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Education Secretary: Teachers Should be Judged on Student Performance

By AP / LIBBY QUAID

Teachers should be judged on student performance, though not solely on test scores, Education Secretary [Arne Duncan](#) said Monday.

Duncan supports merit pay for teachers, an often controversial practice linking raises or bonuses to student achievement. It is opposed by many teachers' union members, who make up a powerful segment of the Democratic Party.

He said test scores alone should not decide a teacher's salary.

"But to somehow suggest we should not link student achievement to teacher effectiveness is like suggesting we judge sports teams without looking at the box score," said Duncan, a former professional basketball player.

Duncan is using federal stimulus dollars to press the issue. Read ([Will Arne Duncan Shake Up America's Schools?](#))

States and school districts will compete later this year for a piece of a \$5 billion fund to reward those that adopt innovations the Obama administration supports. Applications will be available in July, and money should be awarded early next year.

Whether officials tie student data to teacher evaluation will be a consideration, Duncan said.

"Believe it or not, several states, including [New York](#), [Wisconsin](#) and [California](#), have laws that create a firewall between student and teacher data," Duncan said.

"Think about that — laws that prohibit us from connecting children to the adults who teach them," Duncan said.

In several districts around the country including Chicago, where Duncan ran the public schools, merit pay systems have been created with support from teachers' unions. He says he wants it done with teachers, not to teachers.

Duncan will also consider whether states are encouraging charter schools, which are similarly controversial.

Charter schools are publicly funded but operate independently of local school boards, often free from the constraints of union contracts in traditional public schools. As a result, they are hotly opposed by teachers and other critics who say they drain money and talent from other public schools.

Duncan has criticized states where lawmakers have resisted efforts to allow more charters to open, such as Illinois, or more children to enroll in them, such as Tennessee. He has said states will hurt their chance to compete for stimulus dollars if they fail to embrace innovations like charter schools.

The education secretary's remarks came during a conference of the Institute of Education Sciences, the research and statistics arm of the Education Department.

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