



National Education Association - New Mexico

Great Public Schools Begin With Us!

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COMMENTS FOR ATTRIBUTION

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I'm Representative Mimi Stewart, Chair of the House Education Committee in the New Mexico Legislature.

You will find me listed among the named plaintiffs in this lawsuit, and the reasons are two-fold.

First, I have a specific responsibility as a duly elected member of the New Mexico House of Representatives and as Chair of the that chamber's Education Committee to protect the legislative prerogatives and responsibilities of the House when it comes to establishing and following state law regarding public education in our state.

And second, as a 30-year veteran teacher, I have a professional and moral responsibility to protect the rights of public school teachers from unfair attacks on the profession.

The illegally implemented teacher evaluation system addressed in this lawsuit is just that – an illegal and unfair attack on the profession of teaching.

This new teacher evaluation system simply does not work.

That's not just my assessment. That's the assessment from dozens upon dozens of local school superintendents, from all over the state that I've had the opportunity to talk with about this new system.

The new system does not measure actual teaching and learning.

And what it does measure has thus far been unexplainable by anyone from the Public Education Department.

The new system is overly complicated, discounts the art of teaching, and has very little credibility with anyone associated with local public schools in New Mexico.

It's creating havoc in the classroom with too many teachers leaving the profession and too few willing to accept jobs with such an onerous and unworkable evaluation plan that directly impacts on their continued employment.

The Public Education Department isn't helping. They're providing no guidance. They are not responding to concerns or questions from local school districts.

No changes allowed – no course correction anticipated – and no explanations forthcoming.

I've spent a lifetime working in public education. A portion of that time was spent designing and implementing professional development programs for local school teachers. The cornerstone of any evaluation system isn't affixing labels. It's finding out what's working and providing positive reinforcement for those actions, finding out where weaknesses exist and developing plans to correct and strengthen those weaker areas.

This new teacher evaluation system does not provide any method for improvement by the individual teacher. It's a system that simply labels teachers without any understandable criteria for coming up with those labels.

All that would be bad enough, but added to those problems is the unfair and high-handed way this system has been implemented. Without any input from local school officials – or – from the people's elected representatives in the legislature.

It's time to stop and listen to stakeholder input – from parents – teachers – and local superintendents.

And it's obvious that the only way the Governor and Secretary-Designate Skandera are going to stop and listen is if the courts require them to do so.