

## Clarification Points Regarding APPR Paper

[www.newyorkprincipals.org](http://www.newyorkprincipals.org)

NYSUT has sent an email to all members telling them to NOT sign or circulate the APPR Letter. One of the emails they sent is copied at the end of this document.

Permit us to clarify a few points:

- There is no research that supports the linking of student test scores to individual teacher evaluations. Prior to the May 2010 agreement that brought us our current APPR legislation, such linkage did not occur in NYS. By signing off on the agreement, NYSUT helped to make this happen. It is a bad educational practice that will stealthily damage our schools in ways that we cannot imagine.
- The notion that the success or failure of an individual student rests solely on the shoulders of a single teacher is both misguided and contrary to what we know about good practices in schools. A student's success on an ELA exam might have a lot to do with the interventions of a social worker, guidance counselor, dean, assistant principal, resource room teacher, teacher assistant or even a coach. To deny that the entire school is responsible for educating each child is to go against best practices.
- Despite the lack of research base, RTTT requires the use of student test scores to be used in teacher and principal evaluations. To address this point, we recommend a more holistic and locally controlled method. To account for the 20% required under APPR, we propose that schools be permitted to choose what index matters to their community (among a list of approved indices). Examples of possible indices include: graduation rate, ELA passing rates, mastery rates, AP/IB participation rates.
- We are not suggesting that there is a single index that should be used for all schools across the State. We believe that districts and schools should have flexibility to choose what matters most to them locally. We do believe, however, that when all members of an organization are focused on a goal --- working with each other, rowing the same way, if you will --- then there is a far better chance that the goal will be attained. To neglect the role that many of these "non-tested area" teachers have on student performance is to deny what makes the best schools successful.
- We are not looking to dismantle any of the "protections" given under the APPR legislation. (It is difficult to talk about protections when the basis for the legislation is so fundamentally flawed and so harmful to students, schools and teachers.) As principals, we certainly believe that teacher evaluations be based on multiple observations and as objective measures as possible. No matter how many times our commissioner might say it, these tests are NOT objective measures of a teacher's effectiveness.
- We do not accuse teachers of acting unprofessionally. What the letter states, however, is that the linking of student scores to teacher evaluations will incentivize certain practices at ALL levels in schools. Rather than teachers and students working together against the test, it will be teachers against students against the test. Principals have already heard complaints about field trips removing students from classes, absent students impacting a teacher's evaluation, new arrivals being a problem. We are not making these things up; they are happening in schools already! This is not a dig at teacher professionalism; it just speaks to the reality of how a human being whose livelihood is impacted by such a poorly-designed system will be incentivized to view students and a school.

- By no means do we think that all of our recommendations will be adopted without any discussion or compromise. By refusing to sign the paper out of concern about parts of one recommendation, one is losing sight of the forest through the trees! The big picture, of course, is that the APPR regulations as currently constructed are bad for students and schools. We must make our voices heard on this important issue!
- We have not even discussed the money being diverted from our schools and districts to testing and training companies!

NYSUT has found itself on the wrong side of this important issue. Please be sure to read the research on our website ([www.newyorkprincipals.org](http://www.newyorkprincipals.org)) to learn more about APPR. Also, be sure to read Matt DiCarlo's piece on the Shanker Blog. <http://shankerblog.org/?p=4358>

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**Below are NYSUT's positions on this topic:**

1. NYSUT opposes school-wide ratings for teacher evaluations: school-wide ratings are completely inappropriate. Such ratings would result in physical education and music teacher's evaluations being based on math and ELA scores over which the teacher had no influence or control.
2. NYSUT opposes the very idea that teachers will avoid educating students with language, health, disability, or other issues in order to enhance their evaluation scores, or that they will refuse to engage in collaborative activity to improve student performance. These false assumptions completely ignore our roles as professionals, our commitment to our students and, in fact, denigrate the entire teaching profession.
3. NYSUT believes that any implementation plan should include the adoption of a one-year "hold harmless" provision for APPR to enable all locals and districts to learn from their individual experiences, and make necessary modifications for a fair and valid system.

In order to protect what we have achieved in statute and in advancing our profession, it is imperative that we discourage our local leaders and members from signing onto or spreading this letter.