



# APPR UPDATE

## Inter-rater Reliability

June 2012

### **B A C K G R O U N D**

The purpose of this white paper is to provide an understanding of what is meant by inter-rater reliability, explain why it is essential to the development and successful implementation of your APPR plan and provide recommendations for your use with plan development.

Inter-rater reliability is identified in Commissioner's Regulations (Subpart 30-2) as a required component of Lead Evaluator training. Specifically, steps must be prescribed in your APPR plan to ensure that "lead evaluators maintain inter-rater reliability" (30-2.9). The APPR statute now empowers the Commissioner to review and approve all plans to ensure rigor or be subject to rejection and return for re-negotiation. Thus, the standard of inter-rater reliability has great importance for superintendents as they review APPR plans, select and monitor training protocols and submit documentation to their boards of education for Lead Evaluator certification.

The regulation does not provide a definition of inter-rater reliability. Charlotte Danielson has described inter-rater reliability as, "*[t]rained evaluators who can make accurate and consistent judgments based upon evidence.*" However, within the text of the regulation four examples have been provided as options for establishing inter-rater reliability: (1) data analysis, (2) periodic comparison, (3) annual calibration, and (4) re-certification.

Simply, maintaining inter-rater reliability means that if different evaluators evaluate the same teacher's performance they will arrive at very similar scores.

## **C O N S I D E R A T I O N S**

1. Embed the substantive work of establishing inter-rater reliability in your initial APPR training. Employ SED approved rubrics and training criteria. Be sure that training sessions include how to gather, analyze and report evidence. Finally, training sessions might be structured to include organized practice, feedback and even a summative evaluation upon completion of training.
2. Plan to include APPR professional development as a regular agenda item at your leadership team meetings. As a team, view teacher practice videos and then reflect upon rubric use, evidence gathered and how decisions were made to score performances. The cost of providing training videos might be offset by collaborating with your local BOCES. The use of “Instructional Rounds” is another means for neighboring schools to collaborate, observe, reflect and share best practices to promote inter-rater reliability.
3. The analysis of teacher artifacts, that some prefer to call “Japanese Lesson Study,” is a powerful form of professional development. It also can be a component of establishing inter-rater reliability. Artifacts from teachers might include homework assignments, projects, student quizzes, parental letters, etc. that can be cross-referenced with principal observation reports.
4. For those who have established data networks, it may be possible to obtain multiple years of teacher/student test score reports from summative or district formative assessments (AIMSWeb, Fontas and Pinnell, NWEA MAP, etc...) for analysis in relation to teacher observation reports. Because this practice might be perceived as controversial, it is important to consider the following: employ multiple years of data, clearly define the process as confidential professional development for administrators and specify that none of the reflection/analysis shall be used in the evaluation process.

## **S U M M A R Y**

Start now to plan options for establishing inter-rater reliability among lead evaluators in your district. This work is not only necessary for a rigorous APPR plan but can be aligned with current professional development plans to promote instructional leadership.

For additional study about teacher/principal observation and inter-rater reliability the following may be of interest:

- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *Learning about Teaching: Initial Findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project*, 2009;
- *The Widget Effect*, The 2009 New Teacher Project;
- Robert Pianta, *Teaching Children Well*, November 2011, Center for American Progress.