**FAQ’s About the Initial Planning Conference**

*Excerpted from the Advance FAQ Full List. Missing number or lettered items are available on the full list, but are not directly related to the Initial Planning Conference.*

**1) Initial Planning Conference**

**a. What is the window during which Initial Planning Conferences can be held?**

Initial Planning Conferences may be held between the first day teachers report (September 3rd in 2013-2014) and the last Friday in October (October, 25th in 2013-2014). For teachers who start at a school after the first day of school, the initial planning conference does not need to be held by the last Friday in October.

**b. What are the expectations for the Initial Planning Conference?**

The Initial Planning Conference is a mandatory meeting between the teacher and evaluator that occurs prior to any formal or informal classroom observations. There is no minimum length of time for an Initial Planning Conference (i.e., it does not need to be a full class period), but the conference should be long enough to cover all of the goals of the conference. Assistant Principals and other secondary evaluators may conduct the Initial Planning Conference. At this meeting, teachers are required to select an observation option and indicate whether observations can occur via video. Teachers record their choices by completing and signing the Teacher Evaluation Selection Form. Teachers may also submit up to two artifacts to the evaluator.

For teachers who select observation option #1, the Initial Planning Conference may serve as a teacher’s Pre-Observation Conference if the teacher chooses and if the Initial Planning Conference occurs between 1 and 20 days prior to the formal observation.

While it is not required, the State recommends that teachers utilize the Initial Planning Conference to prepare for the school year by a) self-assessing their professional practice on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and b) setting 2-4 formative professional goals. Teachers’ self-assessment and their students’ learning objectives should inform these professional goals. The purpose of professional goal-setting is to guide teachers’ instructional decisions and pedagogical approaches in order to maximize academic achievement for all students.

**c. Does the Initial Planning Conference have to be 1:1?**

Yes. Principals/Evaluators must hold conferences individually with each teacher.

**3) Observations**

**a. What are the differences between the two observation options?**

Advance fully replaces the evaluation process in place prior to the start of 2013-2014. Teachers may not choose from the observation options that existed under the previous evaluation process. Advance requires that, at the Initial Planning Conference, teachers choose from two distinct observation options. The two observation options differ in the number and type of classroom observations that the teacher receives over the course of the year.

For Option #1, teachers receive a minimum of four observations over the course of the year. These observations must include a minimum of one (1) formal, announced, full-period observation, and three (3) informal, unannounced, observations, at least 15 minutes in duration. There is no maximum number of observations a teacher may receive.

For Option #2, teachers receive at least six (6) informal, unannounced, observations that each last at least 15 minutes in duration. There is no maximum number of informal observations a teacher may receive.

**b. What are the protocols for formal and informal observations?**

*Formal Observation Protocol*

Formal observations are announced, full-period observations. The evaluator and teacher must meet, in-person, for pre-and post-observation conferences. Teachers have an opportunity to submit to the evaluator up to two artifacts for review at each conference. Evaluators must include a written post-observation report in the teachers’ file within 90 school days of the observation, excluding any days that the teacher is absent. This formal process yields a rating for all 22 Danielson components.

*Informal Observation Protocol*

Informal observations are at least 15 minutes in duration and need not be announced. There is no maximum time for an informal observation. Informal observations do not require pre- and post-observation conferences. After each informal observation, evaluators must provide feedback to teachers via email, verbally, in writing, or by using any other form of communication. Evaluators must include the post-observation report in the teacher’s file within 90 school days of the informal observation, excluding any days that the teacher is absent.

**c. What is the process for documenting observations?**

Evaluators are required to document component-specific ratings for all observed components after each observation. This summer, at school team trainings, more information will be provided about the methods for documenting observations.

**d. For observation option #1, must the pre-observation conference for a formal observation be lesson-specific?**

Yes. The purpose of the pre-observation conference is to review the objectives, activities, and expectations for the lesson that will occur during the teacher’s formal observation. The pre-observation conference is an opportunity for teachers to submit to the evaluator up to two teacher artifacts that align with Danielson rubric components in Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation) and Domain 4 (Professional Responsibilities). While it is not required, teachers may also submit to the evaluator a completed pre-observation conference form designed to give the evaluator additional context for the lesson he/she will observe. Finally, the evaluator and the teacher should discuss any outstanding questions or concerns and should agree on the date and time the formal observation will occur.

**e. How is the formal observation scored if your principal performs more than one formal observation?**

Under Option #1, if the evaluator chooses to complete more than one formal observation, then the scores of the formal observations are averaged together.

**f. Does the tenure status of a teacher matter when choosing between observation options #1 and #2?**

No, any teacher can select either observation option 1 or observation option 2, regardless of tenure status.

**g. Can a principal unilaterally change a teacher’s observation option choice?**

No, a principal cannot change the teacher’s observation choice. However, if a teacher declines to choose an observation option at the Initial Planning Conference, then the principal will select the teacher’s observation option for him/her.

**h. Can a teacher change his or her observation option selection mid-year?**

While teachers cannot unilaterally change their observation option after the Initial Planning Conference, if a teacher requests a change in his/her observation option, principals have discretion to grant that request.

**k. How are the annual ratings on the Danielson domains calculated?**

Components within a domain will be averaged to create a domain-level rating. Domains 1 (Planning and Preparation) and 4 (Professional Responsibilities) are weighted at 25% and Domains 2 (Classroom Environment) and 3 (Instruction) are weighted at 75%.