

History of the Development of the Newport News Public Schools' Teacher Performance Assessment System

Since 1995, Newport News Public Schools has engaged in an extensive process of revising the division's system for the assessment of teaching. These revisions were designed to support the division's commitment to an educational program that prepares students for the demands of life in the future.

A representative committee of the division's educators drafted teacher performance standards and wrote indicators which were circulated to all schools for input and improvement. Informational meetings offered teachers explanations of the proposed revisions and opportunities to gain responses to their questions.

By August, 1995, educators in five division schools had made the commitment to serve as field-test sites for the new assessment system. These schools received training in the concepts underlying the new system by consultants from the Center for Leadership in School Reform. During 1995-96, each of the field-test schools concentrated on one aspect of the new process, such as revising the performance standards and indicators, designing a performance rubric, compiling evidence of instructional design of student work, or the design and assessment of teachers' work.

The following year, the five field-test schools gained further experience with the new concepts, with all teachers using the formative process and volunteer teachers (and their administrators) field-testing a summative assessment process. In addition, the Staff Development Department conducted information sessions for those not in the field test, sharing experiences from the field-test schools, soliciting suggestions for improvement of the system, and responding to questions from teachers and administrators.

Feedback from the field-test schools centered around two major themes:

- 1) Virtually all participating educators reported greatly enhanced levels of professional reflection and dialogue with colleagues regarding substantive issues in the education of their students.
- 2) The length of the documentation, the enormous number of possible indicators of performance, and the vagueness of the assessment rubrics were cumbersome and difficult to implement.

As the educators looked ahead to the challenge of implementing the system division wide, they became concerned that the system's lack of specificity would create confusion and resistance among their colleagues who had not had the benefit of shaping the process through the field-test efforts.

Consequently, a design team of educators met in May and June of 1997 to make revisions in the proposed assessment system. This committee included representatives from the field-test and non-field-test schools. Their goals were to retain those aspects of the approach that were of clear value to both individual educators and the division as a whole, to simplify and streamline the processes for both teachers and administrators, and to provide accountability for performance.

The team was assisted in their efforts by an assessment specialist, Charlotte Danielson, the author of *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. The design team was able to adapt sections of that book for their purposes, and to merge some of the recommended procedures for documentation of practice with those already in place in the assessment system.

During 1997-98 twenty schools field-tested both the formative and summative assessment process as revised by the design team. The remaining twenty-five schools within the division implemented the formative assessment process only. During the summer and several times throughout the school year, all assessors and each school's Lead Team members received training. As the field test progressed, data was collected quarterly to determine the effectiveness of the revised processes and to gather suggestions.

A subsequent design team representing the field-test schools met with Charlotte Danielson during May of 1998. They reviewed the data and proposed revisions that would remain true to the five teacher performance standards while minimizing unnecessary procedures and paperwork. A final proposal was examined by the school board. Adoption of the Newport News Public Schools' Teacher Performance Assessment system took place on July 29, 1998. August training prepared the assessors, the coaches, and the Lead Teams for division-wide implementation in September of 1998.

Data on the division-wide implementation was collected from teachers and administrators during the first two years. A representative committee was convened in March, 2001 to examine the data and make recommendations to the superintendent and the School Board. The committee agreed that training and consistency issues remain but, overall, the formative and summative processes serve the professional needs of teachers. The changes that were made to the process and the handbook reflect the committee's discussion of the issues expressed over time through the survey instruments and other data collection efforts.

July, 2001

Acknowledgments

This project comprises the work and thinking of hundreds of individuals within the Newport News Public Schools. In 1995, the School Board of Newport News Public Schools recognized the need to update the teacher evaluation procedures. An Ad Hoc Committee for Teacher Performance Evaluation was appointed to accomplish the task. This committee was composed of teachers and administrators throughout the division under the leadership of Jean Beckerdite, Regional Director, and Middle School Teacher Vivian Walker. Since that time, the faculties in schools from across the division, random groups of school-based administrators and teachers, central office administrators, and the Staff Development Department have helped to refine and promote this work.

Special acknowledgment goes to the faculties in the five schools who, in the years between 1995 and 1997, took a leap of faith by field-testing the fundamental concepts and the formative assessment process found in this document. The dedicated teachers and administrators of these schools have pioneered a new paradigm of professionalism:

- Dozier Middle School
- Lee Hall Elementary School
- Newsome Park Elementary School
- Reservoir Middle School
- Richneck Elementary School

Newport News Public Schools is indebted to Dr. Phillip Schlechty, President and CEO, Center for Leadership in School Reform, for sharing his vision of public schools and professional behaviors with us, and to Dr. Linda Shelor, Senior Associate, Center for Leadership in School Reform, for her encouragement and facilitation as this project gained momentum. We also acknowledge the efforts of Charlotte Danielson, Princeton Education Associates, who has lent her expertise in assessment and has helped to operationalize the concepts and refine the processes.

During the 1997-98 academic year all schools within the division implemented the Formative Assessment Process that was developed from these efforts. In addition, twenty schools continued to field-test and refine the Summative Assessment process.

Special appreciation must be expressed to the following members of the design team who labored in May of 1998 to refine the Summative Assessment process for division-wide use beginning in the Fall of 1998:

Jean Bacote, Teacher, Richneck Elementary School
Bettye Byrd, Teacher, Heritage High School
Marilyn Dayton, Administrative Assistant, Jenkins Elementary School
Denise Fehrenbach, Teacher, Dozier Middle School
Frances Forrest, Teacher, Warwick Early Childhood Center
Ethel Francis, Teacher, Newsome Park Elementary School
Lynne Fritzingler, Principal, Lee Hall Elementary School
Phillip Hamilton, Coordinator, Staff Development Department
Tracy Harrod, Teacher, Denbigh High School
Diana Haynie, Teacher, Saunders Elementary School
Michele Mitchell, Teacher, Reservoir Middle School
Katey O'Brien, Teacher, South Morrison Elementary School
Lisa Pennycuff, Teacher, Newsome Park Elementary School

Kathleen Pietrasanta, Coordinator, Staff Development Department
Susan Piland, Director, Staff Development Department
Linda Revia, Program Director, Heritage High School
Barbara Richardson, Teacher, Magruder Early Childhood Center
Deborah Richardson, Teacher, Greenwood Elementary School
Jewell Schaefer-Hanbury, Teacher, Lee Hall Elementary School
Dr. Neil Stamm, Coordinator, Research and Program Evaluation
Lisa Steele, Teacher, Nelson Elementary School
Robert Sulzberger, Teacher, Deer Park Elementary School
Gwen Thomas, Teacher, Dozier Middle School
Patricia Tilghman, Teacher, Jenkins Elementary School
Susan Tilley, Teacher, Reservoir Middle School
John Tupponce, Teacher, Greenwood Elementary School
Vivian Walker, Coordinator, Staff Development Department
Meta Wesley, Teacher, Magruder Elementary School
Jack Wood, Acting Executive Director, Human Resources Department

Another committee met in the spring of 2001. Their charge, to review the data collected during the first two years of division-wide implementation and make appropriate recommendations to the superintendent and the School Board, was carried out in the spirit of continuous improvement and respectful dialogue. Thanks is owed to the individuals below who willingly donated the time necessary to improve both the assessment process and this handbook.

Tiffany Blatt, Teacher, Lee Hall Elementary School
Leslie Bowers, Teacher and Instructional Mentor, Heritage High School
Nancy Brooks, Teacher and NNEA President, Dutrow Elementary School
Kristy Brown, Teacher, Magruder Primary School
Raquel Brown, Teacher, Epes Elementary School
Frederick Cheeks, Principal, Reservoir Middle School
Patricia Clancy, National Board Certified Teacher, Dozier Middle School
Charla Cordle, Executive Director, Human Resources
Phillip Hamilton, Coordinator, Staff Development Department
Stephanie Hautz, Assistant Principal for Instruction, Woodside High School
Keith Kuberek, Teacher, Menchville High School
Pamela Nichols, Teacher and Instructional Mentor, Achievable Dream Preparatory Academy
Susan Nichols, Teacher and Instructional Mentor, Hines Middle School
Cecil Overton, Principal, South Morrison Elementary School
Kathleen Pietrasanta, Coordinator, Staff Development Department
Susan Piland, Director, Staff Development Department
Valerie Price, Teacher, Warwick Early Childhood Center
Angela Seiders, Assistant Principal, Huntington Middle School
Gwendolyn Sifen, Assistant Principal, Warwick High School
Dr. Wayne K. Smith, Regional Director
Dr. Neil Stamm, Coordinator, Program Evaluation
Rebecca Waters, Director of Student Teaching, Christopher Newport University
Renita Williams, Teacher and Instructional Mentor Trainer, Denbigh High School
Diane Willis, Assistant Principal, Palmer Elementary School