



PEER ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE

SY 2009-2010



Final Report – Peer Assistance Committee (Michael McLaughlin, Dale Libkin, Albert Taylor, Marilyn Marion, Ronda Goodale) June 30, 2010

Introduction

The Peer Assistance Program was formed as a cooperative partnership between the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) and the Boston Public Schools (BPS). This partnership was designed to enhance the teaching performance of permanent teachers who are experiencing difficulties in the classroom. Participation in the program is voluntary, and current BTU members provide direct support.

The Peer Assistants Committee convened its initial meeting in June 2007 at which time the Committee discussed goals, wrote the job description and created the criteria for selecting the interview pool.

Training

The Committee felt that the hired peer assistants should be trained in a similar manner to the New Teacher Developers (NTD). The Committee contacted and met with the NTD staff, inquired about professional development opportunities for the school year 2007-08 and agreed to join the NTD for professional development. The Peer Assistants attended three full-day workshops that included: *Foundations of Mentoring*, *Using Student Work to Guide Instruction*, and *Mentoring for Equity*. The Peer Assistance Committee provided weekly support to the Peer Assistants. In addition, the Peer Assistants attended Laptops for Learning Training and were awarded their laptops. The Peer Assistants continued to attend workshops attended by the NTDs in the 2009-2010 school year as well as targeted workshops to support their professional development.

Teacher Participation

Teachers were informed about the Peer Assistants (PA) program through the *Boston Union Teacher*, a monthly newspaper, Boston Teachers Union e-bulletin, at the union's general membership monthly meetings and at the Boston Teachers Union Building Representatives training conference in October 2009 as well as in October 2008. Teachers interested in obtaining a Peer Assistant wrote a letter requesting the help of a PA. The request was mailed to the BTU in care of Michael McLaughlin, who suggested which of the PAs would support the teacher. He sought consensus from the PA committee for individual assignment and notified the appointed Peer Assistant. Support to the volunteering teacher was initiated when Dale Libkin arranged a meeting at the school to introduce the PA to the principal/headmaster and volunteering teacher.

On average, the teachers received 10 months of PA support. This included teachers just beginning in June, and others who still receive consultation after 2 years.

Accomplishments/Program's Impact

The Committee met monthly to oversee all implementation aspects of the program. In order to assess the impact of the program, the Committee requested and received from the PAs an example of a day in the life of a Peer Assistant and developed a teacher questionnaire that elicited feedback and recommendations. Questionnaires were sent to 70 teachers and 22 responses were received. There are thirteen statements for the teachers to provide feedback. They can respond using a Likert scale of: *strongly agree*; *agree*; *disagree*; *strongly disagree*. Except for one question related to administrators, the teachers either checked agree or strongly agree to all statements. They were very positive in their assessment of the peer assistant model. All twenty-two either strongly agree or agree that they value the Peer Assistance Program as a model of professional support and improvement. One-hundred percent (100%) of the respondents felt they had adequate access to their peer assistant. Twenty-one of twenty-two strongly agreed that the peer assistant is a strong advocate for me. Nineteen of the twenty-two strongly agreed that the peer assistant offers concrete teaching suggestions and tools to help in their day to day classroom work and is aware of the culture and climate of the school. The summary of the breakout to each question is on the following page. Of particular interest were responses to the following statements "My Peer Assistant understands my particular teaching situation, needs, and/or challenges"-eighteen out of twenty-two strongly agreed with this statement. Twenty of the twenty-two strongly agreed or agreed with all of the statements. Most of the teachers also took the time to write positive comments.

Here are some examples

. " Thank-you for the program. It is the best help I have received in terms of teacher development in BPS." " I had a great peer assistant who was knowledgeable, patient, and an excellent instructor." It was good to have someone else come into my classroom to help me improve. It was great to have someone to talk about the issues that I was facing professionally and emotionally." " --- has been an exceptional mentor" " Thank-you for allowing me to be part of this much needed program!" " It has been a valuable help to me during this difficult time," "My peer assistant helped immensely with my transition to a new school", " My peer assistant has clarified challenging components of my formal evaluations and fostered an even healthier relationship between myself and my superior" " As to the value of the program, it is inspired genius. It is critical to be able to help teachers to do their best work with students, to help teachers find the best ways to share their expertise in order to contribute their best to society. This great program unites the Boston Public Schools with the Boston Teachers Union, bringing their concerns and interests together into a great act."

Teachers took the time to comment on the level of professionalism, understanding and support provided by the peer assistants.

In summary, the data for the 2009-2010 school years underscores the power and value of the peer assistance program.

The PAs supported seventy (70) teachers this school year, of which ten (10) met standards, and twenty-one (21) teachers remain active.

Volunteering Teacher	Teachers who met Standards	Retirements /Resignations/Other	Active
70	10	39	21

*** Other represents teachers on approved leave of absence**

Accomplishments

- Brochure on Peer Assistance Program
- Reports from each Peer Assistant
- Committee's meeting and discussion with each Peer Assistant

Challenges

- Higher return rate of evaluation questionnaire