

March 12, 2014

I am Dr. Sandra Hunt, Beverly Park 6th Grade teacher,

I am speaking as a member of the Joint Evaluation Team that negotiated the new teacher evaluation system. More than probably any other individuals in the system, we analyzed the roll that test scores could and should play in our evaluations. Here are some assumptions we brought to the bargaining table:

First and foremost Teachers need to experience that the system treats them fairly. To do that measures need to be determined within our district and be based on multiple measures and be tied as closely as possible to what a teacher is teaching. For this to happen, assessments should measure student growth in ways that help both teachers and students improve their performance. Based on a evaluation process, teachers will receive the support, feedback and resources they need to strengthen their teaching. Furthermore, we attempted to design a system that encourages and values collaboration among teachers and administrators. Thus it would make sense to go to Olympia to lobby the leg to fully fund schools so students can reach new heights. We should be advocating that school districts have at least three years to fully implement our state's new evaluation system before considering additional changes. And we should staunchly oppose mandating that state tests scores be used in teacher evaluations.

WHY DO WE ACTIVELY OPPOSE THIS POLICY?

1. There is no research indicating that mandating the use of state test scores improves student learning or strengthens teaching
2. A single test given in the spring does not measure student growth
3. On top of that, only a fraction of teachers teach one of the subjects or grades currently covered by state tests
4. Mandating the use of state test scores reduces local school district flexibility to meet unique student needs
5. Washington is adopting new state assessments aligned with Common Core Standards, which will take years to implement successfully

6. The inappropriate overemphasis on high-stakes testing harms students by narrowing the curriculum, reducing classroom learning time and reducing the overall reliability of the testing system itself
7. Tests must be proven to be valid and reliable in measuring what students have learned before they are used in teacher evaluations

Discounting, ignoring and/or criticizing the legitimate concerns of professional educators is not how we should be approaching new policy initiatives.

Thank you.