

## Teacher job satisfaction plummets — Survey

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Published in *The Washington Post*

March 7, 2012

Available at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/teacher-job-satisfaction-plummets--survey/2012/03/02/gIQAmB5lvR\\_blog.html#pagebreak](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/teacher-job-satisfaction-plummets--survey/2012/03/02/gIQAmB5lvR_blog.html#pagebreak)

It's not fun to be repeatedly punched in the gut. And we can now quantify how not-fun it is, at least when teachers are the punchees.

Over the past two years of gut-punching, teacher job satisfaction has fallen from 59 percent to 44 percent. That's according to the annual *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*.

While this 15-point plummet is no doubt caused in part by the bad economy and budget cutting, it's also hard to overlook things like [Waiting for Superman](#), the media deification of [Michelle Rhee](#), and the publishing of [flawed "scores"](#) that purport to evaluate teachers based on students' test results — an offense first committed by the [Los Angeles Times](#) and now taken up by the *New York Times* and other New York papers. [Teachers knew](#) these evaluations were unreliable and invalid even before [researchers documented those problems](#).

Similarly, teachers see states and districts implement policies that largely base their performance evaluations on student test scores. These new policies are layered on top of *No Child Left Behind* and the subsequent years of narrowed curricula and teaching to the test. Teachers have been watching sadly as the sort of engaging learning that attracted them to the profession is increasingly squeezed out. Further, teachers in many states are facing attacks on their collective voice in education policy by anti-union governors such as Walker (Wisconsin), Scott (Florida), Christie (New Jersey), Daniels (Indiana), Kasich (Ohio), and Brewer (Arizona).

While all those governors are Republican, the trashing of teachers has been a bipartisan effort, led by groups that include *Democrats for Education Reform* and *Stand for Children*. In fact, President Obama is widely viewed as part of the problem. He will never achieve a Santorum-esque level of anti-public-school rhetoric, but [Race to the Top](#) and related policies have continued the drive toward privatization and test-focused instruction. Although the title of a U.S. [Department of Education press release](#) from a few weeks ago read "Obama Administration Seeks to Elevate Teaching Profession," the [headline a couple years ago](#) was, "Obama Official Applauds Rhode Island Teacher Firings."

None of us would want to have our job performance judged on an outcome that we don't really control. Research suggests that a student's teacher for a single given school year influences as little as 5 to 10 percent of her or his test-score growth. Sensible policymaking

does not leap from “teachers are important” to “teachers [can be evaluated](#) as if they are the only thing that’s important.”

Similarly, none of us would want to have our evaluation based on an outcome, [like test scores](#), that we know represents only a fraction of what we do and why we do it. And we wouldn’t want to pursue a good evaluation by doing our job in ways we think unwise or even harmful.

But that’s where teachers now find themselves. Maybe we should feel grateful that their job satisfaction only dropped 15 percentage points.