



Huntington Union Free School District

"A Tradition of Excellence Since 1657"

James W. Polansky

Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Editor:

This letter is in response to Newsday's recent reporting of the 2012-13 state educator Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) data. It is unfortunate that Education Law 3012-c, associated regulations and the recently established APPR process have come down to a media-generated competition and comparison among districts regarding relative percentages of highly effective, effective, developing and ineffective educators. While there is considerable discord associated with the new Common Core assessments, at least exam proficiency percentages are based on the same measure.

With respect to APPR, New York State developed an ingenious strategy that allows school districts to negotiate and locally develop the large majority of criteria on which educators are evaluated. Every district's plan is markedly different from another's. For a small number of teachers in each district, 20% of the composite score and rating is based upon state-determined growth standards related to uniformly administered assessments. For those teachers, the remaining 80% is determined based on district-determined measures. For all other teachers, the entire rating is based on locally developed criteria.

If one took the time to review the APPR plans posted on the SED website for each individual district, one would be quick to notice the considerable variation. In this scenario, the State Education Department should be questioned as to why they approved plans that intentionally lead to a large majority of teachers that are highly effective. And this is not to suggest that any individual teacher or group of teachers does a poor job in the classroom.

The APPR process as it currently stands is beyond flawed. It presents a severely inaccurate portrayal of overall teacher effectiveness in the classroom. The ratings are essentially worthless. Only if the ratings were based on a uniform plan implemented throughout the state would the outcomes assume any validity. Such a plan would need to take into account the variety of factors that impact student and educator performance in each district, some of which are within and some of which are beyond an individual teacher's or principal's control. Until this happens, an inordinate amount of time, attention and funding will be focused on collecting and reporting meaningless data.

Sincerely,

James W. Polansky
Superintendent of Schools