

Poway Professional Assistance Program

A Beginning Teacher Support & Assessment Project

YEAR 1



POWAY
& **FEDERATION**
of
TEACHERS

PPAP
Teachers Helping Teachers...PUSD Style

Q&A

What is the Poway Professional Assistance Program (PPAP) Year 1?

This program provides teachers new to the Poway Unified School District a support system of an experienced classroom teacher to assist in their first year of teaching with the District. The experienced teacher, called a teacher consultant, has a maximum caseload of 15 year one teachers. The teacher consultant provides each new teacher with thorough and frequent classroom observations, reflective feedback, curriculum support, model lessons, coaching, supervision, and assumes the responsibility of their first year evaluations.

What are the qualifications to be a teacher consultant?

The teacher consultant must be a tenured teacher with a minimum of five years of experience. Interested teachers apply for the position and are selected after a screening and interview process that carefully looks for professional competence and relationship skills. Though still a member of the teachers' bargaining unit, the consultant is released from the classroom to work in the program on a full time basis. Training is provided at the beginning of the consultant's term and staff development is ongoing. The consultant truly represents our finest educators. The consultant returns to a classroom teaching assignment after a three-year term in the program.

Is the program really one of peer review?

Yes. The program was conceived with the premise that experienced teachers have a legitimate role in the screening and the training of new entrants into the profession. With a probationary period of two years, it has become critical that proper training and supervision occur from early in the first probationary year. Assuming that supervisory responsibility, the consultant must spend a minimum of 20 hours per evaluation period (twice a year) with each new teacher. His/Her evaluative findings are submitted to the Governance Board which accepts or rejects those findings and forwards its recommendations to the Superintendent and the School Board. The strength of the peer review system is the time spent in the new teacher's classroom and the ongoing supervision of the consultant's work by the Governance Board.

How is the program governed?

The program is jointly governed by the Poway Federation of Teachers and the Poway Unified School District under the umbrella of an Educational Policy Trust Agreement. The Governance Board is composed of three union and two management representatives, with four votes being deemed a majority. This Board governs the program and meets periodically throughout the year. The program's day-to-day functions are managed by the program director.

What are the results of the program?

Since 1987 only a small percentage of new teachers served by the Year 1 Program were not recommended to continue service for the second probationary year. It is not unusual to find the consultant spending over 100 hours of classroom observation, assistance and support time with those teachers experiencing difficulty. But even more dramatic are the principals' positive observations of program graduates in their second, third and fourth years of teaching. The program has established a cadre of teachers who demonstrate the talent and poise of more experienced veterans.

*A support system
where a new
teacher receives
training from an
experienced
teacher.*

Will the program expand?

All regular and special education teachers whose credentials state they need to participate in an induction program participate in PPAP. A goal is to expand the program to include all teachers regardless of prior experience.

The Year 1 Program

PPAP Teachers Helping Teachers...PUSD Style

IN BRIEF

Teacher Consultant

- ◆ Released full time to work with first and second year teachers.
- ◆ Teaching experts skilled at developing teacher growth and reflection.
- ◆ Member of bargaining unit.
- ◆ Returns to the classroom after three years.

Program Highlights

- ◆ Minimum of once-a-week contact with new teachers.
- ◆ Individual staff development in the new teacher's classroom.
- ◆ Materials assistance, curriculum help, lesson planning. . .“Whatever it takes.”
- ◆ Collegial meeting attendance based on the California New Teacher Induction Standards and the new teachers' needs.

Peer Evaluation

- ◆ Three formal written observations per evaluation period (twice a year).
- ◆ Minimum of 20 hours of contact time for same evaluation period.
- ◆ Consultant must keep triad of principal-consultant-teacher viable.
- ◆ Consultant reports findings to Governance Review Board every six weeks.

Peer Board of Review

- ◆ Governed by a five member panel of three Union representatives, appointed by the Poway Federation of Teachers, and two District employees, appointed by the Superintendent.
- ◆ Four votes a majority.
- ◆ Reviews the progress of each new teacher.
- ◆ Oversees the work of each consultant's work.
- ◆ Makes recommendations to renew or not renew contracts to the Superintendent.

Results of Year 1 Program since 1987

- ◆ Over 60 percent of the total teaching staff has gone through program.
- ◆ Small percentage of teachers not renewed for a second year.
- ◆ Unanimous support of all parties.
- ◆ Principals report seeing dramatic differences in second year probationary teachers that have been through the program.

“In the Poway Unified School District in the past 12 years, teachers new to the profession have had the benefit of teacher consultants. The teacher consultants have the time and energy to focus on observing, assisting, and evaluating new teachers. The quality of their evaluation is consistently top quality. Based on my experience since the inception of the program, I have seen teachers in their second year look like they have been teaching for seven or eight years. This is because the consultants are able to provide the time necessary to help the teachers refine their teaching skills. Their classroom routines are organized right from the start, instructions are clear and concise, and transitions from subject to subject are smooth.”

Susan Van Zant, Meadowbrook Middle School Principal, 1999

What do typical visits and activities look like as a teacher consultant works with a new teacher?

Meet Jane Jones. She has no previous teaching experience except for her student teaching and two long-term substitute assignments before she began her position as a sixth grade teacher at Twin Peaks Middle School in the Poway Unified School District. Jane works with a team of three teachers, while having the responsibility of instructing her own students for all subjects except physical education.

The following narrative is a brief glimpse of the informal and formal support a teacher consultant gives to a new teacher in the Poway Unified School District. This support helps the new teacher identify what is going well, reflect on practice, and create possible steps that need to be taken in order to continue professional growth.

Monday, September 14
10:05-10:25 a.m., mathematics class,
Informal Observation

The first informal classroom observation with Jane was in her math class, the subject about which she indicated feeling most confident. Initial contacts with Jane, as well as all other teachers in PPAP Year 1, remain short, trying to maintain a positive reflection. When I entered, the whole group of 28 students was involved in a review of math vocabulary words as a preparation for the next unit. At each student's desk were manipulatives, vocabulary cards and textbooks. Posted at the front of the classroom was a chart of math vocabulary words. Students were seated at desks that were clustered in groups of four. During the review of the vocabulary words, students were spontaneously responding to questions. As more participated, the oral responses became more disruptive and Jane signaled for students' attention. When the behavior did not improve, she began giving individual warnings for inappropriate behavior. Jane appeared flustered and the students appeared confused. Students continued to call out answers at will.

The following notes from the informal observation give an idea of what was written in Jane's *Interactive Journal*. Questions are used to offer teachers an opportunity to reflect in their journals.

The overall **strengths** noted in this observation included comments on Jane's:

- Integrated vocabulary
- Visual presentation
- Collaborative groups
- Preparation of materials
- Use of manipulatives
- Implementation of an attention signal
- Warnings for inappropriate behavior

Suggestions for improvement were phrased as reflection questions. Possible questions focused on:

- Developing a behavior management plan that included appropriate expectations for participating in a whole group discussion
- Implementing a behavior management plan
- Creating a consistent way for gaining students' attention
- Recognizing students who are acting appropriately

Tuesday, October 13
1:20-1:50 p.m., literature class
Informal Observation

As students entered the classroom following their lunch break, Jane stood at the door greeting students, explaining what they needed to do. Jane directed students' attention to information on the overhead. Jane also reminded students about the group points that were being tallied on the board. Students quickly sat down and began the task outlined on the overhead. When the bell rang, Jane recorded group points in tally boxes on the front board and circulated checking students' progress. When one student appeared off task, he was given a verbal warning.

Jane announced, "Give Me Five." Students stopped what they were doing, put their pencils down and looked at her. Students were complimented and then

Case Study — Jane Jones, new teacher continued

Jane set expectations for the literature homework discussion. She reviewed hand signals for choral or individual responses. During the discussion, most responded appropriately and Jane offered positive comments to students. When a few students called out responses, she initially ignored their behavior. One student continued calling out. Jane moved next to him and bent over to issue a warning.

The overall **strengths** of the informal observation were noted in Jane's *Interactive Journal* and included comments on:

- Setting expectations at the onset of the period.
- Creating on-task behavior.
- Preparing materials prior to instruction (overhead).
- Rewarding students for appropriate behavior (group points).
- Circulating during student work periods
- Setting and reviewing expectations for transition time.
- Complimenting students.
- Providing consistency and follow through with expectations.

Suggestions for improvement were written as reflection questions and focused on identifying alternative ways for checking literature homework.

Wednesday, October 28

1:20-2:10 p.m., literature class

Formal Observation

As students entered the classroom following their lunch break, Jane greeted students at the door and she reminded them to have their literature homework and textbooks out on their desks. On the overhead was an activity that asked students to reread their homework from the previous night and underline several ideas they felt were the best. The overhead also instructed students to be prepared to share what they had underlined with their group members. When the bell rang, all students were seated and appeared to be following directions. Jane spoke to a group of students about the key ideas they might consider and it appeared other students listened to her directions as well. She took roll and then circulated checking for homework and on-task behavior. The information regarding homework was recorded on a clipboard.

After 15 minutes into this activity, the talking throughout the room increased but Jane continued to direct her attention to individuals. Jane called for stu-

dents' attention and when everyone was quiet, she told them to share with their group members what they had underlined in their homework. Students were told they had five minutes to do this, and that they would appoint a spokesperson from their group to summarize the insights. When Jane gave the signal to begin, groups appeared to follow directions.

When time for group sharing was up, Jane signaled for students attention with a bell. Jane quickly reviewed expectations for group sharing and then a spokesperson from each group shared quickly as Jane recorded key words from their summaries on the overhead.

Students were next directed to open their literature books to orally read. Jane intermittently stopped to discuss what was read and it appeared the same four to five students volunteered to share their thoughts. The reading was still in progress when the bell rang and as students packed up to leave, Jane told them to read the rest of the chapter for homework.

The overall **strengths** noted in this formal observation included comments on everything that had been mentioned in the informal observations.

Suggestions for improvement were written in question format, allowing Jane the opportunity to reflect on the lesson before the observation conference. The questions focused on how to get students "into" and "through" a piece of literature. Examples of questions included:

- How might you have created interest and purpose for the reading?
- What key concepts and/or vocabulary words were important for students to know and understand?
- What do you think would have happened to the discussions if students had this prior knowledge and stimulus?
- How might you create interest for extended reading?
- What is another way you can give all kids access to the literature beside the whole group reading format?