

My name is Diane Glettenberg, and I am a math teacher at Stafford High School in Stafford Springs, CT.

I am writing today regarding HB No. 5331.

Let me start by saying that I am in favor of changes to our evaluation system. I became a teacher as a second career after 14 years in marketing.

I believe that most of the dialogue regarding teacher evaluation started as a conversation regarding changes to the tenure system, and rightly so. I cannot think of another career where it is more critical to keep your skills current and to adjust your practices to meet the needs of a changing student body, yet the old tenure system made no provisions for removing teachers who failed to do so or who simply relied on the fact that they were tenured to keep their jobs. I have always felt that the tenure system needed some adjustment.

However, what I have seen with the new evaluation system does not address the original problems that I believe the discussions on evaluation were trying to fix. What we have gone to now is a system where teachers feel vilified by our elected leaders. We alone are blamed for the underperformance of our students compared to their international counterparts. What no one seems to remember is that in each of the countries that we like to compare ourselves to, education is a privilege, not a right. Our public education system in this country educates EVERYONE, and as such, we test EVERYONE when we conduct our standardized tests.

In addition to being a teacher, I am also the parent of 3 boys. One is currently enrolled at the University of Connecticut, one is a junior in high school, and one is in 8th grade. The older two were both recognized as CAPT scholars, achieving scores of 5 in each section of the now-defunct CAPT test. Ironically, as a parent, I get no recognition of my role in this accomplishment. Their teachers will receive strong evaluations based on how my children performed on standardized tests just as they would have received poor evaluations had my sons performed badly.

With this system in place, who is going to step up to teach the lowest performing students? If my evaluation is tied to how my students perform on a standardized test that is above their ability level because the new Common Core standards have been introduced all at once, leaving students with critical gaps in their foundation skills that will make it close to impossible for them to score well on the new test, why would I not try to teach to that test? Again we come back to test scores. Most of the countries that we compare ourselves to do not subject their students to the constant barrage of standardized tests. They also do not blame their teachers for the students who do fail.

If I had trained as a machinist, and went to an excellent machinist school and knew everything about every machine, but the machine you assigned me to was assembled incorrectly at the warehouse, all of my machine training is not going to make that machine function properly. At some point, we might figure out that the machine itself was part of the problem and we would work to address the entire problem, not simply my role in the issues. Yet we hold our teachers to

unrealistic standards and penalize them if students whom they see for 6 hours a day do not master every test put in front of them.

The tenure system requires changing to discourage teachers from becoming complacent. Asking teachers to be more involved in their schools and more devoted to their professional development is an entirely realistic goal. Punishing teachers for the challenges all of our students bring to the classroom is unfair.

Diane Glettenberg