



The research is clear: Teachers make the biggest school-based difference in a child's education. We want to be part of the conversation on teachers' contract so that we can hire and support the best teachers for our students.

We have an opportunity to help our students do better by helping them get the best teachers. Every few years, Seattle Public Schools staff sits down with Seattle Education Association (teachers' union) representatives and renegotiates the teachers' contract. In the past, a community's role has been limited to hearing about this process after it ends—through news, school administration or union updates rather than providing input from the beginning. However, **a lot of what happens in your child's classroom is governed by the teachers' contract**—from how teachers are trained and supported to how families can best interact with their school. We think bringing community voice to these negotiations is vital. One way to make sure we have the best teachers is to use appropriate teacher evaluations that incorporate student growth and student feedback.

What are teacher evaluations and why do we need them?

Teacher evaluations are a way to judge a teacher's performance so that they have constructive feedback on how successful they are in helping kids learn. Excellent evaluation systems give all teachers regular feedback that helps them grow as professionals, no matter how long they have been in the classroom. They also give schools the information they need to build the strongest possible instructional teams, and help districts hold school leaders accountable for supporting each teacher's development. Most importantly, **they help focus everyone in a school system, from teachers to the superintendent, on what matters most:** giving our students the best education possible.

Why include student growth?

If we are focused on providing students with the best education, **one of the most basic questions we must answer is whether our students are learning.** Student learning can be measured a number of ways, from using standardized test scores, to in-class evaluations, to portfolios of student work that show progress.

Why include student feedback?

Students know what goes on in the classroom day-to-day. Their experience is not only important—**it's accurate in determining the quality of a teacher.** Student feedback surveys are not popularity contests. Instead, they ask students specific questions about their experience with a teacher. For example, students could be asked to respond to statements like: "My teacher knows when the class understands, and when we do not," and "My teacher has several good ways to explain each topic that we cover in this class." These types of student feedback are better at predicting classroom success than many other measures, including teacher experience or education level.

What can I do?

Learn more and make your voice heard.
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