

**T+ Network Event: *Teacher Leaders Building Teacher Effectiveness Through Peer Assistance and Review*,  
Thursday, February 2, 2012.**

### **Expert Panel Responses to Teachers' Questions**

Members of the Expert Panel:

Jeffrey Chipman, Teacher, Bellevue Middle School, PAR Panel Member

Dr. Sherrish Holloman, Department of Teacher Talent & Effectiveness

Dr. Julia Koppich, National PAR Consultant

Keith Williams, MEA President, PAR Panel Co-Chair

*Below are questions posed to the Expert Panel at the February 2<sup>nd</sup> T+ Network Event and the responses from the Expert Panelists. Their answers may be paraphrased to deliver the most relevant information – each response is attributed to a specific panelist.*

#### **Question 1: What are the roles and responsibilities of the PAR panel?**

**Dr. Julia Koppich (JK):** This work is just getting under way. Memphis will need to identify more specific roles and procedures. In other districts they select CTs (consulting teachers) and evaluate their effectiveness. Most important is the evaluation phase. The PAR Panel will be informed about teacher support, suggest other support, collect evidence via the CT, will have to look at files and make decisions about a teacher's future in the profession (recommendations to school board, superintendent). As far as JK knows, PAR panel decision has not ever been overturned.

**Keith Williams (KW):** Currently, principals just send re-elect or do not re-elect recommendation and \$10,000 - \$15,000 is spent each year fighting teacher dismissals. The PAR panel will assure they have been given every opportunity and if the panel says they need to go, they need to go.

#### **Question 2: What does the PAR program mean for me as a teacher?**

**Jeffrey Chipman (JC):** I'm currently teaching next to a TFA teacher who is doing a great job – she has a mentor, support, etc. PAR will give all new teachers, regardless of their path of entry a strong support system as well. PAR will make teachers more successful sooner.

**Dr. Sherrish Holloman (SH):** This is an opportunity to be part of a profession where you are treated with the level of prestige that teachers deserve. Some people just wander into the profession – which is fine – BUT you can't just wander into a hospital and become a doctor. Teaching is the most honorable profession and must be treated as such.

#### **Question 3: How can teachers be confident of a fair hearing?**

**KW:** The CT comes before the panel after the first semester with a status update. Some decisions are made at this time. There are five teachers and four administrators sitting on the panel – if all five teachers say something is wrong with you, something is probably wrong! Support HAS been given to the teacher. The CT is interested in saving/supporting the teacher. This is an opportunity to reduce the current attrition rate.

#### **Question 4: What impact, if any, will this have on TEM observations?**

**SH:** PAR is form of support. If assigned a CT, the CT goes in, builds on what is in the professional support and growth plan. They do an assessment; figure out what areas need to be focused on, etc. If done well, it will lead to improved observations. CTs will have deep knowledge of content. Administrators cannot be content specialists. If we identify excellent CTs, we will have teachers doing better on observations.

**JC:** In Toledo – most CTs had been in the classroom of each teacher for 6-7 hours, 15 hours of consultation, etc. Another area of support (from Toledo): basic needs were being addressed too (not enough desks, books, scheduling) things that impact a teacher's ability to be effective. The district personnel had no option but to make phone calls and fix the problem. This type of support does not occur currently in Memphis.

**SH:** CTs will do the formal observations of new teachers (TEM observations). In some parts of the country, principals have been hesitant to give up control of newer teacher observations. With the number of principals who have to do observations here in Memphis, they might not be so upset!

#### **Question 5: What data supports the effectiveness of PAR?**

**JK:** Par programs improve teacher retention because people feel supported and that their evaluations are credible. For experienced teachers – either improve or you are gone. PAR builds a cadre of effective teachers over time. In other districts, very few tenured teachers are in PAR because of the support they receive as new teachers. Do they improve test scores? This is the wrong question to be asked. The PAR program is not centered around test scores. It focuses on improving practice.

### ***Open Q & A with the Audience***

#### **Question 6: Are there any specific school-level dynamics for PAR?**

**KW:** The MEA Building Rep has a role. He or she can recommend people who need PAR assistance. Teachers will need to take ownership.

#### **Question 7: What does a day in the life of a CT look like?**

**Consulting Teacher from Ohio:** You're out in the school as much as possible. Brainstorm ideas with other CTs. The CT position is a huge professional growth opportunity – we learn from each other. Other duties include writing reports, conferencing with teachers, etc. We take work home just like teachers. We create leadership opportunities for teachers such as offering PD to teachers you serve. Teachers under PAR have to attend monthly PD sessions.

#### **Question 8: How are CTs trained?**

**SH:** Multiple aspects of training are still under development. CTs must have a deep understanding of the TEM observation rubric, and how to work with adult learners/adult learning. But, individuals can be trained to work with adults. For example: Someone can be trained how to have a difficult conversation with people. One can learn ways to do this without offending people. CTs need to know where their own deficiencies are and use this information to build training for the future.

#### **Questions 9: What are the requirements for CTs and how will they be chosen?**

**SH:** This is still in development. The PAR Panel will approve final criteria and selection process. Some example ideas from working group panel are seven years of experience, tenure, demonstrated evidence working with students, etc.

**KW:** In Toledo the application process is very rigorous. Written, spoken, THEY are observed in the classroom. They then go back to the classroom after three years as a CT.

**Question 10: How will the PAR program be affected by consolidation?**

**KW:** There is an MEA meeting next Wednesday. It is not yet known what the new district will look like – so it is hard to know. Best practices from both systems will hopefully carry over. Some county teachers are very interested in what we are doing.

**Question 11: What mechanisms are in place to make sure the program is effective and sustainable?**

**KW:** Nothing is in place right now. But we want this to be done with fidelity. The focus needs to be on the amount spent hiring teachers and the amount MEA spends on the firing of teachers.

**JC:** The district is expecting to be hiring 700 teachers next year. We hope we will start seeing fewer NEW teachers each year – so the cost will then decrease over time.

**SH:** The policy office wanted to put PAR into policy this year – it is harder to undo. So the goal is to get it into policy so that you have to support it long term.