

PED school, teacher evaluations flawed

BY KEN WHITON
RETIRED ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TEACHER

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Some good news about education in New Mexico: Students and teachers are performing in outstanding ways every day in classrooms across New Mexico.

Some bad news: Teachers are having to do this in spite of the additional and often punitive burdens placed on them by bureaucrats and politicians in Santa Fe and the system they have created.

More bad news: Seven years of misguided, ham-handed, politically-driven “reform” of public education have failed to produce any positive, meaningful effects for students or for teachers.

Because this current crop of politicians and bureaucrats will soon be gone, it’s time to examine the system they will leave behind.

How bad is our current system? Teachers are now subject to an increasingly heavy workload, ridiculous expectations and mountains of needless paperwork. Teachers are now held responsible for things out of their control, such as how students spend the 133 hours they are not in school every week during the school year, and the 182 days they are not in school during the entire year.

Our current evaluation scheme is driving many teachers out of the profession they love through early retirement, moving to another state with better pay and working conditions, or changing professions. Albuquerque Public Schools, as of today has 380 teacher vacancies.

One hopes our new governor, whomever that may be, will uphold campaign promises to initiate a major do-over. Teachers will welcome having seats at the table to ensure reform is done with teachers rather than to teachers.

The greatest of all the travesties the Public Education Department has committed against New Mexicans is that the inaccurate, statistically indefensible teacher, principal and school evaluation regimes PED has imposed on our public education system are now being accepted as fact.

They are not fact.

How accurate can a teacher evaluation system be when its architect has disavowed it in a technical paper coauthored with two other analysts?

That analysis includes such statements as this summary conclusion:

“We find that accuracy varies across models and cut-scores, and that models with similar accuracy may yield different teacher classifications.”

Can there be any doubt about what those three analysts have determined? I hope the Journal will start adding these facts as a disclaimer every time it prints a quote from PED which involves evaluations of teachers, principals and schools.

One bright spot: PED failed in its last-ditch attempt to enact their deeply flawed teacher and school evaluation system into law, even though it had packaged it with token raises for teachers, like a spoiled fish wrapped in old newspapers with a few dollar bills stuck around the outside.

PED is now trashing those who exposed the attempt to deceive hard-working teachers. Educators can be grateful legislators saw through PED's bait-and-switch and defeated this dangerous legislation.

If Gov. Susana Martinez, former Education Secretary Hanna Skandera and Acting Education Secretary Christopher Ruzkowski really cared about getting teachers more money, why did they tie it to their flawed evaluation scheme?

That doesn't pass the smell test.

One final example of PED's failure comes from a recent "Speak Up" entry: "I teach in a school PED wants to take over. This year had an 80 percent turnover in students. If I start school with 20 students at the end of year only two of the original 20 remain. No fault of school or teachers, just the population we serve. How can I possibly teach successfully with those odds?"

In seven years, PED has not come up with an evaluation formula that accounts for this situation. What other schools and teachers are being unfairly penalized by a demented evaluation scheme? What teacher is willing to risk her/his "exemplary" rating and remuneration to work in this school? Clearly, something is terribly wrong ...

Readers and especially PED employees, including Ruzkowski, please find ways to volunteer at your local school. You will see great work being done no matter what the deeply flawed teacher evaluations and school grades supposedly indicate.

[Link](#)