

Stony Brook University The Graduate School

Doctoral Defense Announcement

Abstract

**The Impacts of the Annual Professional Performance Review in New York:
Science Teachers' and Administrators' Perspectives**

By

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The goal of this study was to investigate New York State's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) from the perspectives of secondary science teachers and their administrators. Examining their perceptions through interviews was insightful due to the subjects' proximity to the teaching and learning processes. Five science teacher/administrator pairs from selected school districts were interviewed; all had varied ranges of experience and content certifications. The study also investigated the unintended consequences the teachers and administrators experienced using the new APPR system.

This phenomenological research study lays the groundwork for making policy recommendations for science teacher evaluations. The goal was to examine teachers' and administrators' perceptions, the clarity and practicality of teacher evaluation reforms, as well as how motivational theory might incentivize teacher "buy-in" to future reform efforts. Provisional coding was used in this study based upon prior research. The list of codes was generated using motivational theories applied to the design of teacher evaluation policy and reform implementation constructs.

Although the science teachers agreed with the importance of being evaluated, they generally viewed aspects of the process of quantifying their effectiveness as unclear, unfair, and flawed. The science teachers indicated that student variations in ability and performance were not considered when APPR was established. The science teachers recommended that the focus of teacher evaluations should be on content specific professional development. They proposed the establishment of peer review systems, teacher collaboration networks, and self-reflection documentation as means to improve their science teaching practices.

The administrators agreed that accountability was important, however, holding individual teachers accountable for student outcomes was not reliably measured through the APPR process. They recommended other forms of evaluative measures that would focus on professional development instead of an evaluative effectiveness score. Their recommendations involved creating more time for science administrators to be teacher leaders rather than evaluators. The administrators highlighted three main recommendations: 1) decreasing the number of formal observations and replacing them with frequent informal classroom visits; 2) peer-peer observations utilizing instructional rounds; and 3) educator involvement in the creation of improved science teacher evaluation, with implicit trust in the administrators to exert local control.

Date: July 28, 2017

Time: 10:00am

Place: Life Sciences 038

Program: Science Education

Dissertation Advisor: Angela M. Kelly