



National Education Association - New Mexico

Great Public Schools Begin With Us!

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I'm Deborah Romero, a 3rd grade teacher from Las Cruces.

I'm also a named plaintiff in the NEA New Mexico lawsuit.

And after 18 years as a public school teacher, I have been labeled by the New Mexico Department of Education to be a minimally effective teacher based on a single 40 minute classroom observation.

Not by my principal. Not by my local school district administration. Not by my local superintendent; but by a government functionary all the way at the other end of the state in Santa Fe.

Why? According to the report of my classroom observation, I asked questions of students in too direct a fashion when I would have been more effective if the questions had been more open ended.

After a 40-minute so-called observation in my classroom, someone who does not know me, does not know my students, and, quite frankly, does not know anything about teaching and learning, caused a state-mandated form to be filled out that labeled me a minimally effective teacher.

That nonsensical and unjustifiable action has thrown a shadow over a professional career that I've spent the past 18 years creating.

It would be funny – even absurd – if it were not so deadly serious.

And people want to know why teachers are opposed to being evaluated.

Classroom teachers are not opposed to evaluation.

The truth is we want to be evaluated. We want to be able to identify strengths and weaknesses. We want to become better teachers – to work collaboratively with our peers – and to help our students to be successful.

And don't think for a minute that we don't know when we're being less than successful. We don't need someone from Santa Fe to tell us. We see it in the eyes of our students – when they don't understand – when they're confused about something we're teaching. We see it. We know it. And we work to fix it when it's broken. Not for the state of New Mexico, but for the children in our classroom.

Our old evaluation system – the one that our local school administration created – measured how I was teaching. When I was doing well, it provided positive feedback. When I needed to develop professional technique, it provided a process where the district and I became partners in creating a system of in-service to master those new concepts. This new system – the one that has simply been shoved down our throats – does nothing to improve my teaching. It dictates everything I'm supposed to do in the classroom. And it's putting an end to the cooperation and collaboration among teachers.

When 50% of a teacher's evaluation is based on test scores, it is inevitable that the students feel the strain from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

It's a flawed, and technically illegal, system that provides nothing positive for me – or my students.

And it has to be stopped.