

Bipartisan teacher and principal evaluation bill to ensure high quality education signed into law

OLYMPIA — Today, the governor signed into law a bipartisan bill that will give teachers and principals the tools to ensure every child has a high-quality education.

[Senate Bill 5895](#) will follow an ongoing state effort to move to a statewide four-tier teacher/principal evaluation system by 2015-16, after eight pilot programs have completed tests of what works best. Before 2010, teachers were given either a satisfactory or unsatisfactory grade under a two-tier system.

Over the 2012 session, Sen. Rosemary McAuliffe, D-Bothell, Sen. Steve Litzow, R-Mercer Island, Rep. Kristine Lytton, D-Anacortes, Rep. Bruce Dammeier, R-Puyallup, and Gov. Chris Gregoire worked hard to reach a compromise on teacher evaluation legislation. The legislators released the following statements.

“The single most important factor affecting student success is the quality of the teacher in the classroom,” said McAuliffe, chair of the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee. “This enhanced evaluation system ensures that teachers and principals are given the tools they need to make an immediate impact on student learning. It also continues to build our evaluation system from the ground up. With the experiences of our pilot sites across the state of Washington, we will identify best practices to ensure our teachers grow professionally. My colleagues and I share the goal that every child deserves a high quality teacher in their classroom.”

“Negotiating this agreement was not easy, considering the varying interests of all the parties involved, but our focus remained on what is best for our children and what was signed today reflects those priorities. The end result is a major step toward ensuring that every classroom is led by a great teacher,” said Litzow, ranking Senate Republican on education. “There is still more to do if we are to make Washington’s education system one of the best in the nation, but with this new momentum I believe we are on our way to providing our children with the skills necessary to compete in a global economy.”

“For an evaluation system to be effective, it needs to be fair, it needs to be reliable, and all the parties involved — parents, teachers, principals, and all the taxpayers who support our public schools — need to have confidence that it will really do what it sets out to do,” said Lytton, sponsor of the House companion bill to SB 5895. “We all share the goal of having a great teacher in every classroom, and this bipartisan effort moves our state significantly in that direction.”

“This legislation takes our state a step closer to ensuring a quality teacher in every classroom and a quality principal in every school. It is also an example of how we can try something at the pilot level, study the results and implement it across the state to benefit students, teachers and principals,” said Dammeier, ranking House Republican on education. “I really appreciate the hard work and collaboration that went into this bill. It’s a success story — all sides coming together for the same goal, excellence in our schools, and reaching a compromise.”

SB 5895, which takes effect in 90 days, will:

- add greater specificity and provide expectations for a new teacher and principal evaluation system with four common levels, with one being the lowest evaluation and four being the highest;
- incorporate student growth data as a substantial factor in evaluations;
- allow student input for teacher evaluations, and school building employees input for principal evaluations;
- require that evaluation results are one factor used to make staffing decisions;
- establish an implementation schedule;
- define “not satisfactory” and require a teacher or principal to participate in the probation process in existing law; and
- require a steering committee to examine implementation issues and produce an annual report beginning in July 2013 with a final report due Dec. 1, 2016.

Photo caption: Rep. Bruce Dammeier, Rep. Kristine Lytton, Rep. Marcie Maxwell, Gov. Chris Gregoire, Sen. Rosemary McAuliffe and Sen. Steve Litzow at teacher evaluation bill signing.

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