As you read this article, TEVAL mid-year conferences are either underway or have been completed. The mid-year conference is a crucial checkpoint in the TEVAL process. At this time, two important items are addressed.

Potential Adjustment of Student Learning Objectives (SLO)

SLO’s are reviewed and the teacher and their Instructional Manager (IM) determine if an adjustment to the SLO(s) is warranted. An example is the scenario whereby a teacher has a significant number of students that have been chronically absent from September through February. This will impact a teacher’s ability to meet the SLO and an adjustment would be in order.

Teachers Self Rating for Classroom Practices

At this mid-year conference, the teacher will complete the “self-rating for classroom practices” and the IM will do the same. The teacher and IM discuss the ratings looking for items of instructional practice where there is agreement and disagreement. The purpose is to promote a professional dialogue to ensure supports are provided for areas where there is agreement that the teacher would benefit from these supports. It is equally important to discuss items of disagreement. For example, a teacher rates themselves STRONG on an item while the IM rating is DEVELOPING. A respectful dialogue needs to occur in February, not in June. Our colleagues who co-authored TEVAL purposely designed the self-assessment component so potential adjustments and supports are put in place mid-year, which allows for subsequent improvement in instructional practice.

The self-assessment ratings are unofficial and have no bearing on the final TEVAL rating. Too often, I receive calls whereby a teacher conveys that they were...continued on page 8
Experience Matters  

By David Cicarella, NHFT President

W
gen it comes to teaching, the research is clear. Experience matters. Dozens of studies published within the past 15 years have analyzed the effect of teaching experience on student outcomes and have found that teacher effectiveness associated with experience are the most profound in the early years of our careers, but absolutely continue, often as long as 20 or 30 years. Teacher effectiveness increases at a greater rate when we teach in a supportive and collegial environment. An equally important factor is to allow teachers to accumulate experience in the same grade level, subject matter, or district.

No research suggests that the mere passage of time will make every teacher better. However, it does clearly indicate that for most teachers experience increases effectiveness. The greatest gains in teacher effectiveness occur when conditions for collegial relationships among staff exist along with a positive and professional working environment.

New teachers bring new ideas and fresh energy. Providing our new colleagues with high-quality mentoring will yield experienced teachers that continue to improve in their craft as they remain in the profession. The benefits of experience will be the most profound when new teachers are carefully selected and comprehensively evaluated. Study after study confirms the above conclusions. Experience matters.
In the last edition of the Advance, Dave Minnella (Celentano School, Music Teacher, 11 years experience) was inadvertently left out of the photo listing of the NHFT Negotiations Team. Our apologies to Dave who is now serving a second stint on our team. Thank you to Dave, and all of our Negotiations Team members for their dedication and service to the NHFT.

The 2017-2018 contract extension is signed and sealed which gives us relative peace of mind through the 2017-2018 school year. Given the present political, financial, and economic situation and all of its uncertainty, this is clearly a very good thing. We are now preparing to formally negotiate a contract beyond 2017-2018.

The previous edition of the Advance contained a center spread with photos and professional information for all members of our NHFT Negotiations Team. The team is deliberately composed of teachers from various teaching assignments including elementary, high school, specialty areas, support staff, ESL, and special education. The goal is to create a cross section in terms of years of teaching experience and ensure a diverse, balanced group that represents all of us at the negotiations table.

Contracting Working Group
On November 30, 2017, I sent a memo to inform everyone that in addition to our formal Negotiations Team, we have established a contract working group (This memo was sent to all building stewards and was forwarded to you via the personal email you supplied to your steward). The “contract working group” has met three times and will continue meeting throughout the school year on a monthly basis. It is open to any teacher that would like to attend. The purpose is to allow input and discussion of any and all items that teachers would like to put forth in terms of proposals by the Negotiations Team. While everyone has access via electronic communications to members of our Negotiations Team, the working group allows for firsthand, in-depth discussion with other colleagues and various members of the Negotiations Team. At our January meeting, NHPS Chief Operating Officer (COO) Will Clark attended and engaged in frank, professional dialogue as to the process and perspectives from the NHPS BoE. Members of the working group did likewise. Will has committed to attend future meetings as his schedule permits. This is quite significant and was well received, as he is the lead negotiator for the NHPS. Feel free to come to as many meetings as your schedule allows.

By David Cicarella, NHFT President

NHFT Contract Negotiations: Beyond 2017-2018
NHFT Holiday Party Photos, Omni Hotel Grand
Ballroom, Dec. 2017
When President Donald Trump nominated billionaire Betsy DeVos for Education Secretary, teachers in her home state of Michigan were outraged—again.

In her confirmation hearing, DeVos’s responses to senators’ questions may have made her look uninformed and unprepared. She said schools need guns to protect students from grizzly bears; she didn’t know federal disability laws apply to schools; she couldn’t explain basic education policy; she refused to answer whether charter schools and traditional public schools should be judged on the same accountability measures.

But her poor performance doesn’t mean she is naïve or inept. She has a track record of moving her ruthless privatization agenda—with the aid of large sums of cash.

DeVos herself has no experience working in public education. But her family has donated an estimated $200 million to Republicans, particularly in Michigan, where she has legislators under her thumb. She believes that public schools are a “monopoly” and a “dead end” and that government is by its nature bad.

“There’s more to come for everyone else if she gets appointed,” said Kalamazoo Education Association President Amanda Miller. “People are going to have to be ready to fight.”

CONFLICTS ABOUND

DeVos’s next Senate confirmation hearing has been delayed until January 31 to give senators an extra week to wade through her financial filings looking for conflicts of interest. And there are quite a few.

She and her husband Dick, heir to his father’s Amway fortune, own $1.5 billion in assets, including stakes in 100 companies and investment funds. Some are education-related, such as K12, which runs online charter schools, and Neurocore, which claims its programs to treat autism and attention deficit disorder can boost classroom performance.

DeVos has led several national and local “school choice” organizations, though she’s stepped down since being nominated. She’s also linked through family connections to organizations that support anti-gay “conversion therapy” and bringing religion back into schools.

The trend in federal education policy under Presidents Bush and Obama was to concentrate federal control over schools through harsh “accountability” measures—until a year ago, when the Every Student Succeeds Act shifted some power back to states. It’s unclear whether DeVos would defer to the states or wield a big stick.

IN HER POCKET

Boosting charter schools and weakening teacher unions have become bipartisan causes. But in states with Republican governors and legislatures, such efforts have moved much faster.

The DeVos family pushed for the state law that established charter schools in Michigan. Then they pushed to lift the cap on charters. Most recently they put the squeeze on state Republicans to kill part of a bill that would have bailed out Detroit Public Schools.

The bill would have established a commission to oversee existing charter schools, along with public schools, and to decide which schools can open and which should be shut down.

Some Republicans were considering voting for the package. But they changed their tune after the DeVoses threatened to cut them off financially. When the commission was defanged, legislators were rewarded with $1.5 million in their accounts within two months.

Rumor has it that DeVos is allowed onto the floor of the
Michigan legislature, where she pulls Republican lawmakers behind closed doors for one-on-one meetings.

The family also pushed to raise the state limit on campaign contributions—then showed Republicans their appreciation by donating up to the new max.

**CHARTER DYSTOPIA**

Thanks to the DeVoses, Michigan hands $1 billion a year to charter schools. Charter enrollment has grown by 75 percent in a decade. Of the state’s 400 charter schools, 80 percent are for-profit, the highest share in the country.

With lax regulation and oversight, charters in Michigan are easy to open and very hard to close—despite complaints of corruption as public money flows to outside companies, to high rents, to real estate investments, and to relatives of the charter managers.

DeVos’s catchphrase is “school choice.” Like many privatization advocates, she argues that charter schools produce results. But a Stanford report found that 80 percent of Michigan charters were below the state averages in reading and math.

Though DeVos comes from the western side of the state, Detroit—where 85 percent of the students are African American and 75 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch—has been the center of her experiments.

“’I’ve never seen her at one community forum,” said high school teacher Joel Berger. “And yet you are dictating what’s happening in the city. It’s so undemocratic.”

**STARVED OF FUNDS**

The state took over Detroit’s school district in 1999. A governor-appointed “emergency manager” with dictatorial powers took control in 2009, limiting the elected-school board’s authority.

More than 130 public schools have closed in a decade, while 100 charters opened. And instead of increasing school funding or addressing the poverty and segregation that hamstring the city, state lawmakers and emergency managers have pursued quick fixes.

“Money is spent on professional development and bringing in consultants,” said high school teacher Shalon Miller. “Everything but for the students.”

As funds are diverted to charters, she says, Detroit’s 50,000 public school students are forced to accept less and less. “We don’t have arts and gym and music and drama—the host of things that make high school bearable,” Miller said. “That’s not choice. That’s stealing.”

**BREAKING POINT**

Even in more affluent districts, teachers and students are feeling the pain. Thirty miles away in Novi, health teacher Chandra Madafferi says it’s all by design—starving schools of state funds and then calling them failures.

“They can create the environment to get the results that they want,” she said.

Teachers have taken pay cuts and freezes and had their collective bargaining rights curtailed. On top of Michigan’s 2013 “right-to-work” law, which includes public sector workers, there are other laws that forbid payroll deduction of union dues, prohibit bargaining over discipline or evaluations, and make teacher evaluations trump seniority.

“Every time we fight back,” Madefferi said, “the law is used to tie our hands.”

It’s taken a toll on the workforce, she said: “Now we are at the breaking point where teachers are leaving the profession.”

**‘THE CHOICE-IEST’**

One program the DeVos family likes even more than charters is school vouchers: public funding that parents can use to send their children to private and religious schools.

Vouchers are unpopular nationally; Michigan voters killed a referendum that would have introduced them in 2000. But Trump has announced he wants $20 billion in federal funds for such programs.

Since 2010 the DeVoses have donated $5 million in Wisconsin, where vouchers are big. Today one-third of Milwaukee students use vouchers, with a smaller percentage in charter schools.

“After 20-plus years, we have the choice-iest school system,” said Milwaukee teacher Ingrid Walker-Henry.

But while Wisconsin public schools are ranked on performance criteria set by the state, private schools don’t have to post any score or evaluation—leaving parents at sea when choosing better schools for their kids.

“You can’t make an informed decision if you don’t have all the information,” Walker-Henry said.

**PLAYING DEFENSE**

Michigan and Wisconsin are often called the “Wild West” of privatization. It’s no coincidence that both have severely limited public sector collective bargaining.

Wisconsin Republicans made their move in 2010, clearing the way for more budget cuts and privatization by forcing teacher unions to turn their attention to collecting dues and recertifying annually.

...continued on page 8
As in Michigan, union membership took a big drop. So did the dues money that unions could raise to fight back. But Walker-Henry and other Milwaukee Teachers activists have made lemons into lemonade, using the new restrictions as an impetus to focus on internal organizing and involve members in fights to improve public schools.

On a local level, teachers have won a few victories against big conservative donors and the politicians who do their bidding. Last year Milwaukee teachers beat back a takeover plan for their district, although they know state Republicans will try again.

Outside DeVos’s turf in Massachusetts, a teacher-led grassroots campaign crushed a November ballot initiative that would have lifted a cap on charter schools. Teacher unions in Michigan and Wisconsin have been playing defense, though—and losing ground.

‘CORE OF DEMOCRACY’

A year ago, Detroit teachers organized rolling sickouts to protest deteriorating building conditions, the state’s continuing restructuring of the school district, and the news that they wouldn’t be paid their remaining salaries for the school year once summer break started.

The sickouts closed 93 out of 96 schools and made national headlines, though the state offered only a Band-Aid solution.

Rank-and-file teachers who led the protests have since formed a caucus that ran for Detroit union leadership in December. They didn’t win top spots, but they plan to keep pushing their union to engage members more—and to increase the pressure on DeVos and the Republican legislators she funds.

“One thing we are going to have to do is get our community mobilized,” Miller says. As a union rep, she tells members, “We have battles to fight, and yes, it hurts now, but if we don’t mobilize, we will never regain our money.”

Milwaukee teachers have focused on pushing for more resources in public schools while bringing parents on board to protest the closure or conversion of public schools into private ones. “We feel it’s our responsibility,” Walker-Henry said.

The Milwaukee union involves parents in coming up with demands. As part of a citywide coalition, it’s pushing for smaller class sizes, less harsh student discipline, and less testing.

In Michigan, Maddeferi said the attacks by the DeVos family are about more than unions and schools. “If you break down public education, you are breaking down the core of democracy,” she said. “Every public school should be the first choice.”

Samantha Winslow is a staff writer and organizer with Labor Notes.
samantha@labornotes.org

Teval Mid-Year Conferences: A Crucial Checkpoint

“rated developing” at this mid-year conference. NO teacher receives any ratings mid-year. Summative ratings occur only at the end of the school year. There is no such thing as a “mid-year rating”. The mid-year conference is an informal assessment of instructional practice focused on celebrating successes and identifying areas in need of improvement and implementing support.

As we continue to modify TEVAL and tweak it for improvement, the emphasis is shifting to more “fact-based” evidence. Teachers should be hearing “I rated you strong on this indicator because of this evidence”. Instructional Managers have been undergoing collegial calibrations in our ongoing attempt to strengthen the evaluation process and use objective, fact-based data when conducting observations and the subsequent evaluations.

The Major Components of TEVAL

1. Goal setting (September)
2. Timely feedback and support (ongoing throughout the school year).
3. Mid-year conference (deadline for completion – Feb. 28)
4. End of year conference (prior to end of the school year)

Other Important Items

1. Goal setting (SLO’s) must be mutually agreed upon. Neither the teacher nor the IM can unilaterally impose SLO’s.
2. All regularly scheduled TEVAL conferences are “one on one” with only the teacher and instructional manager present. No other administrators or NHFT officials should attend.