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New proposed teacher evaluation system raises concerns

ATPE fears fallout from federal official's demand to evaluate teachers using student test scores

AUSTIN, Texas – The state's largest educator association has concerns about plans for a new teacher evaluation system recently announced by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Under the new plan, a small percentage of teachers— those who teach certain subjects and grades for which there are state standardized tests— would be evaluated in part using student test scores. The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) worries about raising the stakes of high-pressure student testing and potentially alienating teachers.

“Several research studies have questioned the validity of using test scores to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of individual teachers,” ATPE Governmental Relations Manager Jennifer Canaday said. “These calculations may overvalue or underestimate a teacher’s effect on student test scores, and they fail to account for other factors that contribute to student success.”

ATPE has urged TEA to use test score calculations only at the campus level or higher for evaluation purposes.

“Combining the data for all teachers on the campus reduces the potential harm of false positive or negatives,” Canaday said. “Campus-wide scores promote collaboration rather than competition by recognizing the contributions of *all* faculty members.”

Last year Texas joined the majority of states in requesting waivers of the No Child Left Behind Act, which holds schools accountable for meeting federal standards for “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) that often conflict with state accountability requirements. The waivers of the outdated federal law, which Congress has failed to

reauthorize and update, enable states to avoid harsh AYP sanctions and spend federal dollars more flexibly. However, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan conditioned Texas' NCLB waiver on the state's agreeing to adopt evaluations more heavily based on student growth using test scores. Last week was the deadline for TEA to announce its plans to comply with the federal condition.

For more information on this topic, visit

<http://www.teachthevote.org/news/2014/05/05/tea-announces-details-of-teacher-evaluation-pilot-submits-plan-to-usde-for-approval>.

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The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with more than 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, para-educators, administrators, college students and retired educators and works to create a better future for 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public educators.