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Williamsville Schools

# Superintendent describes difficulty in implementing teacher evaluations

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Implementing the state Regents reform agenda that will govern the way teachers and principals are evaluated is a daunting process because of the labyrinth of rules and ever-changing regulations, Williamsville School Board members were told Tuesday.

The board heard a 45-minute presentation on the district's implementation of its new annual professional performance review. The new requirements are based on regulations imposed by the state Education Department to evaluate teacher and principal performance beginning in September.

"This is one of the largest unfunded mandates to come from New York State in quite some time," Superintendent Scott G. Martzloff said.

While the district has been working on the implementation since 2010, Martzloff said the process has not been without its challenges.

“From the beginning of this initiative, the state Education Department has kept the target moving,” he said, alluding to the constantly changing regulations. “It would be better if there was greater clarity involved. Everything is being left up to the local school districts to negotiate with their unions and to implement.”

Still, Marie Balen, the district’s assistant superintendent for instruction, said the process has remained a collaborative one. She described how the evaluation process aims to advance student learning and achievement through school-based inquiry teams and data-driven instruction.

Kim Kirsch, assistant superintendent for human resources, told the board that the rubric, or tools, required to achieve and evaluate those goals will result in the district picking up additional expenses.

“We were promised, originally, by the state Education Department that there would be no cost for the rubric . . . but the reality is it didn’t end that way, and so many of the rubrics, when you buy them from the companies, cost you money,” Kirsch said.

One, in particular, would cost \$500 per building per year, she said. “I worry about my colleagues who are from small districts who don’t have money to run programs, who are doing personnel cuts in a major way, and they have to do this. They have to pay for it,” she said.

Martzloff said teachers in different disciplines will be responsible for meeting a variety of learning objectives as part of the new evaluation process. “You’re talking about hundreds of student-learning objectives,” he said. “Some teachers will have multiple student-learning objectives.”

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