

Amy Congdon
2nd grade classroom teacher
Trumbull

Before the Education Committee
On S.B. No. 24, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS
Section 30 - *Teacher Evaluation*

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Amy Congdon, and I'm a second grade teacher in Trumbull. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Section 30.

I am very fortunate to have an administrator who supports me. She hired me three days before school began in 2003 when I was a newly certified teacher looking for an opening (I cried for 10 minutes in her office out of sheer joy for the opportunity!) We share many of the same views on teaching practices and education in general. I feel very blessed to work for someone who I know will support me in the classroom and encourage me to become the best teacher I can be. She has gone out of her way to send me and other colleagues to professional development that was outside of our district-provided workshops. Those experiences have been invaluable to me. Even though I graduated only 9 years ago, so much has changed in education and has been recently proven through research. I am constantly hearing about new programs and practices that will help students learn more effectively. I want to make sure I know enough about these new discoveries so that they benefit *my* students ... *our* students in Connecticut. I don't want to just "show up" or be a "warm body" in my classroom. I teach because I want kids to love learning and to help them become capable, caring members of our society.

All that being said, I cannot control the outcome of my students' learning. I can present the information and give them every research-proven method of applying the skills that the great educational minds have come up with, but if there's no parent support at home, they won't succeed. If they didn't get enough sleep the night before the CMTs, they won't do their best. If they choose to not reread questions or check their work, the results won't reflect their abilities. If they just don't care about taking a test that day, they will fail. How can I possibly be held responsible for uncontrollable life-circumstances or a student's unfortunate attitude?

I urge you to reconsider any evaluation program that rates a teacher's effectiveness based on the students' standardized test scores. Again, I have been blessed with an administrator who respects and supports me, but I have witnessed colleagues in my town who have been unfairly targeted by administrators due to age or personality conflicts. Therefore, I also urge you to not depend solely on an administrator's evaluation either. I hope teachers and school districts can work together to develop a fair evaluation process based on experience, willingness to learn more about this demanding profession through advanced degrees, student achievement beyond a standardized test and an appropriate amount of administrative input.

Thank you for your time!