



National Education Association - New Mexico

Great Public Schools Begin With Us!

Betty Patterson
President

Mary Parr-Sánchez
Vice President

Charles Bowyer
Executive Director

COMMENTS FOR ATTRIBUTION

Manessa Young Padilla
Secondary Gifted IEP Facilitator
Los Lunas, New Mexico

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I'm Manessa Young Padilla - a named plaintiff in the NEA New Mexico lawsuit.

I come to teaching in a less orthodox way than the others here. I became a teacher through New Mexico's alternative licensure process.

After a career in accounting, I did the paperwork, took the tests, participated in the dossier process, and became a classroom teacher.

New Mexico said it needed more teachers and provided a way to become a teacher without having to earn a second undergraduate degree. I decided I really wanted to teach – my dream since I was a child – and gave up the board room for the classroom.

While it allowed me a way to do something I really wanted to do – I did take a \$10,000-a-year pay cut to become a teacher. Some people look at me funny when I say that; but, it's important to remember that almost everyone in teaching is making less than they would in another profession. We teach because it's how we want to spend our professional lives.

So I have committed to education. I have taught math and science. And after 6 years in the classroom, the State of New Mexico – the people who wanted desperately for me to change careers and enter the classroom – have suddenly decided I'm a minimally effective teacher.

My district – and my principal – disagrees with that assessment. They know its wrong; but under the new teacher evaluation system, there's nothing they – or I – can do to correct it.

You see, I have the misfortune of being a math and science teacher. The students that I teach have been tested, tested, and tested again and again on math and science.

And their test scores enter into my evaluation.

The system doesn't measure or take into account - who my students are – or what challenges they face. For example, the young lady whose cousin was shot in a gang fight in L.A. the night before standardized testing. The test only considers that one day of performance without considering what is happening in their lives on that one day.

The system simply wants to know the numbers. Not the students – just the numbers.

And if that weren't unfair already, I get measured in a different way than many of my colleagues who don't teach a subject that gets tested multiple times each year.

If you're students aren't tested – the state has no student test scores to be included in your evaluation. In essence, you're being tested on attendance and observation.

Neither situation is fair. Neither situation is right. This new evaluation system provides no method for feedback – whether you're from one of the tested subject areas or not.

One group of teachers is evaluated on their students' test scores – and the other group is evaluated on whether they come to work every day and can put on a show twice a year while they are being observed.

Neither group is helped professionally, and the instruction both groups give their students is not improved.

I have considered going back to accounting but refuse to be driven out by people who have never taught a day in their lives. I think this evaluation system is unfair and that's why you'll find my name as a plaintiff on the NEA New Mexico lawsuit.