

# Teacher development instead of evaluations:

a position statement from the committee to elect **Barbara Madeloni**

Excessive collection of evidence, lengthy policies and procedures, detailed rubrics, complex equations for measuring impact on student learning: our k12 teachers are overwhelmed by a system that is burdensome, distracts them from a focus on their students, and reduces the complexity of teaching to a series of discrete events.

The demand for evaluations is being promulgated by the same voices that degrade teachers: people who are looking to bust public sector unions and privatize public schools. As with every assault on teachers and public education, we need to stop buying into the language of the attackers. And we have to protect our language from from being misused in rhetorical sleights of hand.

From Bill Gates to the Obama administration, the message is that student test scores should be used to evaluate teachers. But this approach narrows our purpose and interferes with the relationships that are at the core of good practice. In fact, there is scarce evidence to suggest that teacher evaluations improve student learning, but there is good reason to fear that their pretense of objectivity will lead to opportunities for abuse.

## **Our focus should be on teacher learning and development and not teacher evaluation.**

- \* Teachers learn from sharing ideas, questions and practices with colleagues. They need the time and resources for these conversations, and the trust and respect to lead them.
  - \* Teacher learning, like all meaningful learning, rests on trust, openness, support, opportunities to make mistakes, creativity, and critical questioning-of all parties.
  - \* Teaching is nuanced, complex intellectual work that calls for a range of skills and knowledge. This includes not only knowledge of pedagogy and content, but of self, other, social contexts and history, child development, individual children and the communities in which they live.
  - \* We continue to learn to teach over the course of our careers. Our learning is individual in the ways we are successful and in the rate at which we grow.
  - \* Knowledge and skill grow from experience and reflection. There is no fast road to the development of teacher knowledge, skill and wisdom.
  - \* Any conversation about teacher development requires discussion about the purpose of education. Successful teaching leads to many outcomes. Some of these are evident in the short term, many emerge years later within a host of student life experiences. Successful teachers emerge after years, with wisdom, empathy, confidence and clarity of purpose that cannot be measured or reduced to a rubric.
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