

## QUESTIONS

### TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION PANEL:

AREA SCHOOL DISTRICTS – Melrose Municipal Schools

SEPTEMBER 23, 2014

Submitted by: Jamie Widner, Melrose Superintendent

- 1. Based on the PED approved plan for your school district, outline your school district implementation timeline of the Educator Effectiveness System for teachers and principals this school year.** At Melrose we are doing two observations per year, because we have two principals. One will observe one set of teachers in the fall and then observe the other group in the spring. The other principal will alternate his observations with the first principal.
- 2. Which online system does your school district use to help implement the EES? Does your district plan on using this system next year?** At Melrose we use the RIX innovations program for lesson plans with our teachers. Then we upload whatever information is necessary for TEACHSCAPE. As far as using RIX next year, we still don't know what we will use. We may use it and we may not.
- 3. By licensure level, what is the number and percent of teachers in you school district in each of the following groups?:** We have had some changes from last year to this year, so I will give you our numbers for this coming school year.
  - **Group A teachers: 8 group A teachers.** 1 is highly effective, 4 are effective, 1 is minimally effective, and 1 is ineffective.
  - **Group B teachers: 8 group B teachers.** 7 are effective and 1 is minimally effective.
  - **Group C teachers: 3 group C teachers** and all are effective.
  - **We learned early this school year that we will now have to evaluate Group D teachers and we have one. This group will be for pre-kindergarten teachers who are on the pre-K grant.**
- 4. For principals, what is the number and percent of these administrators in your district in each of the following groups?** Melrose has 2 principals and they both have a Level-3B license and they are in Group A principals. They both were rated effective.

- 5. Has your school district shared the data and results of the District Educator Effectiveness Summative Report with your teachers and principals?** Melrose did present the summative evaluation sheets sent from PED to our teachers. However; we did not make our teachers sign them. We made them sign a statement composed by the Superintendent. We then attached the statement to the summative evaluation sheet from PED and filed both in their personnel file. The statement composed by the Superintendent stated, "As a teacher at Melrose Schools, I agree my principal has shown me my summative evaluation sheet utilizing the new PED mandated evaluation system. I further agree that the Melrose principals have done walkthroughs and formal observations in compliance with the PED mandated evaluation system. However, because we do not understand the VAS scoring system, which relates to 50 percent of my evaluation, I am signing this statement instead of my evaluation sheet, submitted by the PED, as suggested by my superintendent. The Melrose Schools administrative team has tried to understand how the summative evaluation scores were arrived at and we all understand very little. We further understand that there were parts left off my evaluation that may have helped my scores. I am signing this sheet acknowledging that I have been given my summative evaluation, but that I don't necessarily agree with it. I also know that this summative evaluation will be in my personnel file, as mandated by PED." We took this step, because we knew that there were parts left out and the superintendent did not agree with the way the PED was using teacher attendance data. We feel (and the staff was told) that teacher attendance is our decision as a district, (eg. Number of days missed before a teacher would begin to lose points on the evaluation).

There were some problems, that I addressed to PED and I was given some responses to my questions, but I did not pursue changes in our teacher evaluations like other districts. I chose to accept what was sent, knowing that they were wrong, and hoping that the second year would be better. We were told upfront that this was a baseline year and that changes would be made to make the process better and more usable as time progressed. I hope that is the case.

- 6. Did your school district participate in the EES pilot project last year?** No we did not participate in the pilot at Melrose. We knew this first year was to be a baseline year and I felt that for all those districts that did not participate in the pilot that we were going to be able to use 2013-14 as a state-wide pilot of the system that was checked and tweaked the previous year. We have been told numerous times that 2013-14 was a baseline year, but most of the consequences in the teacher evaluation system have

been implemented and teachers have no recourse, even though it was and is still considered a baseline year. We feel if it is a baseline year, with many problems to still work out, the consequences of the EES plan should be put on hold for a year.

- 7. Please add any other comment you might have addressing lessons learned in implementing your evaluation system.** First and foremost, we do support evaluating teachers with a better method. We certainly want to be held accountable. We don't believe we are using a better method today, than we were using before. We believe the observation piece is very good and the walkthroughs have really encouraged teacher-principal interactions. However, here at Melrose we have always done this and we have a small enough staff that we have always had walkthroughs and observations with great teacher-principal interactions. I believe as far as the observation piece is concerned, this new evaluation system is helping promote better teaching and learning. My biggest concern is the VAM portion of our evaluation plan. The way it is set up it is inherently undefinable for the average school administrator. When we talk about quartiles and three year scaled scores and student growth and school growth, there is no way that it can be discerned how our teachers will be rated based on the VAM. This evaluation model does not look like the concept that was presented to us three and four years ago. We knew about student achievement being a part of the plan, but 50 percent is way too much and with it being so hard to determine how to process scoring, it becomes a major issue. I have always been one to not stand by and allow things to be done to me, but regarding the VAM, I don't even know where to begin, so in this case I just let it be. When discussing the VAM, I believe it is the worst part of this plan because it does not give a true picture of what happens in that classroom on a day-to-day basis. Many times teachers are either doing SBA testing (which will become PARCC), giving interim assessments, or other required tests, or preparing for the tests. My third graders will miss 20 days of schooling this year because of testing requirements. This does not count test preparation days. I think the VAM is the absolute worst part of this evaluation system and the superintendents have asked for it to be counted at a smaller percentage of the overall evaluation score, but there is no negotiation from PED. I am truly frustrated with the entire process because it is a blame game from the top down. I asked one time why my school needed to be fixed because we are not broken. I did not receive an answer. We had two schools with a grade of A and one school with a grade of B and we send 77 percent of our graduates on to post-secondary schooling and more than 90 percent of our graduates are productive citizens. We have tracked this number over the past 20 years at Melrose Schools and I believe this is a very true picture of the product we turn out. I further believe that the majority of the schools on the east side of the state are doing a wonderful job in producing their product. I don't

believe schools on the east side are contributing to New Mexico being 49<sup>th</sup> in the country in education, as quoted by politicians. With that in mind, I believe we should be given the opportunity to have local control of our schools. Right now we are being mandated to death and that is what a multitude of experienced veteran teachers and administrators are thinking as well, because they are leaving the profession in droves. The flip side of that issue is that all teacher education institutions in New Mexico are experiencing declining enrollment. So the question arises, how can we fill teaching positions in the near future and what will happen to a generation of students that are experiencing these reforms. I continue to hear that all the reforms are backed by research. Well from my perspective, as an old ag. teacher, farmer and rancher, I truly believe the only way to create good kids is to build a great foundation on which to build their lives, with solid parenting, solid teaching, a solid community and a solid system without political shades of grey at every turn. I run my school based on old fashioned values. It is traditional and conforms to our community, not some Ivory Tower philosophy that will change in the coming months to some other new research-based system. I thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak my opinion regarding the new PED mandated teacher/principal evaluation system.

**TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION PANEL:**

Demographic Information: Melrose Municipal Schools

Submitted by: Jamie Widner, Melrose Superintendent

**Total Number of Schools:** At Melrose we have three schools – High School - grades 9-12, Elementary School - grades PreK-6, and a Junior High – grades 7-8.

**Number of Schools per grade level:** At Melrose we only have one classroom and one teacher for each grade level.

**Total number of students by school and grade level:**

Elementary School: 120 students

Junior High School: 30 students

High School: 53 students

**Total number of students in district:** 203 students (This includes Pre-K)

**Total number of teachers per grade level:** At Melrose we have 20 licensed teachers for all subjects and grade levels. As stated earlier, we have one classroom and one teacher for each grade level at the elementary school. Our JH and HS teachers teach their subjects to all students.

**Number of Principals and/or assistant principals:** We have two (2) principals –

Elementary – 1 (Also Special Ed. Director for the district)

JH and HS – 1 (Also Athletic Director, football coach and activity transportation coordinator)

We have no assistant principals.