

Teacher Evaluation: New Approaches for a New Decade

Whether spurred by the hope of Race to the Top funds or the research that students in ineffective teachers' classrooms do not make the academic gains of children taught by more effective educators, a number of states have enacted legislation in the last year to amend teacher evaluation policies. This ECS Policy Brief provides highlights of these new provisions through summaries of legislation.

Zinth discusses Student Achievement Data, including:

1. Optional use of student achievement data
2. Student achievement data required- the extent not specified
3. Student achievement data required- 33-50% of evaluation
4. Student achievement data required- 50% or more of evaluation

The author also provides information regarding the standardizing of evaluation procedures; guidance to help local boards develop new evaluation systems; training for evaluators and educators; an appeals process for tenured teachers; recognizing and retaining highly effective teachers; support for all teachers to improve; and support for new and/or low-performing teachers and consequences for lack of improvement.

While one recent study found that “principals do consider teacher productivity in determining which teachers to dismiss” and “elementary teachers who were dismissed had significantly lower value-added with regard to student achievement in prior years compared with their peers who were not dismissed”, the same study reported that principals were reluctant to fire teachers, even when the system studied made it easy to do so. “The apparent reluctance of many ... principals to utilize the additional flexibility granted under the new contract may indicate that issues such as teacher supply and/or social norms governing employment relations are more important factors than policymakers have realized.”

Many of the newly-enacted measures also amend principal evaluation practices, often giving principals greater leeway for selecting the teaching staff in their buildings, while including student achievement as a measure in principal evaluations and continued employment. These new policies may encourage principals to use the teacher dismissal measures that, for whatever reason, they were reluctant to apply in the past.

Education Commission of the States. (2010, June). *Teacher evaluation: New approaches for a new decade* (Issue Brief). Denver, CO: Jennifer Dounay Zinth.