Western Kentucky University
TopSCHOLAR®

Counseling & Student Affairs Faculty Publications | Counseling and Student Affairs

8-15-2010

Unfair Way to Evaluate Teachers: Test Scores about more than Classroom

Aaron W. Hughey
Western Kentucky University, Aaron.Hughey@wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/csa_fac_pub

Part of the Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons, Human Resources Management Commons, Organizational Behavior and Theory Commons, and the Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons

Recommended Repository Citation
Hughey, Aaron W.. (2010). Unfair Way to Evaluate Teachers: Test Scores about more than Classroom. *The Lexington Herald-Leader, August 15, 2010*.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/csa_fac_pub/41

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Counseling & Student Affairs Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact connie.foster@wku.edu.

Kentucky.com™
LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER

Opinion – Op-Ed

Sunday, Aug. 15, 2010

Unfair way to evaluate teachers

test scores about more than classroom

By Aaron W. Hughey

In what I hope will not become a national trend, the District of Columbia recently fired 165 teachers for "poor performance."

On the surface, this would seem to be a good move. After all, who wants incompetent educators in the classroom?

But closer inspection reveals a major flaw in the decision-making process that led to the removal of these "ineffective" teachers.

For the first time in the D.C. system, the evaluation procedures used to determine who got to stay and who had to go included student scores on standardized tests.

And although test scores were not a factor in every decision, their use does signify a disturbing trend to those familiar with the well-documented limitations associated with these instruments.

It is widely known, for example, that children from more affluent families consistently score higher on all varieties of standardized tests than do their counterparts from poorer families.

Standardized test scores always reflect family background and racial and ethnic heritage — realities over which teachers have absolutely no control. As such, these factors should always be taken into account when interpreting or using standardized test scores to make inferences about teacher performance.

In most instances, this is simply not done.

Holding teachers accountable for the results achieved by their students, when the truth is that they do not have control over all of the variables that contribute to those results is patently unfair, arguably unethical and just plain wrong.

If we are serious about improving the quality of our public schools, then we need to spend more time listening to those who are actually on the front lines: our classroom teachers.

Significant improvements in any discipline tend to always originate at the grass-roots level.

Teachers — more than administrators, legislators, parents or the general public — know how to make the schools more responsive to the needs of society.

Aaron W. Hughey is a professor in the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs at Western Kentucky University.