

New Report: Teacher Evaluation Systems Still Not Removing Bad Teachers

It's been said time and again that having a good teacher is the primary determiner of whether or not a child will succeed in school. Parents and school boards in the era of the one-room schoolhouse likely recognized this, and were quick to remove poor teachers from their midst.

But in modern times—due in part to union protections and increased bureaucracy—poor teachers seem to have a habit of hanging around in perpetuity. To combat this, efforts to evaluate, identify, and remove bad teachers have picked up in various state policies in recent years.

But according to [a piece](#) by Frederick Hess in *Education Next*, research is demonstrating that these efforts are in vain. Hess writes:

“In a new paper, Matt Kraft and Allison Gilmour [look at teacher evaluation results](#) in 19 states that have adopted new evaluation systems since 2009. These new systems were occasioned because reformers and policymakers were horrified by the fact that more than 99% of teachers were routinely deemed effective, even in struggling systems. The push for new teacher evaluation systems was central to Obama administration efforts, along with the Race to the Top and then ESEA waivers. As U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan [put it](#) in 2013, ‘For too long, in too many places, schools systems have hurt students by treating every teacher the same—failing to identify those who need support and those whose work deserves particular recognition.’

*Unfortunately, all that time, money, and passion haven't delivered much. Kraft and Gilmour note that, **after all is***

said and done, the share of teachers identified as effective in those 19 states inched down from more than 99% to a little over 97% in 2015. (This was the case even though teachers themselves, when [surveyed by Education Next](#), suggest that about five percent of their district peers deserve an 'F'—and another eight percent deserve a 'D.')

As Hess goes on to explain, the new evaluation systems demand more paperwork and bureaucratic overhead. This encourages administrators to “go through the motions” and not accurately evaluate teachers, often “inflating grades to avoid documentation headaches.” School administrators also struggle with a “nice guy” complex, not wanting to offend teachers who are doing a poor job.

As the report above testifies, today’s ineffective teachers can hide in the bureaucratic layers of the education system even when good evaluation programs are in place. Is it time that we returned to a smaller, more local system of education where parents could keep a better eye on the quality of the teachers training their children?

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