

Testimony by: Alejandra Correa
Senate Bill 4
Senate Education Committee

I am Alejandra Correa a former 4th grade teacher who has recently become an assistant principal in San Antonio. I am also a PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin so I come before you today to share my experience as a teacher, administrator and a student.

I support Senate Bill No.4.

Pinpointing the skills that lead certain teachers to make a greater impact on student performance than others is a matter of great urgency. The role of teacher evaluation is an underutilized resource that might hold promise as a tool to promote teacher professional growth and measure teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

A method of determining if a teacher is highly effective must include multiple measures, provided that teacher effectiveness is evaluated, in significant part, on the basis of student growth. All children do not start at the same level. There may be students who have had a high mobility rate, have social-emotional and financial issues at home, live in a homeless shelter or who did not have the strongest teacher the previous year. These students already may be several years behind their peers. A highly effective teacher may produce significant gains in these students. This increase in the academic achievement of the student should form a noteworthy part of the teacher's evaluation.

Multiple Measures of Student Learning must be included. These would include for example, value-added or growth measures, curriculum-based tests, pre/post tests, projects, oral presentations, performances, or artistic work.

There should also be multiple measures of teacher performance—including, for example, classroom observations, student test score data, self-assessments, and student and parent surveys. This accountability measure also must ensure that administrators provide teachers with the support they need, to be as effective as they can be, and to create a better environment for students. Teachers must be given feedback throughout the school year as well as useful professional development that will help them improve their areas of weakness.

The appraisal process of teachers must not cease with provisional and three year educators. It must also include teachers with seniority and tenure. By doing this, we will be putting children ahead of adults.

We have to make sure those teachers who are making the biggest impact on students' lives have the opportunity to do that work and that it is reflected on their evaluation. Please ponder that not all classrooms are equal and not all schools are equal just as not all parents are equal, but they will be measured by the same standard. Some classrooms have 16 kids and others might have 22, some might have four special education students, others might have serious management problems in the classroom. How do you adjust to these differences? As administrators we try to make the classrooms as balanced as possible, but this may not always happen. By focusing on student growth the appraisal process will determine whether the teacher added — or subtracted and will add objectivity to teacher evaluations.