



# Hillsborough

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## Classroom Teachers Association

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### EET Representative Council Forum December 8, 2011

Location: CTA River Apartments

Panel:

- MaryEllen Elia, Superintendent
- David Steele, Director of EET Project
- Carol Kurdell, School Board Member
- Stephanie Woodford, Director of EET/Peers & Principals
- Jean Clements, President HCTA

Moderator:

- Stephanie Baxter-Jenkins, Executive Director of HCTA

Note:

This is a “content” transcript. It focuses on capturing the key content of the Q&A session and not on verbatim transcription of the entire session.

### Content Transcript

CLEMENTS:

[Ms. Clements welcomed the representatives and guests and recognized the superior results on the recent NAEP Report Card.]

ELIA: The recognition of the high scores of the TUDA study is for the teachers.

[Ms. Elia recognized the work of, and expressed appreciation to, teachers and staff, mentioned that Hillsborough is one of the highest ranked in the nation and introduced the panel members.]

BAXTER-JENKINS:

[Ms. Baxter-Jenkins described the procedures for the meeting and explained that questions were submitted prior to the meeting and were taken directly from what

teachers at school sites submitted to CTA Reps. They were categorized into “like” categories and would be submitted to the panel during the forum. Ms. Baxter-Jenkins submitted questions to the panel and handled questions from the CTA Reps in the audience.]

CLEMENTS: The questions are legitimate, justifiable concerns with so much new coming at us so fast!

BAXTER-JENKINS: The first question is regarding the Post-Conference Process. Teachers are surprised by lower scores on written results as they frequently differ from the actual conversation in the post-observation conference and that there is not a real way to respond when it is negative.

STEELE: Mentors are told to leave the conferences with an open mind. Teachers should share things with mentors, so they know everything they should know before they leave. Post-conference should have an instructional focus. During the post conference, the observer may realize or become aware of things not observable. Not having the ratings available can leave it open to have the option to adjust the rating. The main reason for this is to focus on next steps and key points of the lesson. The written evaluation shouldn't be a surprise if the post conference goes well. There should not be any surprises. We realize that this is what upsets teachers and we are training on this point.

WOODFORD: The number of times the evaluations are a surprise is a concern of mine. The importance of planning becomes more evident during the post conference. More often than not the rating becomes higher. The model only goes over the three areas of strength and three areas of focus. There may be other areas of focus that are not gone over in the post conference. This is being discussed and that may be changed, but if the model is changed the conferences would need to change.

ELIA: The work with peers may be to talk about more sensitivity, so there are not as many surprises. Teachers can contact Stephanie [Woodford] about disagreements or concerns. Call her or email her if your final evaluation is a big deal.

WOODFORD:

[Acknowledged that she is hearing about sensitivity issues and explained that conferencing is a learned skill. She stated that their (peers) last training was on conferencing skills and that she does not want teachers to feel surprised.]

CLEMENTS: We are insisting that this gets worked on. We are losing a value if a way to have more information is not provided. There must be a way to have more explicit feedback on everything. There has got to be a way. It should not just be about the rating. It should be about learning. It should not get stuck on talking about three areas of focus and strength.

ELIA: Teachers really want more time for the post-conference. If we are not seeing that this is getting better this year, then we need to look at it again. There has to be a balance on getting feedback on areas where you really need it, and the time. This is to inform, it's not to sort; it's to be support. We increased the number of peers, but it will not be unlimited. This is a process that is not finished. All the comments will be taken into account.

BAXTER-JENKINS: Since we are on topic of feedback, here's another concern. Almost every group of questions from every site had scheduling issues: observations so close in time, administrator then peer, that there is no time for meaningful reflections. There is a huge lag time from observations to final evaluations; no score from peer for up to a month. Also, observations are being scheduled the first day back from winter break or other long breaks or observations on the last day before the long break.

ELIA: The scheduling issues have been discussed before and have been discussed with the Teacher Advisory Group and Project group. If we take those specific days out it is very difficult to get one hundred and thirty-five days of observations out of the days we can use.

STEELE: We have to find one hundred and thirty-five days to have evaluations, but with days taken out it's hard.

WOODFORD: Teachers also wanted peer matched to content or grade level. We have one hundred and thirty-five peers and over 13,000 teachers, so each peer is going to over 35 schools. The matching was done this year, so peers are going to many different schools in order to accommodate the match in subject area. So scheduling became more of an issue. Teacher feedback was that matching content was more important than scheduling. The principals are alerted as to when peers are in the building and principals are asked to schedule around that. By matching content, the peers are spread out over more schools.

ELIA: So, the issue is that the peers are more flexible in moving around, but now we need to ask the principals to work around the peer schedule. Those days before and after holidays shouldn't be used.

WOODFORD: I'm surprised to hear about the uploading problem. This year the goal is to have reports uploaded in five days. In the written protocol it is ten days, but they, realistically, try to have the reports done by five days. I did not realize it was an issue.

CLEMENTS: The problem may be more with principals/administrators not uploading in a timely manner. A recent report showed that nineteen principals had not done any observations or had not uploaded the data. They have been contacted and alerted that the lag time was not acceptable. The issue is time management. We are working to get this corrected. We [HCTA] are checking and are following up.

BAXTER-JENKINS: The next group of questions is related to the rubric and inconsistencies in scoring. Teachers are told that it is not possible to meet all areas of the rubric in one class period. Instead of marking something N/A, the teachers are being marked down and listed as "not observed". Teachers want some score between "developing" and "accomplished" before scores go public.

WOODFORD: If a peer observes a lesson and the lesson did not lend itself to certain elements being observed, then that element should be marked "not observed". Anything that should be in a lesson is rated. If something is not expected to be observed, how does it impact score? A "not observed" should not negatively impact a score. Only informal observations have the "didn't observe" option. The purpose of the informal is to allow the observer to see those things not seen on prior visits. It is a way to collect more data.

BAXTER-JENKINS: Regarding inconsistencies in scoring: for example, members of the same team or department have similar lessons or similar pieces, but people in the department have widely varying scores for doing the same thing.

WOODFORD: That is hard to answer because we did not see the lesson. The delivery may be very different for the same lesson. Also, the student needs may be vastly different. Maybe what was taught did not match the needs of the students in one class and in another class they did. This is a challenge because the lesson was not seen.

STEELE: When I taught, I taught the same topic, but I did not teach it the same way to different groups of students. The dynamics of the class will vary and it is not realistic to expect same ratings.

BAXTER-JENKINS: Here is one our most often asked questions: concern about the terminology “developing”. The term “developing” makes it feel like you are not meeting expectations. People have a specific concern when grades and rating become more public. How would parents understand it?

STEELE: You need to understand that the committee consisted of about twenty-five people who developed the rubric, who tweaked the Danielson rubric to become the Hillsborough rubric. Danielson uses Basic in her rubric, some districts use numbers, 1,2,3,4 or 4,3,2,1. This is not a finished product and we can go back and change this. This is not a finished product. The term “developing” is still being reviewed and considered.

ELIA: The things that bug you are the things you need to submit to GreatTeachers or to Dr. Steele or Stephanie Woodford. This is a change process and the process is constantly being revised. Look within. Try to think about why “developing” bothers you. Or suggest another way or other words. Satisfactory is not the same thing. Send in your suggestions. Talk at your schools and send suggestions.

WOODFORD: The committee felt we needed to give it another year – not that we just thought it was the correct word. The rubric has to match all teachers. It should show strengths of teachers.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: On the issue of consistency, the question was not answered. Can you explain the “holistic approach” and how you come to final scores with everything in “the bucket”?

WOODFORD: We do not average everything that is in the bucket. Where does the evidence lead me? Looking at the time of school year, what is in bucket? If the scores were averaged to get the evaluation rating, all the evidence that is not a number would be ignored. Do you want it easy to understand, which would be simple? Or a more holistic rating which is a more powerful score? You can have a “developing day” even if you’re better than that, which is why we take a holistic approach, rather than averaging.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It’s extremely subjective. The journal...is it important to reflect in it?

WOODFORD: Yes, use your journal (bucket) and make it public, so that they can see it. Peers are expected to read the journal. Many teachers will put in additional information, some voice concern, some reflect. I’ve heard from many people that they thought journal was ignored.

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ELIA: The journal is read at the end and it is taken into account.

CLEMENTS: If you want something read right away, copy and email it to the peer. Peers can respond to emails.

BAXTER-JENKINS: Some updates to LTM need to be made so that notifications can go to everyone concerned.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How much evidence is sufficient and what types of evidence are you looking for? We, as teachers, deserve to have clarification. With the holistic scoring, even though the teacher provides volumes of evidence, there's no clarity.

STEELE: Because of the holistic scoring system, there is no simple way to answer. Two art critics will not see the same thing about a work of art. Two judges on a piece of art do not have the same judgments. Look at the context of the bigger picture. Make as much evidence available as possible. These scores are a range. Washington, D.C. takes five scores a year and then averages, but averaging takes away the ability to grow during the year and takes away the elements the teacher can add to the bucket. There is no way to say how one individual will interpret. Peers and mentors spend a lot of PLC time going over the evaluation and bucket and putting all of this together. They have an established practice.

ELIA: This is obviously something you would like to have more fully explained. Perhaps Stephanie [Woodford] can have a few peers come look at an actual bucket and you can listen to the conversation as to how the results come about. We can arrange a class for you to watch and see what it "looks and feels like", so we can talk the same language.

WOODFORD: Peers are a tough group. They really advocate for teachers. When we worked on learning how to view the buckets, it was amazing when various people read a bucket they came up with same ratings.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Peers and mentors are doing a fine job, but there are major concerns with communication. It concerns me when Dr. Steele refers to art critics and judges not judging the same. What validity is there in the process if two peers will not judge the same?

WOODFORD: David [Steele] left out one part. When we look at different scores, we have criteria to follow. The rubric keeps us directed toward consistency.

STEELE: There is a difference between consistency and lockstep. How do you make a decision with a tough case? There is a reason we use two different raters [principal and peer]. Seventy-four percent of the time the principal and peer gave the same rating.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Why is the district taking the position of not being able to videotape?

WOODFORD: It would be taking away the rights of peers and mentors if they are videotaped without permission. Peers and mentors have rights to do their jobs. They are in many different places and due to the logistics of tracking and logging, it was decided that peers have rights in the classrooms where they observe.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Administrators are stating to teachers that they will be marked “developing” if they are using five or more days of their personal/sick time.

BAXTER-JENKINS: It is not a policy.

ELIA: They should not be. That is not a district policy.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: On the rubric the terminology is “virtually all students participating”. Is that 100% of students and 100% of the time? Peers are saying that is 100% of students 100% of time. Virtually does not mean 100%. Why make such a distinction?

WOODFORD: We need more information and specifics. Virtually does not mean 100% of students 100% of time.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You tell us they are “highly trained peers”. How can someone be highly trained if they were just hired in June?

WOODFORD: They go through extensive training. Example: the peers who were hired in June went through the Cambridge training this summer then were assigned to an experienced peer for two to three weeks to practice pre-post conferences, observing and rating.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Foreign language teachers have been asking for foreign language trained peers, but haven't received any feedback. What's going on with that?

WOODFORD: We are working on that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I helped a group of peers this year, with several learning to become a peer. I was told I would not get any feedback.

WOODFORD: That's a great point. You volunteered to help and if you want feedback that will be discussed.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have a concern with peer evaluators discussing cases with principals. Is it appropriate for a peer to speak to administrators about their work with specific teachers?

WOODFORD: The protocol is that they should not until the full cycle is complete. If a peer has a serious concern, s/he can go to principal. There should not be conversations until the cycle is complete. If you have specific concerns, please call Stephanie Woodford.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Regarding the peer portion and results of testing: what happens if the peer rates low and the principal rates high? How do you know which is valid and which is not?

STEELE: That is why we use multiple measures. Each gives a different point of view. We do check if they are far apart. There was a good correlation this past year. In the case of one score very high and one very low, it does mean that one must be wrong. The scores measure different things. The principal measures domains 1-4 and peer domains 1-3 and value add measures student results. They are three different measures; three pieces of evaluative data.

ELIA: Please make sure we know that specific example, so we can look closer at it. Are you saying value-add is one way and the other two were much lower?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes.

ELIA: We need to have that information and let us look at it. Let us see where that falls in David's [Steele] graphs. You are finding examples where you don't think it works right. We need to look at that to see if there is validity in each example. We need



to look at the examples. We are working through this. Everybody needs to check the specifics and check against the design of the system.

BAXTER-JENKINS: We have had files opened and examined, but we need specifics.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If something is marked as "did not observe on formal observation"...I have not seen that on a formal observation. I have seen it on informal, so where is that marked?

STEELE: That can be marked on formals. 3E was where it was marked the most last year.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Where is it marked?

WOODFORD: There is a box.

BAXTER-JENKINS: Is this new this year?

WOODFORD: No.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When teachers ask the peer how to improve, the peer does not have any advice.

WOODFORD: No, peers will not be giving advice on how to do this differently. Peers should not be telling how you would do it differently. Peers are taught not to tell the teacher what will work and what will not work.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Teachers feel that they do not know which direction to go.

ELIA: Teachers are talking more with the colleagues at their school about lessons. I've also heard teachers say, "The peer told me what to do", and teachers didn't like that. How people receive feedback is different. If this is really a problem, we need to know about it. We need suggestions about exemplars to help people. It could be a list of options.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Follow-up to the post observation question: scores not available. Would it be possible to have a preliminary score so the teacher could know

what should be talked about? If the teacher knew the peer thought an area needs focus that the teacher did not identify, the discussion could take place.

WOODFORD: We tried that in trial scenarios last year and the collaboration was lost. We only got through two or three ratings because it turned into arguments about ratings instead of discussing how the lesson went. It became each defending his or her own ideas. It is supposed to be about discussion and collaboration. I worry that I won't have peers if it just becomes about ratings.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Regarding Domain 4: we've been told from middle school principals that if we ask for comp time for going above and beyond – chaperoning a dance, other school events - that we cannot use that event for Domain 4.

ELIA: That must be happening at just your school because it isn't happening elsewhere.

CLEMENTS: That should not be. If you have a specific situation, let us know. We'll get that fixed.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: No, it is happening in many of the middle schools.

ELIA: Please email us if it is happening in any of your schools.

WOODFORD: This will be discussed at administrators meeting.

BAXTER-JENKINS: We have to wrap it up because it's time for the CTA Rep Council meeting to begin. We got through approximately half of the questions, so we will be having another meeting in January to continue this discussion.

ELIA: You will have a break in a few days. Have a great holiday.