I have been an educator in Colorado for 12 years and in that time I can count the number of meaningful evaluations I have had using two fingers. Truth be told Senate Bill 191 is not a tool that is a single measure "gotcha" intended to eliminate overpaid teachers. The evaluation process of SB191 provides a cycle of evaluation, formative and summative, that considers multiple measures to come to a final overall rating. The process begins at the beginning of the school year with teacher self-evaluation, review of previous data (multiple measures) and results of student perception surveys from the previous year. These multiple measures are used collectively as a base of information for teachers and principals to work together to build a growth plan for the remainder of the school year. This growth plan will be used by teachers to guide their professional development toward areas in need of improvement and help ensure the use of effective teaching practices. The process continues throughout the year with a series of observations from evaluators to look for observable professional practices. Each evaluation provides talking points for teachers to reflect on their practice and determine how well they are progressing toward their growth goals. It also provides an opportunity for a teacher to collect evidence of practices that may have been missed in the evaluation process.

The final evaluation rating for a teacher is not based solely on students’ scores on one standardized test. It is divided equally into two parts: 50% is based upon "Professional Practices" and 50% is based upon "Measures of Student Learning".  Professional Practices are Colorado Teacher Quality Standards and are research based practices that all teachers should be demonstrating. Measures of Student Learning (MSL) are a series of measurable data points that may include state assessment data and are not based solely on one single criterion. Each individual district determines which measures to use and how many and in most cases, teachers have been part of the process to determine which measures are used and the weight that each measure carries on the evaluation. Ultimately the combination of the teacher's MSL score and the Professional Practice score provide a final rating of ineffective, partially effective, effective or highly effective. Not a mere satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Personally I welcome the opportunity to participate in the cycle of evaluation and work toward professional growth. As an educator there is always room to improve and SB191 is designed to facilitate a plan for improvement. And while it is true that money is extremely tight in our rural districts, this process has opened avenues of collaboration and support between districts at unprecedented levels. We are working together to be better educators. Frankly, if we hold our students to such standards it stands to reason that educators should be held to high standards as well. The outcomes for our students are far too important to not!

Jim Parr, Montezuma-Cortez Teacher

