

POLICY #7

Teacher Evaluations

What if students were able to grade their teachers?

Description:

Every teacher is evaluated by principals to make sure they are doing a good job. Right now, the main components of teacher evaluations are students' scores on tests and classroom observations by principals. In Massachusetts, evaluations must include "student feedback," but the surveys used often focus on problems that only adults care about and may not lead to real changes in the classroom. With this policy, we can create better student surveys that capture how students feel about their teachers and force schools to act on the feedback that is received.



Examples:

- The Model Survey made by the state mainly asks questions about learning information and managing behavior in the classroom, and only 20 districts in Massachusetts use it
- 8 school districts, called MCIEA, use a teacher evaluation system that includes topics students care about, like the way teachers treat students and whether they listen to feedback
- Some states make schools both report student survey results and use the results to promote good teachers and better train bad ones



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Teacher Evaluations (Continued)

Pros	Cons
Student power: Including questions that students care about in surveys means that teachers will have to change the way they teach and treat students in order to receive benefits like raises and promotions.	Student power: It is ultimately up to the principals and administrators in each school to determine how to use the results of the surveys along with test results and observations.
Inclusion: All students would be answering surveys for their teachers, so everyone's voice would be heard.	Inclusion: Survey results are anonymous and will be tallied up and averaged, so individual students may not have a large impact on the final decisions.
Likelihood of passing: There is already a law that requires student feedback to be used in teacher evaluations, so it might be easy to change the way schools follow this law to include student voice.	Likelihood of passing: People in charge may not be willing to give up their ability to rate and promote teachers how they would like to. For example, teacher's unions might be opposed since they want to protect teachers from undesirable outcomes.

If we chose Teacher Evaluations, we would want to make sure that:

- Students are involved in deciding what questions are asked
- Schools are required to do something with the results