

BURYING THE EVIDENCE:

StudentsFirstNY Analyzes Hidden 2015-16 Teacher Evaluation Ratings

At a recent meeting, New York City United Federation of Teachers (UFT) President Mike Mulgrew crowed that 97% of city teachers are effective or highly effective according to the 2016-17 evaluation results. The problem is, there has been no public review of the results from the 2015-16 school year, let alone the newer results the union boss touted.

A deliberate attempt to de-emphasize teacher evaluation results

While the New York State Education Department (SED) produced an analysis of the results in March and posted it on the website, there was no public release, and no mention of the analysis in any Board of Regents meetings.

Five months later, again with no press release, SED posted researcher files with the 2015-16 data, away from view of most parents and education stakeholders. Several weeks later, [some data was posted](#) in a more parent-friendly format, but a query for New York City results produces an error message. SED displayed an alarming lack of transparency by failing to properly release a detailed analysis of 2015-16 teacher evaluation ratings.

Some might argue that these ratings have less meaning since there's a moratorium on the use of student test scores and evaluations are in a transitional state. In this paper, StudentsFirstNY argues the opposite: it is because evaluations are in a state of transition that we must closely analyze the results to have an informed conversation on what is working and what is not.

Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa recently told POLITICO New York, "We're going to take stock in the next month or two before the Legislature comes back," but she had already concluded that the moratorium must be extended, without any public review of the latest results. The state teachers union wants state test scores removed from evaluations entirely and called for a repeal of the legislation.

In this environment, where significant policy decisions will be made, SED had an increased responsibility to release an analysis of the teacher evaluation ratings. By failing to properly release teacher evaluation ratings from the 2015-16 school year, SED has done a disservice to students, parents, educators and the public.

No wonder officials hid data: teachers are all great while kids aren't learning

StudentsFirstNY analyzed the researcher files buried on the department's website. The results: the kids are failing while all teachers are effective or highly effective. No wonder officials hid this data from the public.

The message the inflated results sends to parents is: we don't care whether your children are learning, we're not going to hold anyone accountable. And the message this sends to truly great teachers is: we don't see you.

STUDENTSFIRSTNY ANALYZED THE RESULTS AND OBSERVED CONCERNING TRENDS

- Teacher evaluation ratings bear no resemblance to actual student learning.
- New York City (NYC) watered down its system considerably.
- Districts across the state gamed the system entirely.
- Virtually no teachers are rated ineffective.
- Observations are inflated across the board.
- The State Provided Growth score is the only measure that shows differentiation.
- A large number of teacher ratings are suppressed.
- In NYC, ineffective teachers are clustered in schools with a high percentage of minority students or students living in poverty.
- The State Education Department is failing to follow the law requiring it to monitor districts where teacher and student performance don't match.

2015-2016 TEACHER EVALUATION RESULTS AS ANALYZED BY STUDENTSFIRSTNY

Teacher evaluation ratings bear no resemblance to actual student learning

9.5 out of 10

NYC Teachers Effective or Above

4 out of 10

NYC 3-8th Graders Proficient in Reading and Math

18 out of 19

NYC schools with less than 10% proficiency on ELA exam have ZERO ineffective teachers

87% of teachers are Effective or above

In these 10% pass rate schools

Some of the worst offenders:

School	Student Performance: Math Pass Rate	Teacher Performance: % Highly Effective or Effective
Lyons Community School	1%	100%
IS 136 Charles O Dewey	7%	100%
Brooklyn Secondary School for Collaborative Studies	7%	100%
MS 113 Ronald Edmonds Learning Center	9%	100%
PS/IS 157 Benjamin Franklin Health and Science	10%	100%
Evergreen Middle School for Urban Exploration	5%	100%

At Mayor de Blasio's Renewal Schools, there's a 57 percentage point gap between teacher and student results.

New York City's results have gone from model to mockery

In 2013-14 and 2014-15 there was a fairly reasonable distribution of teacher ratings in New York City. Unfortunately, in the last two years New York City has lost nearly all differentiation in its ratings.

Table I: NYC Teacher Evaluation Ratings 2013-14 to Present

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16*	2016-17**
Total Effective/Highly Effective	92%	93%	95%	97%
Highly Effective	9%	11%	23%	26%
Effective	83%	82%	72%	71%
Developing	7%	7%	4%	3%
Ineffective	1%	1%	0%	

*2015-16 transition scores were used for teachers impacted by the moratorium on State tests; original scores were used for all other teachers. In their 2015-16 analysis, SED presented transition and original scores separately instead of blending them the way we did.

** Reported in Chalkbeat and attributed to Michael Mulgrew, UFT.

Districts across New York gamed the system entirely

- 99% of teachers are rated effective and a shocking 71% are rated highly effective.
- More than half of NY's school districts rated 100% of teachers Effective or above on their observations.
- 19% of districts rated 95% or more of their teachers Highly Effective on their observations.
- Almost half the districts rated 100% of their teachers Effective or above on their overall score.
- 16% of teachers are considered Developing or Ineffective based on the State Provided Growth Score compared to fewer than 1% on most of the other measures.

Table II: 2015-16 Teacher Evaluation Results Rest of NY (excluding NYC) vs. Prior Years

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total Effective/Highly Effective	98%	98%	99%
Highly Effective	58%	61%	71%
Effective	39%	38%	29%
Developing	2%	2%	0%
Ineffective	0%	0%	0%

The ratings for a surprising number of teachers were suppressed from the released data. While privacy is an important consideration, more than half the ratings of teachers outside NYC were suppressed, which seems unusually high.

Table III: Suppressed Data 2015-16

	NYC	Rest of state
Number suppressed	15,127	67,969
% of teachers suppressed	24%	53%

Very few schools have any ineffective teachers at all; ineffective teachers are clustered in schools with the neediest students

NYC Schools with Zero Ineffective Teachers: 95%

- 3% of schools have 1 ineffective teacher
- 2% of schools have 2 or more ineffective teachers

However, 15 schools have 10% or more of their teachers rated Ineffective:

- 6 of them are Renewal Schools
- On average, these schools are 79% African-American and Hispanic compared to 67% citywide

A few specific examples:

School	Ineffective Teachers	Poverty Rate
High School of Arts and Technology	25%	93%
IS 313 School of Leadership Development (Renewal School)	35%	75%
PS 194 Countee Cullen (Renewal School)	29%	99%
PS 88 Silverstein Little Sparrow	25%	100%

CONCLUSION

In The New Teacher Project's groundbreaking report [The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness](#) the group argued that teachers can't be treated as "interchangeable parts" who are all rated the same. Excellent teaching should be recognized and poor performance must be addressed.

New York's teacher evaluation system must differentiate between great teachers and those who are less good. It's not just the viewpoint of StudentsFirstNY; it's the law.

SED is required by Education Law §3012-d(15) and Section 30-3.13 of the Rules of the Board of Regents to analyze data to identify:

"Schools or districts whose teacher and principal overall ratings and subcomponent scores and/or ratings show little differentiation across educators and/or the lack of differentiation is not justified by equivalently consistent student achievement results; and/or schools or districts that show a pattern of anomalous results in the student performance and observation/school visits categories."

Under the previous commissioner, SED actually followed the law and [intervened in Buffalo](#) when the teacher ratings were out of whack. [They did it in Syracuse](#) too. It looks like SED has decided to give New York City a pass even though it's flagrantly flouting the law.

It's time for the State Education Department to hold New York City and other districts accountable for the failure to implement a teacher evaluation system that does right by students and teachers.