



Testimony of
Dan Blanchard
New Britain Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 871, AFL-CIO

Education Committee Hearing
March 7, 2016

SB 380 An Act Concerning the Exclusion of Student Performance Results on the Mastery Examination from Teacher Evaluations

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Dan Blanchard and I am a teacher at New Britain High School. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of SB 380 An Act Concerning the Exclusion of Student Performance Results on the Mastery Examination from Teacher Evaluations.

Decouple Student Test Results with Teacher Evaluation!

I keep hearing people say we need to hold someone accountable for student achievement. Well, tying teacher evaluations to student standardized test scores is not the answer to student achievement. We need to decouple tests results with teacher evaluations. There are just too many variables to hold one teacher as the person responsible for the test results regardless how they come out. Testing is taking away from learning time and the countries that have already shown to be really good at testing are over here studying our educational system because they know that testing is not the answer. Nor is tying it to teacher evaluations.

Test results are usually more of a product of the home environment than the school the student goes to or the teacher the student has. Schools have their students for about 6 hours a day. The other 18 hours the kid is back in the home and community. Furthermore, while the student is in school, the student also has multiple teachers over many years. It's comparing apples to oranges. One cannot say definitively that any one particular teacher should be accountable for how a particular student tested. In the old days we used to push some of that accountability onto the student. Today, that behavior has faded and we now have more reluctant learners than we have ever had before.

Teachers need to teach if students are going to learn. Some teachers have extraordinary gifts of creativity that they aren't being allowed to develop and use because our educational system has become more and more standardized in trying to take all of these tests and improve their test results. Teachers aren't going to be creative when they are worried about how the testing will affect their evaluations. This whole thing of treating schools like a business over the last decade has turned our schools upside down with all of these big business manufactured tests. Our students and schools aren't any better off for all the stress that we have caused them and teachers. Testing is not learning. And tying testing to teacher evaluations doesn't make sense.

Finally, everyone knows how good China and some of the other Asian countries are at testing. They do extremely well on tests, but yet they still come over here to study the United States'

educational system. We are trying to be more like them by becoming better testers, but they have already been there and know that it doesn't work and there is more to education than just testing. As a matter of fact, they want to be more like us so their kids too can think outside the box like Americans.

There are a lot of people who would like to see test results decoupled from teacher evaluations. And I am definitely one of them. It just doesn't make sense to continue to tie test results with teacher evaluations when one considers how many other factors are involved in those tests results, and all the learning time that has been lost, as well as the fact that great test-taking countries are interested in what we do over here when we aren't taking tests and tying it to our teachers' evaluations.