to take on a significant portion of the cost themselves after an initial, multi-year period of state support.

Any effort to expand PAR should learn from California's effort, which mandated programs whether or not districts were ready to take on such a collaborative venture. California's effort has not produced a viable model for statewide PAR, and suggests that only locally negotiated and designed programs are likely to succeed. (See box page 7.)

In an environment of budget reductions, at every level including the state, ODE and local districts, it may seem unrealistic to call for a new program like PAR. But the redirection of professional development funds could be the first step in efforts to fund a pilot, and the state should seek seed money from other sources, including the federal government and private foundations. Funds should also be sought for evaluation of PAR's effectiveness in Ohio as new programs are developed.

The timing is right for such an effort. There is a broad consensus that effective support for teachers is an essential component of improved teaching and learning. In this context, the fact that the Strickland administration has put teacher leadership at the core of its proposals to improve Ohio's education system makes PAR an appropriate component of a solution. At the same time, ODE

continues its work to strengthen new teacher induction linked to professional development – expanded PAR can be a natural extension of such efforts.

In the long term, Ohio should look to the experiences with PAR of the four districts reviewed in this report, new districts that implement it and other districts across the country as it works to expand PAR more broadly statewide.

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