

Testimony regarding the Teacher Evaluation Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

I am providing my testimony regarding the Teacher Evaluation Plan. Having served on my district's TEP team from the beginning, I have witnessed the problems and stressors associated with its creation and implementation.

My first concern falls within the structure of the plan. Currently, 45% of a teacher's evaluation is based on the students' results on a state test along with another "standardized" test. Forty-five percent? First of all, best practice tells educators that almost half of their students' overall performance and academic worth is much more than sets of test data.

In the past, teachers were pushed to "prepare" students for CMTs; in the process, education became a series of exercises to "teach to the test". Although CMTs did not accurately reflect the products of good teaching, teachers and districts were still judged by the outcomes. Now we have another set of state-endorsed tests, unproven and a different version of the same thing. Now the tests are electronic (major disruption in technology classes at the high school level), untimed, and spread over weeks, grossly interrupting valuable instructional time. Teachers are still being asked to "prepare" students for these tests, presumably through the Common Core. It seems like a re-purposed effort to quantify education. While accountability is valuable and necessary, weighting test scores for 45% of a teacher's worth is unfair, unreasonable, and demonstrates a lack of understanding of what the teaching profession embodies. The structure of standardized testing in Connecticut has taken the joy from teaching and replaced it with stressed students who are becoming disengaged and who are tired of being "prepared" for high stakes tests

Secondly, only certain content areas are "evaluated" on the state tests, primarily Language Arts and Math. The additional stressors placed on teachers working in these areas, particularly at the secondary level where content is departmentalized, are immeasurable. Secondary teachers in other content areas are allowed to design their own departmental assessments for equal consideration to the state tests. How is this equitable?

While I am not opposed to state testing, too much emphasis is placed on the scores themselves, forcing teachers to spend valuable educational time getting students ready. Let teachers design state assessments that are fair and based on educational best practices rather than on big business.

Another concern regarding the Teacher Evaluation Plan (up until recently) was the number of formal observations. Evidence supports the fact the formal observations are not the ones that change practice; multiple informal drop-in observations give evaluators a better sense of a teacher's style and skills over time, with more opportunity for quick feedback. Informal observations require little to no paperwork, freeing administrators up to spend more time in classrooms. Informal observations will provide better opportunities for change.

It saddens me that education has become so complicated. Too many “professionals” from outside of the education field have offered up their thoughts as to what is best for teachers and students. Here is my response to them:

When my car breaks down, I take it to a technician- but that does not make me a mechanic. When I am sick, I go to a doctor- but that does not make me a physician. However, everyone has been to school...but does that make them all educators? I think not. Please leave education to the educators- **those folks who have actually worked in the classrooms with students for more than a few years!**

Respectfully submitted by a dedicated but tired educator with 30 years of experience,

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