

Dear Sir,

I am a high school science teacher. Prior to teaching, I had spent 20 years as a professional engineer. I got into teaching, as I wanted to make a difference in the lives of young people. I had a very good career as an engineer, and I wanted to give back to the community. I have been teaching for 17 years.

This has certainly been my most challenging year since my first year in teaching. The documentation required for the New Teacher Evaluation Program has stifled my creativity, and stolen the time needed to fully prepare for all of my classes. Please don't get me wrong, as I am a very hard worker! My typical day starts with a 4:45 wake-up, and I am on the road to school by 6:00 AM. Staying at school until 3:30 or so would give me time to meet with students needing extra help, or volunteering for many of the student activities held at the school. Afterwards, I will typically bring home 2 to 3 hours of planning, grading, e-mailing parents and students, and doing the work required for my science team.

These days with the requirements of the new teacher evaluation process, I am also required to document the performance of 38 students, including subgroups consisting of my special education kids, in terms of 3 goals. This means developing and administering a "baseline assessment" for each of the 3 goals (these must be fully documented on-line), developing a rubric for each goal, grading each paper, documenting the results for each student via graphical methods so that the administrators can follow the progress of any student, developing (and documenting) intervention activities to enhance the performance of my students, providing an intervention assessment (grading, graphing, documenting on Bloomboard) to show how the students are doing, then developing and documenting a summative assessment for the students, administering this, and again documenting the student performance so that the administrators can see that my students are progressing. In addition to the documentation, I must keep an on-line narrative which explains what I did, why I did it, how the students performed, and the next step. Keep in mind that above is required to be done for "3 GOALS". In addition, we are required to document all parent contact (which may be a good idea).

Has this affected my teaching? Yes! All the documentation in order to meet the mandates necessary for my job security has shifted the focus from the classroom to a survival culture. As a teacher, I want to do a good job. However, I cannot sacrifice more family time in order to meet the additional meaningless paperwork requirements. Something has to give, as I can not do it all!

Ever since leaving engineering and entering this profession, I came to realize that this is the toughest job in the world. Not everyone can connect with the kids and teach, as I've learned that being an effective teacher is truly a craft, which takes time and training to develop. I had hoped to stay in this profession for 20 years before retiring, and had truly enjoyed every year up until this one. Under the new evaluation system, I doubt that I will make it another 3 years.

Sincerely,
Vince Tokarz, Granby CT