

Full Committee Hearing on H.R. 3989, "Student Success Act" and H.R. 3990,
"Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act."
February 16, 2012

Good morning everyone. My name is Felicia Kazmier and I am the Art teacher at Otero Elementary School in Harrison School District 2 in Colorado Springs, CO. I would sincerely like to thank Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Miller and other members of the Committee for allowing me the opportunity today to address the Committee and the bills they have put forward to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It is both an honor and a privilege as an ordinary citizen to have the opportunity to possibly encourage innovation in the way our students will be educated. Let me state for the record that I love my job. Teaching is not for everyone and especially when you are working for a district like Harrison School District 2 which holds you accountable. Our district has implemented an evaluation system that not only evaluates our effectiveness as teachers, but expects us to produce results in regard to student learning while compensating us for our hard work.

In the last five years, Harrison has stepped up to the challenge that now faces many Americans today in this room; should teacher evaluation be linked to student achievement results? Harrison School District 2 has established a pay for performance system that measures teachers on effectiveness and results (50/50). Teacher effectiveness is measured by formal and informal observations, written summative and ongoing spot observations-at least 8 for probationary teachers and 4 for non-probationary teachers. Our administrators provide feedback, coaching, and professional development to improve teacher effectiveness. The teacher's results are divided into 8 weights-for example for me a District Art Project, a District CBM which is a curriculum based measurement, a District Art Assessment set, a Mid-semester Performance task, my school's individual state test results and lastly my individual achievement goal. Another teacher, depending on the grade and content, will have assessments that reflect achievement in their content area. Within this process collaboration is necessary because all teachers own building scores based on our state assessments. I look to my colleagues to assist me in how to best teach writing so that my students can not only write about Art but then also use these writing skills to improve their state writing scores. In order to be Exemplary on individual goals and student achievement, I have to impact other students outside of my own building. This year while mentoring several first year teachers I focused on one teacher and wrote an Exemplary goal with her that would impact how effective she would be in her instruction. We not only met her goal but her data exceeded our expectations. This type of collaboration cannot be overlooked when it comes to impacting the quality of effective teachers we employ.

The district did not have to compensate teachers, but chooses to do so. The more effective I am, the more students achieve and the more money I can potentially earn. I am currently a

Proficient II teacher, which is one of nine effectiveness levels. If a teacher is deemed ineffective, then the administrator has decisions to make about training, remediation, or removal. I believe that what makes our District's system work is that all teachers have been given the opportunity to help in creating our evaluation system. While I am not a classroom teacher, as an Art teacher, I teach the entire school. So when it came time to have a say into what my evaluation process would look like, I chose the leadership role and stepped up to the challenge. I was asked by our Superintendent to sit down with him and other Art teachers to create a system by which we could be effectively evaluated. How can I take issue with a system that I myself have been asked to help create? I have been given a voice and for that I am grateful. We took small steps to get to where we are today. First, our district had to create an environment where teachers and administrators were prepared to recognize and then provide amazing instruction. Our principals started coming into our rooms and taking notes. We sat down together and started discussing what good instruction looks like. We were trained and given instructional feedback. I wanted to get better not just for me, but for my students. Side by side we have designed a system that allows my students to create amazing art to show what they know. Quarterly and semester testing provides me feedback on what my students are learning. Day to day assessment occurs and I see growth. How can I say that I am a good teacher without having data to justify that statement?

I am a supporter of the Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act and the direction that the act is going because it requires districts to design teacher evaluation systems around broad parameters while giving the districts the flexibility they need to create a system that works for their needs and the needs of their students and staff. When districts make student achievement data a significant part of their teacher evaluation process they help teachers to better understand the power of and utilize the information gleaned from data itself. Our district, our administrators and all of our teachers are daily collecting data because knowing what your students know and are able to do should drive effective instruction. When districts use multiple measures of evaluation in assessing teacher performance, teachers are responsible for two things, their effectiveness in the classroom and the results their students produce. Multiple measures gives us as teachers more than one way to evaluate what our students know and are able to do, shouldn't administrators evaluate their teachers in much the same way? When districts have more than two rating categories for the performance of teachers, it gives the teachers a way to not only increase their effectiveness, but also the effectiveness of those around them. When working with novice teachers this year, I looked to our performance evaluation scale as a guideline as to how best help them achieve success for their students and for themselves. If teachers believe that they can move up the scale through improving the quality of their performance in the classroom, achievement scores will improve as well. When districts make personnel decisions based on evaluations, they are doing so to ensure that students receive the best teaching possible provided by the most effective teacher available. In our district, if you are a Proficient II teacher or above, you can be asked to change schools so as to provide effective instruction where it is most needed. When districts seek input from parents, teachers, school leaders, and other staff in the school in the development of the evaluation system, everyone has a

stake in the outcome. Our district holds accountability meetings, FOCUS groups and shareholders meetings to provide opportunities for everyone's voice to be heard. When creating a system such as Harrison School District 2 has, it is vital to reach out and invite in those who will be most impacted by the system. When so much is at stake, it is imperative that a district reach both inward and outward in order to ensure that everyone has reason to buy in.

I support and am excited about the Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act because responsibility for student achievement should belong to the districts. I know that before I started working for this district, I believed I was a good teacher. I thought that I had been teaching for some time and I knew my content area so that must make me a good teacher. The quality of the instruction I currently present to my students is so far ahead of any teaching I have ever done. Understanding the difference between good teaching and great teaching is what inspires me to support the Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act. Like any other parent, I want nothing less for my own three children than I would give to any of my students and that is effective instruction provided to them by a teacher who has been proven to get results while at the same time creating a positive learning environment.