



THIS TEACHER EVALUATION TREND WAS THE REFORM DU JOUR. NOW STATES ARE BACKING AWAY



Florida stopped requiring districts to do it in 2017.

The New Jersey Department of Education announced in August that it was reducing its reliance on the practice.

And, 20 years after it was first introduced in Wyoming, the practice was eliminated entirely this year by that state's legislators.

A decade after the now-defunct Race to the Top grant competition dangled a financial carrot to entice legislatures throughout America to adopt teacher evaluation policies that rely on student test results, the about-face is picking up speed.

Even the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—which poured \$700 million into initiatives related to teacher evaluations related to student performance—[announced in 2017](#) that it was pivoting away from the practice.

But researchers, including those at the National Education Policy Center, raised caution flags early on. In 2006, when advocates of using students' standardized test scores to evaluate teachers were enthusiastically trumpeting the approach, NEPC Fellow [Edward Wiley](#) wrote a practitioners guide that identified [multiple concerns](#) about so-called “value-added” models that use longitudinal student achievement results to assess teacher performance. Teachers are not randomly assigned to classes, and some groups of students are more likely than others to exhibit growth, regardless of the quality of their instruction in a particular school year. Student achievement tests tend not to be designed to evaluate teachers. And assessment errors may also impact results.

“Notwithstanding the federal enthusiasm for test scores, many researchers have warned against using a single measurement of any kind as the primary basis for such important personnel decisions as teacher retention, dismissal or pay,” Fellow and Pennsylvania State University emeritus professor [Patricia Hinchey](#) wrote in an NEPC [policy brief](#) published in 2010. She added:

While there are important questions about what achievement scores can—and cannot—indicate about individual teachers, there is no question that placing excessive emphasis on test scores alone can have unintended and undesirable consequences that undermine the goal of developing an excellent teaching force.

As districts and states end test score-based evaluations, what should they do instead?

In a recent *Kappan* article entitled [*Learning from what doesn't work in teacher evaluation*](#), NEPC Fellow [Audrey Amrein-Beardsley](#), an associate professor at Arizona State University, and her co-author Kevin Close offer some good advice. Their recommendations include using multiple measures to evaluate teachers, emphasizing formative assessment, and including teachers in the development of evaluation approaches.

“If policy makers learn from the mistakes of the recent past, then they should be able to design teacher evaluation systems that are consistent, valid, fair, and useful,” they conclude.

NEPC Resources on Teacher Evaluation

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