

MEMORANDUM

TO: TOM FREEDMAN

FROM: JULIE MIKUTA

RE: RESULTS OF PEER INTERVENTION PROGRAM IN COLUMBUS

DATE: JULY 8, 1997

SUMMARY

The Columbus school district has run a peer review program (PAR) for the past 11 years. It is one of the few school districts associated with the NEA (as opposed to the AFT) that has an on-going peer review program. During the life of the program, all beginning teachers and 168 veterans have participated. Of the 201 beginning teachers last year, 15 resigned before or after receiving a poor evaluation; of the 168 veteran teachers over the 11 years, 2 were dismissed, 75 were released in good standing and the rest either retired or exited the system during or after their evaluation. This memo gives a general overview of the program.

SUPERVISORY PANEL

Four teachers (including the union president) and 3 administrators set on the panel which oversees the PAR program. The panel is responsible for: approving final decisions about the teachers identified for intervention; selecting and training experienced teachers as "consulting" teachers; maintaining records of participating teachers; reviewing reports of consulting teachers and meeting with principals in schools of veteran teachers under review.

IDENTIFICATION OF TEACHERS IN NEED OF INTERVENTION

There are 3 ways that teachers are selected for the program:

1. self-referral -- This usually occurs in the case of a teacher who has a limited contract and anticipates a negative report.
2. peer-referral-- This is the most commonly used referral system. An individual teacher recommends a peer for the program; the building counsel must approve the recommendation before presenting it to the program supervisors.
3. referral by building administrator

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE PROGRAM

Consulting teachers work with veteran or new teachers by observing them, working with their administrators, providing them with resources, and setting up schedules for them to observe other "successful" teachers. Beginning teachers (including those individuals who have taught in another system, but are new to Columbus) undergo a one-year program, while veterans are

involved for a longer period of time. Consulting teachers make regular reports to the PAR panel.

RESULTS

Both teachers who were dismissed challenged their evaluations. However, the district had extensive documentation on their shortcomings, which made it relatively easy to fire the teachers.

Visitors from all over the country observe the program, usually in the interest of setting up their own.

The records indicate that there is no gender or racial bias in the selection of teachers for intervention.

COSTS

There are 13 PAR consultants. Each is paid their teaching salary +20% (approx \$60,000 each). PAR also involves the training of consultants, and the salaries of a secretary and substitute teachers (for veteran teachers while they observe other classrooms). Three teachers in the district are paid a supplement to be a member of the PAR panel.

SPIN-OFFS OF THE PAR PROGRAM

In 1996, the district hire 2 of PAR's consultants to work with student teachers.

Ohio State University runs a PAR course designed around the needs of the Columbus school system. Student teachers who take the course have formed a community that appears to continue during their early teaching years in Columbus.