

# Myth vs. Fact: The Truth about Reform [Round Two]

Modernizing Teacher Evaluations, Tenure and Compensation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

---

Myth: The bill slashes salaries for teachers.

Fact: The bill creates a special fund, starting at \$900 million, to raise salaries for teachers in high-poverty schools, teachers of subjects such as math and science that are in high demand, and teachers whose students learn at least a year's worth of knowledge in a year's time.

---

Myth: The bill will chase great teachers out of the classroom.

Fact: Great teachers care about student achievement. The bill will reward them with the ability to make more money based on their skills.

---

Myth: The bill will hurt recruiting of great teachers.

Fact: Providing teachers with more money is a great recruiting tool.

---

Myth: The bill penalizes teachers who don't have any control over what students come into their class.

Fact: Florida's progress during the last decade proves *all* students can learn, regardless of the challenges they may face outside the classroom. Evaluating teachers based on progress (what a student learns), not proficiency or achievement (what a student knows), focuses on what the student learned during a year in the classroom. In fact, students who are below grade level often make more progress under an effective teacher, and this bill rewards those teachers who help our most vulnerable students. Those teachers could actually earn *more* than teachers of students who are on or above grade level.

---

Myth: This reform is a purely partisan effort.

Fact: Both Democrats and Republicans are advocating for the use of student test scores to measure teacher effectiveness. Reforms advocates include President Barack Obama, the U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan and the Gates Foundation. Florida's business community has called on the Legislature to act on these issues. In their report *Closing the Talent Gap*, the Florida Council of 100 and the Florida Chamber of Commerce called for these reforms. The Florida Senate issued Interim Study 2010-213 studying teacher quality in 2009.

---

Myth: The bill eliminates tenure in Florida.

Fact: The bill doesn't eliminate tenure for teachers in the classroom today. The courts have determined that tenure is a property right and can't be taken away by the Legislature. The bill does end the practice of granting lifetime guarantee of employment after just three years in the classroom. Instead, new teachers will have annual performance contracts.

---

Myth: It's unfair to base teacher evaluations on student learning.

Fact: Right now, teacher performance reviews are based on the observations and opinions of their principal – making these evaluations 100% subjective. Using data for 50% of the annual performance review makes the evaluation more objective – and therefore, *more fair*.

---

Myth: The bill will hurt our chances of getting federal funding under Race to the Top.

Fact: The bill will *help* Florida in the competition for federal funding under Race to the Top. President Obama's Race to the Top program calls for improving teacher effectiveness based on performance, including evaluation systems that take into account data on student growth as a significant factor, providing opportunities for highly effective teachers to obtain additional compensation and considering whether to grant tenure based on rigorous standards and removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers after they have had ample opportunity to improve.

---

Myth: Annual tests are not a good measure of teacher effectiveness.

Fact: Annual tests are an objective measure of the knowledge and skills students gain from one year to the next. If you believe teachers impact how much a student learns, then annual tests that measure progress are an objective measure of their effectiveness in the classroom.

---