

Teachers unions' response on teacher evaluation

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What's important for teacher unionists internationally to be considering? Mary Compton asks me some hard questions in this interview. One issue Mary and I didn't discuss is teacher evaluation, which has emerged in the past year as the most dangerous issue many teachers unions navigate. But I think the response teachers unions should take flows from the reasoning in this interview. Neoliberal groups that masquerade as putting "students first" are pushing for "employment at will" contracts to replace tenure. The question is, of course, whose will? What's the process for insuring that voices of all the stakeholders are heard, including teachers as a group? NYU professor Gary Anderson exposes Deborah Kenny's deceptive rhetoric about giving teachers respect and trust - by firing them at will. Her touchy-feely stuff strikes a responsive chord in many people, and we need to face this danger head-on. Advice I give in my book about reaching out to parents and students is key in this contest. To win public support in our struggle against "pay for performance" plans, most of which use these bogus "value-added" formulas, we have to break out of the box of the contract. So here's my advice, put very strongly: Teachers unions have to demand parent and student input on what good teaching looks like. No contract settlements without consultation with parents, students, and citizens, please! If the board of education won't call those meetings and hearings, the union should!