

An APPR “Q & A” Update

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A brief APPR overview APPR or Annual Professional Performance Review is mandated through NYS Law 3012C. All teachers and principals will be evaluated as Highly Effective, Effective, Developing or Ineffective. The law stipulates the following components in developing professional evaluation: 20% state growth measure, 20% local growth measure, 60% other local measures.

When does this begin? Teachers of ELA and Math, grades 4 – 8 are currently evaluated under the terms of the new APPR guidelines with all other subject areas (including Music) beginning in 2012-13. The starting dates are also contingent upon new union contracts. In districts with unexpired union contracts, the new APPR evaluation process will begin with the start of the new contract.

Will music teachers be evaluated by written tests for the 20% state growth measure component? There will be several options for the state 20% test component. Most recently, the “Task Force For Teacher and Principal Effectiveness” began working on a Student Learning Objective (SLO) option that will allow teachers to create objectives and goals specific to their local district and program. The SLO model will be locally developed and will be accepted by SED as a rigorous measure for the state 20% component.

Many in our field believe that the use of SLO will allow local districts, teachers and administration to assess student and teacher work through fair and appropriate criteria that would be difficult to measure through a one-size-fits-all paper/pencil test. However, districts will have the option of using tests and even ELA/Math scores for the 20% state component.

Why is it that no one in my district has heard of Student Learning Objectives and how will I learn more about this option? The Non-Tested Work Group of the Task Force is currently working on the SLO model using templates from other states to create materials appropriate for New York. Work kits and templates for the SLO option will be developed and shared with school districts soon. There should be ample time for music educators to receive the materials and plan for APPR implementation for next year.

What if my school district wishes to start APPR for music teachers earlier than September 2012? As in the past, school districts can evaluate teachers in any manner negotiated between the Board of Education and unions.

What should I do if my school district demands development of written tests for APPR implementation this year? Creating statistically “valid and reliable” tests requires the work of expert test developers. Paper/pencil tests for music may not measure performance ability of students effectively. Alternatively, the SLO model may allow for the evaluation of students in an authentic, performance-based manner. Informing your administration of the SLO option may be prudent.

Can’t NYSSMA scores be used for the 20% state component? NYSSMA festival participation is certainly an indisputably valuable part of many successful programs. And while state law may allow district use of NYSSMA scores, the Task Force steered clear of recommending NYSSMA scores for APPR. NYSSMA festivals were not created, nor intended to offer a “high stakes” testing model for evaluation of students and their teachers/principals. Factors such as cost, certified adjudicator availability, comparability of school offerings, student access to private lessons, and availability of quality instruments, etc. must be considered before using the NYSSMA model as part of a high stakes testing measure.

Who should I contact if I need advice NOW? Collaboration and discussion with colleagues from neighboring districts is always valuable. You may also call the NYSSMA office for more information. While NYSSMA continues to learn of new developments every day like the rest of us, its officers and staff can recommend someone in our field who can advise you on immediate concerns or challenges.

Final thoughts and advice on APPR New developments will continue to emerge and will be shared with the NYSSMA and NYSCAME membership. Stay informed and try to use your influence to steer your district in the best direction for your local program. APPR development will surely be an extended process over the next few years. Remaining calm, patient and educated will be the key toward succeeding in these challenging times.

