

LA teachers to be judged partially on student achievement

By Teresa Watanabe, Los Angeles Times

In a potentially groundbreaking decision, Los Angeles teachers and administrators agreed with the school district for the first time to use student test scores as part of performance reviews beginning this school year.

But an attorney for United Teachers Los Angeles later said the commitment he made during a court hearing Tuesday was contingent on whether the union and L.A. Unified School District could successfully negotiate an agreement on exactly how such scores would be used in the teacher evaluations.

That drew criticism from an attorney who sought the pledge in a case he brought on behalf of Los Angeles parents, who successfully sued the district for violating a 41-year-old state law that requires evaluations to include measures of student achievement, such as test scores.

“This is exactly what we were concerned about – that [UTLA] would say one thing in court and change their position thereafter,” said Scott Witlin, an attorney for the group of unidentified parents.

In the case, which could transform teacher evaluations in California, Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge James C. Chalfant ruled last month that L.A. Unified had violated the law, known as the Stull Act. The plaintiffs’ attorneys had argued that the absence of a rigorous evaluation system that effectively identifies weak teachers for improvement or, if necessary, dismissal, deprives students of their constitutional right to educational equality.

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