

**RYAN P. AUMENT, MEMBER
41ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT**

PO Box 202041
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2041
Phone: (717) 705-7161
Fax: (717) 705-1946

Manor West Commons, Suite 501
2938 Columbia Avenue
Lancaster, PA 17603
Phone: (717) 295-5050
Fax: (717) 295-5053




House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

Committees
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Children and Youth

raument@pahousegop.com
RepAument.com

MEMORANDUM

TO: All House Members
FROM: Representative Ryan P. Aument 
DATE: October 17, 2011
SUBJECT: Proposed Legislation - Teacher Evaluation System

While there are many influences on a student's education, the most important is the quality of the teacher that stands in the front of the classroom and molds a child into a student who is inspired to learn.

Recent reports of teacher evaluations conducted during the 2009-10 school year show that 99.4 percent of all teachers received a satisfactory rating in our Commonwealth. Currently, Pennsylvania's evaluation system only provides for a rating of either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, limiting the feedback they receive and perpetuating the status quo. Teachers need accurate and constructive feedback, including the inclusion of student performance data to improve their practice in order to ensure our students are taught by professionals who continuously grow and improve. Therefore, Pennsylvania needs a more robust system that distinguishes between educators who are excelling and those who are struggling and need support to improve or ratings to exit the profession.

As such, I plan to introduce legislation to implement a new teacher evaluation system that is a critical part of Governor Corbett's education reform agenda. The Pennsylvania Department of Education has been developing and piloting this new system for two years. With guidance from a steering committee comprised of representatives from across the educational spectrum, the business community, and three research entities, the first round of the pilot program took place during the 2010-11 school year. The department is now embarking on a second phase of the pilot. Beginning in January 2012, participating pilot schools will use the new evaluation method and provide feedback to the Department of Education. More than 100 entities have voluntarily signed up to participate in the pilot, demonstrating the widespread support for this new system.

Under the new system, 50 percent of an educator's evaluation would be comprised of multiple measures of student achievement. This would include student achievement data on statewide assessments, student growth data through the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS), and other measures of student achievement for grades and classes not assessed. The remaining portion, classified as traditional teacher practices, would include areas such as classroom observations.

This new measure will more accurately evaluate our teachers and their impact on students and will also show educators where they need more improvement. This new system will result in teachers who are better prepared to educate students and students who are more likely to achieve.

If you would like to join me in cosponsoring this integral piece of Governor Corbett's education reform agenda, please contact Lori Clark at lclark@pahousegop.com or 705-7161 by Friday, October 21.

RPA:lac