

Ed Trust-Midwest Testimony to Legislature:

Michigan Needs a System of Improvement to Support Teaching Quality

Contact info:

Donnell Green

The Education Trust- Midwest

dgreen@edtrustmidwest.org

248-854-5297

Publication date: February 19, 2014

Today Amber Arellano, Executive Director, and Sarah Lenhoff, Director of Policy and Research of the Education Trust-Midwest, testified to the Michigan Legislature about Michigan's proposed statewide educator evaluation and support system. Their testimony follows.

Thank you for giving us the chance to speak to you today about Michigan's first proposed system of educator support and evaluation. I am Amber Arellano, executive director at the Education Trust-Midwest. With me today is Sarah Lenhoff, our director of policy and research. ETM is a non-partisan, data-driven, education research, information and advocacy organization. We work to serve as a source of non-partisan information and expertise – and a partner to state leaders, educators and others – about Michigan education and achievement gap closing.

First, we'd like to thank Governor Rick Snyder and lawmakers for your tremendous leadership on the development of this new system focused on raising teaching and learning in our schools. From the very beginning of this system's development in the 2011 tenure reforms, the legislature has been a leader on the issue of raising teaching quality. We strongly support Governor Rick Snyder's recommendation to invest more than \$27 million in the FY15 state budget in this proposed new system. Special thanks go to Rep. Margaret O'Brien and Rep. Adam Zemke for their incredible investment of time and dedication to HB 5223 and HB 5224.

Clearly, Michigan desperately needs this new system. Today Michigan is at the bottom for student learning and growth among all 50 states in most subjects and grades. But it doesn't have to be this way. The state of Tennessee provides us a good model of how this new system can dramatically and quickly transform our schools – and Michigan students' learning levels.

As you can see in the slides shown here today, Tennessee has been far outpacing Michigan – and the national average in student growth – since 2011. Indeed, it is now the nation's leading state for student growth, according to the new national assessment. These gains are being made not just for white students but for African American students, too.

Tennessee's leaders attribute this extraordinary growth to their implementation and investment in their new statewide educator support and evaluation system, along with higher standards.



February 6, 2014

Dear Honorable Lawmaker,

As Michigan's only statewide nonpartisan organization focused on what is best for students, the Education Trust – Midwest has a strong interest in ensuring all Michigan students have access to effective teaching. Research shows that teaching quality is schools' most powerful lever to improve student learning, which is vitally important in Michigan where 69 percent of fourth-graders cannot read on grade level – an indicator of future academic success.

We applaud the direction of two state initiatives we believe have great promise to improve teaching and learning in Michigan: rigorous career- and college-ready standards and educator evaluation and support. Tennessee, an early adopter of both strategies, posted the biggest gains of all states on the national assessment in 2013. It invested in high quality peer-to-peer training on higher standards and led the country in developing a statewide data system to track teacher impact on student learning.

House Bills 5223 and 5224, which are currently being discussed in the House Education Committee, have great potential to establish statewide expectations for high quality, accurate and fair educator evaluations, which our teachers and administrators need in order to get feedback and grow.

The attached report, "Supporting Michigan's Teachers: Smart Implementation of High Standards, Training, and Educator Evaluation," lays out a sensible roadmap and timeline for implementation of higher standards and educator evaluation in Michigan. It focuses on how to ensure that teachers get the support they need to raise the level of their teaching to meet higher standards and the feedback and data they need to improve their practice.

As you consider the educator evaluation bills and the state's budget, we urge you to focus on how best to support high quality teaching and learning in our state. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

The Education Trust – Midwest Team

Enclosures (3)

Editorial: Grade Michigan teachers with care

1:00 am

detroitnews.com



The Michigan Legislature has to devote time to teacher evaluations.

Michigan has made some significant strides in education reform the past few years. From lifting the cap on charter schools to major changes in teacher tenure law, the state has caught the attention of reform-minded experts across the country. But this work is far from finished.

A few key pieces of Gov. Rick Snyder's education agenda are languishing in the Legislature. Even though lawmakers are showing signs of fatigue on education policy, they should use this year to finish some of the projects they started.

One of the most important tasks is to approve a statewide model for teacher evaluations. Lawmakers themselves made this a priority in 2011 when they passed sweeping changes to the teacher tenure law.

Many aspects of that revamped law revolve around how teachers are graded. And the law requires schools to start measuring teachers' performance, based in large part on how well their students do, starting this school year. By the end of the 2016 school year, 50 percent of a teacher's annual evaluation is supposed to be based on student growth.

Here's the problem. Even though the clock is ticking on how the evaluations are done, schools haven't received much direction from the state. A talented group of evaluation experts—the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness—whom lawmakers tasked with creating a statewide model, turned in recommendations last summer. This blueprint focuses on helping teachers improve their craft, rather than simply punishing them for lackluster results.

The process took longer than the Legislature expected, however, and lawmakers are still mulling over their suggestions.

They need to make some decisions soon. The evaluation model is supported by the top education advocacy groups in the state, including the Education Trust-Midwest and StudentsFirst of Michigan. It's unfair to give schools blanket edicts and then offer them no concrete guidance. It's difficult and expensive for individual districts to come up with their own evaluation models. Some schools have done it well, but many haven't, so they will need to rely on this evaluation.

Also, lawmakers are still debating what standardized test they want to use to measure student growth. Currently, students take the Michigan Educational Assessment Program, which does a decent job of charting proficiency in key subjects, but not the amount of progress made in a given school year.

Making these decisions will give districts clarity and the tools they need to implement the new law as it was intended.

Some lawmakers seem to be backpedaling from the idea of a statewide model. For instance, Rep. Tom McMillin, R-Rochester Hills, has said recently that evaluations should be a matter of local control. Unfortunately, districts have proven this is difficult. Since 2009, schools were tasked with evaluating teachers “significantly” on student performance. Yet a 2012 report on those evaluations found that more than 99 percent of teachers were making high marks. That’s simply not an accurate picture, given the lackluster performance of state students on standardized tests.

There is reason for concern with the new model. If legislators make the statewide evaluation too prescriptive, they open the door to a plethora of legal challenges from teachers unions that could undermine the valuable tenure reforms from three years ago.

The governor has said finishing the evaluation piece of education reform is a priority, and the Legislature should hasten its work.

Amber Arellano: Invest Michigan's surplus in our future by improving education

*By Amber Arellano Detroit Free Press guest writer Filed Under Opinion Commentary Rick Snyder
1:25 PM, January 26, 2014 |*

freep.com

The other day, a Michigan teacher e-mailed me — and wow, was she frustrated.

Her salary has been cut, despite the fact that her school has been identified as high-performing by state leaders. Morale in her school is falling faster than the snowfall this winter.

Hold me accountable for performance, she said, but stop cutting teacher salaries and making it tougher for me to stay in the profession.

"I'm sorry to grumble at you, but obviously I'm frustrated," she wrote. "I left a human resources position in 2003 to become a teacher, and I've made less and less money ever since, even after getting my master's degree."

This fifth-grade teacher and single mom has a great point. We need to support our teachers, and hold them accountable, and treat them as professionals, including through professional salaries. We need to elevate the teaching profession in our state — and treat teachers for who they are: One of our state's most valuable and important public resources.

This month, state leaders are exploring how much to invest in our K-12 education system. From our nonpartisan perch, it feels like an important point is missing in this discussion: We need to invest more in our students and educators to dramatically improve teaching and learning in Michigan.

Our state has fallen — and continues to decline — in student achievement compared to states across the nation. And that's not even comparing us to the world's students. Data reveal we're performing dismally compared to the world's leading countries.

Our students — and our teachers and principals — deserve far better. Our future viability as a state, and our children's futures, depend on it.

That's why we must invest more in K-12 education — immediately. We have a rare opportunity to do so: the gift of a more than \$1-billion state budget surplus.

Should that money go into targeted state-level investments to improve teaching and learning? Yes, absolutely. We need to fund Michigan's proposed new statewide educator support and evaluation system, along with training on new college- and career-ready standards, to start.

We need to make sure educator evaluation isn't simply about accountability in Michigan. It should be about supporting teacher growth — especially in the first decade of their career or if they are struggling. Our new system also should identify master teachers who can serve as school leaders, mentors and coaches to boost teaching and learning — and ensure all of our educators and schools make the transition to teaching at higher levels. That requires state investment.

Should budget money also go to ensuring teacher salaries aren't further cut? Yes, absolutely.

This debate shouldn't be an either/or.

And while we applaud the investments that Gov. Rick Snyder is making in pre-K education, we also worry that many children who will benefit from those investments will soon attend terribly low-performing K-12 public schools, risking the learning gains that they made in their preschool years.

We need to invest in all of our children — from pre-K through high school and beyond. As not only an advocate for public education, but also as a Michigan mom, taxpayer and citizen, I cannot think of anything more crucial to our state's — and my daughter's — success.

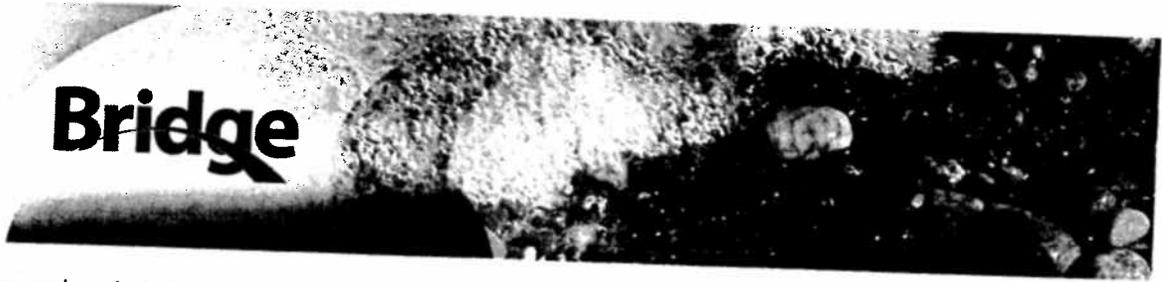
The bottom line is that our students are woefully underserved by a public education system — both traditional and charter schools alike — that is not performing at even average levels for national achievement.

Our kids don't deserve it. Our educators don't, either.

Our state leaders need to make investments to change that trajectory this winter.

Let's do what's right for our children and our state: invest wisely and strategically to improve our schools' teaching and learning.

Amber Arellano is the executive director of the Education Trust-Midwest, a nonpartisan statewide research, policy and advocacy group.



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Guest commentary

Michigan needs 'master teachers' who exhibit excellence, not mediocrity

23 July 2013

by **Sarah Lenhoff and Amber Arellano**
Education Trust-Midwest

Imagine you are a Michigan public high school math teacher. A 15-year veteran, for years your students have learned nearly twice as much as students in your colleagues' classrooms across the state. Your instructional abilities and attention to students' needs have catapulted them beyond their peers.

Now imagine this: Our state leaders tell you that your excellent performance really isn't appreciated. They announce you are going to receive the same leadership, promotion and pay increase opportunities as almost all of the other teachers in Michigan.

If that weren't enough, state education leaders also tell you that if you'd like a leadership opportunity as a teacher, you'll need to spend hundreds of hours of more time and money to get an additional credential that will make you a master teacher. What's more, widespread research shows credentials are weak predictors of high teaching quality.

Sounds like a crazy idea, right? Yet this new plan is precisely what state leaders are planning to fully implement this fall.

The Michigan Department of Education has devised a new teacher credential called the Advanced Professional Education Certificate. Its criteria – which go into effect on Sept. 1 – are intended to create a pathway for high-performing teachers to move into teacher leadership positions.

As former public school teachers, we applaud the state's intention. We have long advocated for the identification of teacher-leaders, also known as Master



Amber Arellano is the executive director at the Education Trust-Midwest, a non-partisan research and advocacy group working to raise achievement for all Michigan students.

Teachers. They can play a unique role in supporting their colleagues' instruction. Research suggests that teacher-leaders can make a huge difference in helping catch up students who are far behind — and make a pivotal difference in transforming failing schools.

But in order for such Master Teachers to make such a difference, they must be highly effective, skilled teachers. In other words, they must be truly masterful at their craft.

Therein lies the problem with the MDE pathway. The department plans to allow teachers to earn this new certificate without a single “highly effective” rating on their annual evaluations. Rather, teachers will be able to apply for the credential if they have received “effective” ratings on their last five evaluations — and have completed a teacher leadership program or National Board certification.

The implications of this policy are enormous for both Michigan students and the teaching profession. In 2011-2012, 75 percent of teachers in Michigan were rated effective, while just 23 percent were rated highly effective. If that trend continues, about 98 percent of teachers in Michigan would be rated at least “effective” or better and, after five years, would be eligible to become Master Teachers.

Combined with new proposals on merit pay, we worry that, essentially, every teacher in Michigan could get a raise and a promotion, regardless of their skill and performance.

More importantly, under this plan, our state's real Master Teachers would be marginalized. We cannot afford for that to happen. Many high-performing teachers are so disenchanted by the lack of opportunity in their profession that they leave teaching before students can gain the full benefit of their expertise. We're also concerned about the state requiring our already-superstar teachers to spend considerable time and personal resources on programs that have been shown not to improve effectiveness.

Finally, relying on brand new training programs to turn average teachers into terrific Master Teachers doesn't make sense. As we've mentioned, credentials are weak predictors of teaching quality. Today there are better measures of effectiveness, which can be determined through a combination of observations of practice, measures of student learning and other indicators such as student surveys. Such measures will form the foundation of Michigan's proposed new statewide system of educator evaluation and support, to be announced tomorrow.

Rather, being a Michigan Master Teacher should be an honor reserved for those who have proven their ability to perform at high levels. Michigan's new teacher-leader credential should be reserved only for those teachers who are rated “highly effective” for three or more consecutive years.

In addition, the state should pilot new qualitative data-driven Master Teacher pathways. District-led pilot induction processes could help discern whether Master



Sarah Lenhoff is the director of research and policy at the Education Trust-Midwest, a non-partisan research and advocacy group working to raise achievement for all Michigan students.

Teacher candidates are strongly skilled at coaching other teachers and serving as school and district leaders.

We urge the State Board to ask the Department of Education to change its criteria before Sept. 1. Michigan should honor the differences between our teachers, and celebrate excellence. Our truly masterful master teachers deserve no less.

8 comments from Bridge readers.

Chuck Fellows

July 23, 2013 at 10:04 am

At what point is the MDE going to demonstrate how this new "Master Teacher" certificate is going to impact the learning opportunities in the classroom? That's the point isn't it, to improve learning opportunities.

Learning is an activity that takes place between a teacher and a student. Teaching is the activity, teacher and student learning is the goal.

Why do policy makers at all levels pointedly and continuously ignore the voices of the two most important participants in a learning journey.

Maybe its time that the legislature and the MDE revisit the meaning and purpose of "policy" and stop trying to run the classroom from Lansing. At this point they have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are incapable of either. And the children pay the price for their ignorance.

A cynic might say that the leadership of the MDE is looking for ways to justify their existence on the public payroll since they are being threatened, wrongfully, by a minority in the legislature with an agenda to turn education over to the free market, You know that process that gave us the second great depression. Nah, only a cynic would think that.

Susan Buckley

July 23, 2013 at 10:10 am

"Both" Michigan students? Which two?

Do you mean Michigan students and teachers both?

Lisa

July 23, 2013 at 10:24 am

And just how to do measure a teacher's affectiveness? Based on student achievement? How do you even compare student achievement from WEst Bloomfield to Detroit. Detroit may have the best teachers in the State, but if the students aren't motivated to learn, they aren't going to no matter how good the teacher is.

Ann O'Connell

July 23, 2013 at 12:52 pm

I heartily second that MDE should pay more attention to teacher effectiveness and less to additional time (and money) spent on programs from our various schools of education when considering which teachers should be designated as "Master Teachers". While evaluations from skilled colleagues and administrators are also helpful, the proof of excellence in teaching is the growth in student learning. Additional "education" from academic programs, almost all of which have repeatedly failed to demonstrate any effect on student achievement should not determine teacher retention, promotion or pay rates.

Lisa above- you compare student learning across districts the same way you would within a classroom, or a single school district. You give them all the same test or assignment and compare the results according to a standardized measure of what students are expected to know at each grade level. Then you compare the average change in achievement level from the start of the year to the end of the year in

GOOD FOR TEACHERS, GOOD FOR STUDENTS

The need for smart teacher evaluation in Michigan



The Education Trust—Midwest

TO THE POINT

- Smart teacher evaluation helps teachers understand their strengths and weaknesses and supports them in improving student learning.
- Despite their best efforts, many local school districts and charter schools don't have the resources or expertise needed to reliably evaluate teachers and give them the support and feedback they need to grow.
- By adopting state standards of evaluation, Michigan will help ensure that all models used in the state are reliable, technically sound, and focused on improving teaching and learning.

Overview

As Michigan student achievement continues to fall behind a growing number of other states, it's clear that Michigan needs to support teachers better to improve instruction. Developmental feedback, in the form of a well-crafted, annual teacher evaluation, is an important first step toward that goal. Echoing their peers in other states, many Michigan educators say helpful, routine evaluations and useful professional development have been rare for much of their careers.

In an effort to give teachers the feedback and training they need to improve, the Michigan legislature passed a law in 2009 requiring local school districts and charter schools to evaluate all teachers every year, taking into account how much students learned. Since then, districts and charter schools have worked to develop their own evaluation models, often struggling mightily to ensure that the complexity and difficulty of teachers' work is taken into account.

Recognizing that struggle, the Michigan legislature returned to evaluation reform in 2011, creating the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness. The council of state-appointed education experts is charged with developing a statewide system of educator evaluation, including: Michigan's first common definition of what effective teaching looks like and a statewide evaluation model that any district or charter school in the state can use if it chooses. In addition, for those jurisdictions that want to develop their own models, the council is developing a set of state standards that all districts and charters would have to meet to have their models approved.

Still, a reasonable person might ask, is all this state-level action really necessary? Aren't our local districts and charter schools capable of deciding how to get their teachers the feedback and training they need to grow? To answer that question, the Education Trust–Midwest examined the teacher evaluation models now being used across Michigan.

The Education Trust–Midwest wanted to see how Michigan schools are responding to demands for developmental, technically sound — in other words, *smart* — evaluation practices that provide high-quality

professional development and feedback for our state's teachers. If we are to raise student achievement in our state, then we must do more to support and develop our educators' capacity to teach at higher levels. With this in mind, we reviewed local evaluation models adopted by 28 Michigan districts and charter schools of different sizes and capacities across the state. We then asked, "Do they measure up?" To help answer this question, we looked to best practices according to national research, lessons learned by other states and districts, and practitioners' recommendations. This report summarizes our conclusion, which is that most local models — despite the hard work that has gone into them — do not measure up to research-based standards for smart evaluation.

Included among our findings from the Michigan district and charter school models we examined:

- **Almost 20 percent** used checklist-style teacher observation tools with no opportunity for rich developmental feedback for teachers.
- **Almost half** allowed, or did not explicitly prevent, tenured or experienced teachers to go unobserved for an entire school year.
- **Only 18 percent** used the state's standardized tests to measure individual teachers' impact on student learning. State assessments are designed to measure how well students are learning Michigan's curriculum to ensure all students are getting rigorous, high-quality instruction to prepare them for an extraordinarily competitive global economy. Neglecting to use these available assessments leaves Michigan parents with no confidence that their children are learning what they are supposed to learn in school.
- **None** used a student growth or value-added model that was technically-sound enough to reliably gauge teachers' impact on student learning. Such measures are needed to provide rich feedback to teachers — and actually protect them from arbitrary evaluations.
- **The majority, 61 percent**, did not provide clear guidance to evaluators on how to combine the

“The process of evaluation has been yielding nice results for students — conversations are in more depth and it has forced us to have important conversations. We are grateful for this.”

— Scott Moore
Superintendent
Oscoda Area Schools

many measures of teaching performance into a final rating. This means administrators are more likely to produce unreliable or inaccurate final evaluation ratings — which may be risky for teachers, as these ratings will have a profound impact on their careers and futures.

- **No model** created a master or mentor teacher status or training to empower highly effective teachers to become observers in the evaluation process, which would help local schools manage the increased workload that meaningful evaluation may create.

Many of the district and charter school leaders we spoke with say they’ve long needed guidance to improve teacher evaluations. In other words, some state action is essential to protect everyone’s best interests — that is good for teachers, students and administrators.

To that end, the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) is developing a teacher evaluation system for the state. In the coming months, the Michigan legislature will have the opportunity to adopt the council’s recommendations. This report uses the lessons learned from local evaluation models already being implemented across the state to inform the work of the council and share these lessons with educators across the state, who often do this hard work in isolation. We also recommend standards the state should adopt to ensure that even those districts and charter schools that opt out of the state system meet minimum criteria for smart evaluation.

It’s also important to note that, despite the flaws found in these local systems, district and charter leaders across Michigan say the newfound emphasis on evaluation is helping teachers grow. Indeed, progress in other states and pockets of evidence from within Michigan have convinced us that it is possible to give teachers the kind of developmental, supportive feedback and data they need to truly excel.

“Principals, teachers, and central office are all tied together. Central office folks can’t sit idly by and blame buildings. **It’s not a “gotcha” system.**

It is a professional development and growth system — this is to help teachers grow professionally.”

— Sheila Dorsey
Assistant Superintendent
Kalamazoo Public Schools

GOOD FOR TEACHERS, GOOD FOR STUDENTS

The need for smart teacher evaluation in Michigan

BY DREW JACOBS, SARAH LENHOFF, AND AMBER ARELLANO

INTRODUCTION: WHY DO WE NEED TO IMPROVE TEACHER EVALUATION?

For years, parents have known that teachers matter an awful lot when it comes to student learning. American society hasn't always acknowledged that. But in recent years, a growing body of research has shown how fundamentally important teachers are to students and to our state's and country's future. Indeed, when compared to every other in-school factor, teachers influence student learning more than anything else. More than class size, or even the school system itself, teachers have the most profound effect on how much students learn, and can even help close the achievement gaps that have persisted between groups of students.¹

Despite what we know about the power of teaching, national studies have found state and local school evaluation systems rate almost all teachers as "satisfactory." A recent study by the Education Trust–Midwest showed similar results in Michigan.² Traditional teacher evaluations have simply not provided the kind of constructive feedback that would help teachers improve.³ Not surprisingly, teachers nationally repeat the same refrain: Evaluation has not been helpful.⁴

INITIAL STEPS IN MICHIGAN

In 2009, Michigan began to take steps to remedy this problem. The legislature passed a law that required local school districts and charter schools to evaluate all teachers every year and take into account how much students learned as part of teachers' final evaluations. This put a new focus on student achievement and on supporting teacher development. However, unlike leading states, the law provided little guidance or state support on how to do this complex work well. Since then, districts and charter schools of varying size and capacity throughout Michigan have worked — often in isolation — to develop their own standards for good teaching and appropriate feedback, developing their own, unique ways of measuring teacher practice and student learning — and often struggling mightily along the way.

In 2011, recognizing an urgent need for assistance, the legislature passed pioneering tenure and teacher evaluation reforms to raise student learning and improve schools. This led to the creation of the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE), a group of state-appointed education experts. Chaired by Dean Deborah Loewenberg Ball of the University of Michigan's School of Education, the council is charged with developing a statewide "opt-out" system of educator evaluation. That means that local school leaders can use the state evaluation model being developed by the MCEE, or they can seek approval for their own local models, which must meet new state standards the council is set to release in the spring of 2013. The council also is charged with developing

a new statewide value-added model for assessing student growth that all Michigan districts and charter schools will be required to use for a portion of their evaluations.

In November 2011, more than 300 districts and charter schools indicated their intention to opt out of the state evaluation model and develop their own instead. This report examines 28 of those models. (See sidebar and Appendix A to learn more about these 28 models and how they were selected for review).

HOW WE ANALYZED EACH LOCAL MODEL

To analyze the models, we looked to the latest, most widely accepted national research on teacher evaluation by policy and practice groups like TNTP (formerly The New Teacher Project), TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement, and the National Council on Teacher Quality, and by respected education researchers such as Sanders and Horn; Goldhaber; and Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain, among others.

Together, this research found that "smart" evaluations contained the following components:

- They are conducted annually
- Have clear, rigorous expectations that differentiate teacher performance
- Include multiple, structured, and comprehensive classroom observations
- Include sound measures of student learning growth
- Encourage constructive, clear, developmental feedback.

Because administrators and other evaluators are accustomed to rating almost all teachers as "satisfactory," smart evaluation models also give clear directions about how to combine multiple measures of performance into a final rating through what is known as a scoring framework. In Michigan's high-stakes educational environment, where evaluation ratings will dictate which teachers earn tenure and remain in the teaching profession, and which ones may eventually be dismissed if they do not improve after years of support, this work is critically important to the futures of thousands of professional educators and many more students.

Finally, research suggests that strong evaluation models include attention to both design and implementation. Smart evaluation takes time, expertise, and resources. Many educators across the state are worried about the new demands of quality educator evaluation, for good reason. One of the considerations in our study, therefore, has been whether these local evaluation

Drew Jacobs is a data and policy analyst, Sarah Lenhoff is assistant director of policy and research, and Amber Arellano is the founding executive director of The Education Trust–Midwest.

HOW WE SELECTED THE 28 DISTRICTS AND CHARTER SCHOOLS EXAMINED IN THIS STUDY:

The Education Trust-Midwest chose school districts and charters representing a range of public school experiences in Michigan's urban, rural and suburban areas. Our sample ranged in enrollment from 200 to 18,000 students. The districts and charter schools also varied in socioeconomic, racial, and special-education populations. Some — such as Oakridge Public Schools, Wayne-Westland Community School District, and Oscoda Area Schools — were previously cited as examples of best practices of teacher evaluation by the Michigan Department of Education and others.

In addition to analyzing the models themselves, we made multiple efforts to talk to the school leaders behind each model because we believe that context matters. Some of our most telling findings in this report come from these conversations. We are grateful for their courage, generosity and candor in speaking about this difficult work, the challenges they have faced, and how much they are learning.

Leaders in these 17 traditional public school districts and two charter school management companies agreed to talk with us: Bad Axe Public Schools; Berrien Springs Public Schools; Cadillac Area Public Schools; Choice Schools Associates; Dearborn City School District; Garden City Public Schools; Kalamazoo Public Schools; Kelloggsville Public School District through Kent ISD; Lapeer Community Schools; The Leona Group, LLC; Lincoln Park Public Schools; Livonia Public Schools; Oakridge Public Schools; Oscoda Area Schools; Rockford Public Schools; Romulus Community Schools; Rudyard Area Schools; Wayne-Westland Community School District; and West Iron County School District. We appreciate their contributions to our understanding of this important work, and we hope their insights will inform other districts and charter schools, as well as the ongoing work of the MCEE.

models help administrators and other staffers manage the potential increase in workload brought on by a new system.

Guided by this research, we assessed each evaluation model by asking five key questions:

1. Are teachers getting developmental, actionable feedback from their observations?
2. Is every teacher observed at least once a year by a trained evaluator? Are novices or low-performing teachers observed more often?
3. For teachers in grades and subjects with state standardized tests, are those test results used to generate technically sound estimates of a teacher's impact on student learning?
4. Do administrators and teachers know how to take the data generated from multiple measures of teaching — such as student growth, classroom observations, and student

surveys — and combine them to determine an accurate final evaluation rating? Is a clear, thoughtful framework provided to help them do this in a consistent way?

5. Are districts and charter schools finding effective ways to assist local educators with managing the increased requirements and workload, while administering consistently smart and reliable evaluations?

FINDINGS: THE STRUGGLE TO CARRY OUT SMART EVALUATION IN MICHIGAN

Question 1: Are teachers getting developmental, actionable feedback from their observations?

Finding 1: While some teachers are getting useful feedback from their observations, nearly 25 percent of the models we examined use checklist-style observation tools with no opportunity for the kind of rich feedback that will help teachers improve.

Classroom observation is the cornerstone of smart evaluation. Evaluators need to see teachers in action to know what they are doing well and how they might improve. But for observers to evaluate teacher practice accurately, they need a concrete vision of what good teaching looks like, with examples and descriptions of good practice in each of the four rating categories that Michigan now requires all schools to use: ineffective, minimally effective, effective, and highly effective. In other words, evaluators and school leaders need to clearly communicate what they mean when they say a teacher's practice is "effective" or "ineffective." As Sheila Dorsey, assistant superintendent at Kalamazoo Public Schools, told us: "Teachers want quick, actionable information."

In some places, such as the Dearborn City School District, the observation tools are both clear and descriptive, allowing teachers to receive rich, meaningful feedback that would help them improve. Dearborn administrators use an evaluation framework (or "rubric") that addresses 28 discrete teaching behaviors related to student learning that they can observe. As one example, administrators and teachers in Dearborn know what lesson clarity looks like at each of four performance levels, making it easier for administrators to conduct observations and to give constructive feedback, and making it easier for teachers to use that feedback as a guide for improving their practice (see Table 1, pg. 3).

In contrast, in White Cloud Public Schools, just north of Grand Rapids, administrators use an observation tool that gives no description of what each teacher rating category looks like, let alone guidance that teachers can use to improve their practice (see Table 2, pg. 3).

This kind of checklist-style observation protocol is typically of little use to classroom teachers because it provides a poor starting point for meaningful conversations about improving classroom performance. Smart observation tools give teachers precise and actionable information on current performance, what they can do to increase student learning, and a path for school leaders to support their teaching. They also allow schools to identify and use a teacher's strengths as an example

Table 1. Excerpt from the observation rubric that the Dearborn City School District submitted to the state in its bid to “opt out” of the state evaluation system.

DEARBORN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT				
LESSON CLARITY	Ineffective	Minimally Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
	Lesson presentation has no defined structure nor is based on district curriculum.	Lesson presentation has some structure and is only partially based on district/state curriculum. Rarely is new information related to previous teaching.	Lesson presentation is clear, logical and based on district and state curriculum. Multiple techniques relate new information to previous teaching and accommodate student needs.	Model lessons are designed and shared with other teachers to improve understanding and practice across the curriculum.

Table 2. Excerpt from the observation rubric that White Cloud Public Schools submitted to the state to opt out of the state evaluation system.

WHITE CLOUD PUBLIC SCHOOLS				
TEACHER COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY.	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Not Demonstrated

for other teachers to follow. In Oakridge Public Schools in Muskegon, the district’s new approach to observations has already begun to improve conversations about practice. “We have taken a narrative approach to documenting observations which has been found to be more productive starting points for substantive dialogue about improving instructional practices,” said Superintendent Tom Livezey.

Sarah Earnest, Regional Human Resources Coordinator at Kent Intermediate School District, which helped Kelloggsville Public Schools near Grand Rapids design its model, said: “One of the biggest things I have learned is the power of the conversations that are had with teachers. That is where the learning occurs for the teacher.” A strong system of observation and feedback is one of the most effective ways to encourage powerful conversations between teachers and administrators.

The MCEE is piloting four promising, research-based observation tools in Michigan districts this school year. The results will help the council establish guidelines and recommend a statewide evaluation model that puts rich and meaningful feedback and collaboration at the forefront of teacher development. In the coming months, the legislature needs to step up and pass the council’s recommendations into law.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MICHIGAN

- The Michigan legislature should support new state standards requiring all district and charter school evaluation models to use observation tools that focus on the teaching behaviors most related to student learning, and contain clear descriptions of what teaching looks like within each level of performance.
- The MCEE must develop an observation tool that focuses

on the teaching behaviors most related to student learning in its statewide evaluation model. This tool must contain clear descriptions of practice at each performance level.

Question 2: Is every teacher observed at least once a year by a trained evaluator? Are novices or low-performing teachers observed more often?

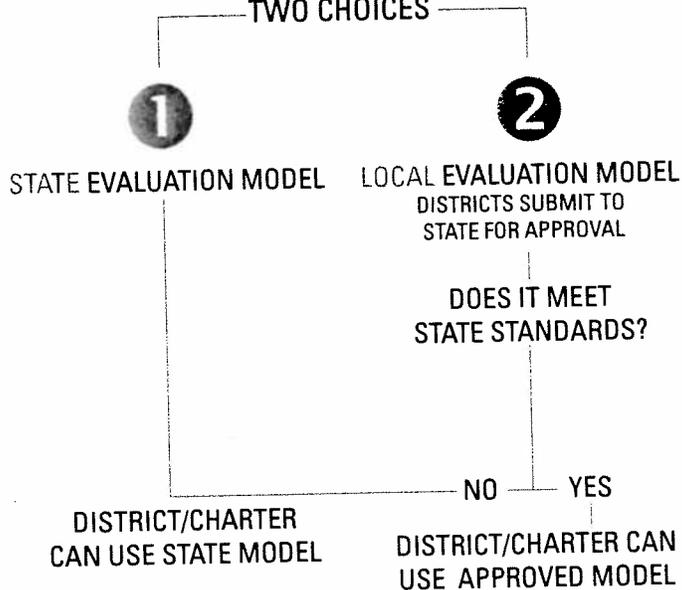
Finding 2: In roughly half the models we reviewed, teachers were observed at least once a year as part of an annual evaluation. However, about 46 percent of the models either allowed (or did not explicitly prevent) tenured or experienced teachers to go unobserved for an entire school year.

Teachers in their 20th year want to grow and improve as much as teachers in their first year. Teaching is demanding work and all teachers can strengthen some aspect of their practice. Even veteran teachers benefit from high-quality observations.

While about half of the models we analyzed required all teachers to be observed at least once a year, 46 percent either allowed some tenured teachers to go an entire school year without being observed or did not prevent this from happening. New teachers *should* receive more feedback than veteran instructors; most experts suggest multiple observations each year during the first several years of teaching.⁶ However, we shortchange our veterans if we don’t observe and share feedback with them at least annually.

The model used by Garden City Public Schools, west of Detroit, requires all teachers to have at least one annual observation and allows more observations for teachers who are new or struggling.⁷ Minimally effective or ineffective teachers in Garden City receive three or more observations annually.

MICHIGAN'S OPT-OUT EVALUATION SYSTEM TWO CHOICES



This graphic portrays the two teacher evaluation choices that will be available to local school districts and charter schools in Michigan. Systems can choose to use the state evaluation model, which is recommended by the MCEE, or they can opt to design their own model, which must meet state standards to win approval.

Alternatively, Madison District Public Schools in Oakland County has an evaluation plan for some tenured teachers that calls for no classroom observation at all. Teachers under this plan meet with administrators to review goals in September and again at the end of the year to discuss progress toward goals. But with no annual observations, these teachers do not get helpful feedback on their strengths and weaknesses that only classroom observation can provide. They don't receive an outside perspective on their teaching, which all professionals need to grow and learn. All teachers, no matter their tenure status or experience, should be observed at least once a year as part of a comprehensive evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MICHIGAN

- The MCEE must require annual observations for all teachers, both in the statewide model it's developing and in the standards it's crafting for districts and charters seeking approval for their own models.
- Struggling or less experienced teachers should receive at least three observations each year, though these may be of varying lengths and may be conducted by either administrators or specially trained expert peers.

Question 3: For teachers in grades and subjects with state standardized tests, are those test results used to generate technically sound estimates of a teacher's impact on student learning?

Finding 3: Only 16 percent of the models we examined use the state's applicable standardized tests to measure student learning. None of the models we examined used a technically sound growth or value-added model to gauge teachers' impact on student learning. In other words, the models we reviewed did not take into account students' performance when they enter the classroom or other factors that may impact student growth.

Two decades of research have demonstrated that teachers can have a significant impact on how much their students learn during a given year. Sanders and Rivers, for instance, found that students who achieve at the 50th percentile at age 8 will rise to the 90th percentile by age 11 if they have three consecutive years of high-performing teachers.⁸ The same students with three consecutive low-performing teachers would decline to the 37th percentile by age 11. That's a 53-point gap in achievement within three years.

But research also shows that even good classroom observers can't always distinguish the teachers who produce the most growth in student learning from those who produce little or no growth.⁹ That's why it is important for teacher evaluations to include both classroom observations and more direct measures of student growth whenever possible. Adding this second group of measures can actually protect teachers from arbitrary evaluations, because they provide objective information regarding a teacher's impact on student learning, based on how much a student learned during the school year while also taking into account other factors in a student's background, such as poverty. To do this, districts in Michigan must look to appropriate standardized tests and use a technically sound growth model, such as "value added," to isolate a teacher's impact on student learning.

Some of the local models we examined identified the best assessments currently available for measuring student learning, such as the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and the Michigan Merit Exam (MME). In Kalamazoo Public Schools, for instance, the evaluation tool spells out when state assessments should be incorporated into some teachers' evaluations: "Where a statewide assessment exists for the teacher's subject or grade level, that assessment shall be one of the measures used along with other comparable, rigorous measures approved by the principal in conjunction with the leadership team."

Conversely, in Oakridge Public Schools, teachers can be held accountable for student outcomes based on less useful or reliable factors, such as pass/fail rates. This is a less objective measure of student learning because it can be affected by factors beyond how much a student learned, such as attendance. Even in subjects and grades where state assessment data are not available, it's important for the MCEE to provide guidelines for measuring a teacher's impact on student learning. Instead of allowing teachers in one district to be evaluated on their students' pass/fail rates and teachers

in another district to be evaluated on student growth on approved assessments, the state must provide clear guidance that is consistent across Michigan. Without a uniform standard, teacher evaluations across the state will not be comparable; meaning that a teacher rated “highly effective” in Grand Rapids may only be rated “minimally effective” in Grand Blanc. If this is allowed to happen, parents will have no way of determining if their teachers are truly effective, or if their districts or charter schools simply set a low bar for performance.

For those grades and subjects in which students are tested by the state, the most widely accepted way to measure student growth is through “value-added” data. Value-added is a statistical measure that takes into account all of the student data available — including achievement scores from past years — to determine a teacher’s impact on student learning. These data look at the amount students grow during a year with a given teacher and compare that to how similar students grow elsewhere in the state. This is the most reliable way to measure the effectiveness of teachers in tested subjects and grade levels (typically about one third of all teachers) because it takes into account not only where students are at the end of the year but also where they started at the beginning. It also takes into account important factors that can affect student achievement, such as poverty. Why is this important? Accounting for these factors prevents teachers from being penalized for taking on challenging teaching assignments involving struggling or impoverished students.

Models like the one proposed by Berrien Springs Public Schools illustrate why value-added is so vital to making teacher evaluation reliable. Berrien Springs, in the state’s southwestern corner, doesn’t use a value-added model. Instead, it rates any teacher whose students, overall, perform “above the state average” as effective. In practice, this means that teachers who teach low-performing students will be vulnerable to misleadingly low evaluations, even if their students improve drastically during the school year. A sophisticated growth model such as value-added would credit those teachers who dramatically improve student growth, even when those students remain below the state average.

The MCEE is charged with developing a sophisticated value-added model for all districts and charter schools across the state. Even those seeking to win approval for their own evaluation model must use the state growth or value-added model at least in part to determine a teacher’s impact on student learning. This state model will boost the confidence of educators who, like Superintendent Tony Habra of Rudyard Area Schools in the Upper Peninsula, are “worried that teachers with a significant number of at-risk students on their caseload will end up being rated as less than effective” on their evaluations.

In addition to sound growth models, teachers — especially those teaching untested grades or subjects — would also benefit from other measures of student learning, such as uniform student learning objectives. These measures help to ensure that teachers are working toward standards-aligned goals that are reasonable and measurable. States such as Indiana, New York, and Rhode Island have adopted student learning objectives to gauge the performance of teachers who

“Principals are having great conversations with teachers that they never had before. They are spending more time in classrooms than they have in 10 years.”

— Jan Bermingham
Program Coordinator
Berrien Springs Public Schools

teach subjects that are not tested by state assessments. The MCEE faces a similar task — it must find a way to measure the impact of all teachers, even those teaching classes that are not tested by the state. The council could, for example, develop a list of student learning measures that districts and charter schools can choose from in addition to a growth model.

The district and charter leaders we talked with said they understand the importance of measuring student learning because it helps them determine what elements of teaching are the most important. “It used to be, if your class was quiet, you were doing a good job. Now, we look at whether students are learning,” said Cheryl Irving, assistant superintendent at Lincoln Park Public Schools, a district located just south of Detroit.

Every model in our sample fell short in soundly measuring student learning, however. Despite their hard work, we found no districts or charter schools used a value-added model to measure student learning for evaluations. Only about one-in-three models included *any* measure of student growth as 25 percent or more of a teacher’s evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MICHIGAN

- State leaders must ensure that all Michigan districts and charter schools adopt the state-provided growth model being developed by the MCEE and use it in their local evaluation models for teachers who teach tested subjects and grades, regardless of whether they use the state system or seek approval for their own. This is the only way to get comparative data on teacher performance across the state, which will help ensure all students — especially the lowest performing — have access to highly effective teachers.
- The MCEE must provide clear guidance about how to measure student learning for teachers of subjects and grades where standardized assessments are not available, the kind

Table 3. How Final Ratings for Rhode Island Teachers are Determined

This is one example of a tool administrators can use to determine teachers' final evaluation ratings. In Rhode Island, administrators can take teachers' professional practice scores from their observations and combine them with student learning scores to decide what rating to give teachers on their final evaluations.

		STUDENT LEARNING			
		4	3	2	1
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND RESPONSIBILITIES	4	Highly Effective	Effective	Developing	Developing*
	3	Highly Effective	Effective	Developing	Developing
	2	Effective	Effective	Developing	Ineffective
	1	Developing*	Developing	Ineffective	Ineffective
		*Note. This disparity will trigger an immediate review. Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Docs/Teacher_Model_GB-Edition_II_FINAL.pdf			

of guidance that teachers of non-core subjects receive in states such as Indiana, New York, and Rhode Island. We recommend the state convene a group of leading educators, students and parents to develop guidelines or new assessments to measure student learning in subjects not tested by the state.

- The MCEE should also approve a second method of measuring student learning for teachers of both tested and non-tested subjects, such as a process for setting annual student learning objectives for districts and charter schools across Michigan.

Question 4: Do administrators and teachers know how to take data generated from multiple measures of teaching — such as student growth, classroom observations, and student surveys — and combine them to determine an accurate final evaluation rating? Is a clear, thoughtful framework provided to help them do this in a consistent way?

Finding 4: Of the models we examined, 61 percent did not clearly describe how to combine multiple measures of teaching performance into a final rating. This means administrators have to guess how to put together these new measures of performance, creating a risk that teachers' final ratings will be inaccurate and that teachers will not receive the support they need to improve.

All measures of teaching practice — including observations, student growth, and measures like teacher and parent surveys — should be taken into account when determining teachers' final ratings. But this is new work for administrators, who are used to basing evaluation ratings entirely on checklist-style observations and rating virtually every teacher "satisfactory." Many administrators say they welcome guidance on how to combine these multiple, more nuanced measures to determine final ratings. A clear scoring framework would help them reliably determine teacher performance, so they can give teachers the feedback and support they need to improve.

But designing these scoring frameworks can be a struggle. "We are really wrestling with how to address the mismatch between student data and observation data," said Sid Faucette of Choice Schools Associates, a charter school management company. Teachers are likewise struggling with these changes. "There is a tension for teachers about the difference between 'highly effective' and 'effective,'" said Sarah Earnest, regional human resource coordinator from Kent Intermediate School District. "We were using 'satisfactory' and 'unsatisfactory' evaluations, and it was always, 'I'm the best because I'm satisfactory.' So we have to change some mindsets because all teachers are expecting to be 'highly effective.'"

Rhode Island provides a good example of a strong scoring framework (see Table 3, above). Supported by both the Rhode Island teachers' union and the Rhode Island Department of Education, the state's scoring framework helps administrators combine different measures of teaching into a sound final rating. It also flags instances where there is a wide disparity between measures.

Scoring frameworks such as Rhode Island's take the uncertainty out of evaluations and help administrators make reliable decisions about teacher performance. In those instances in which there are disturbing disparities in the scores — i.e., a teacher who is scored as "highly effective" in student growth, but is rated "ineffective" in the classroom observation — teachers can depend on external reviews to reconcile such discrepancies and ensure reliability and accuracy.

Sheila Dorsey, assistant superintendent of Kalamazoo Public Schools, said creating this type of external review could create more buy-in among teachers and administrators, both of whom are subject to performance evaluation in Michigan. "Administrators have to be randomly checked for their evaluations, so principals are trying to do a good job," Dorsey said. "They really want to help teachers become better professionals. There's a lot of coming together."

But only nine of the 28 models we examined gave administrators clear guidance on properly assembling a final rating. For instance, the model developed by Island

City Academy, a charter school in Eaton Rapids, gives administrators little guidance on how to combine measures of teaching from observations, student learning, and parent communication into a final rating for each teacher. With no standards for scoring final ratings, administrators in the state are likely to fall back to the status quo: rating every teacher “effective” and not giving teachers the feedback they need to learn and improve.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MICHIGAN

- The MCEE must develop a meaningful scoring framework for the state evaluation model to provide a clear way for educators to combine each piece of the model into a final annual rating for each teacher.
- For districts that want to opt out of the state model, the legislature must establish a standard that requires every district and charter school to develop a clear scoring framework for administrators to determine final annual ratings for each teacher.

Question 5: Are districts and charter schools finding effective ways to assist local educators with managing the increased requirements and workload, while administering consistently smart and reliable teacher evaluations?

Finding 5: None of the local models we examined create a master or mentor teacher designation for highly effective teachers to become observers and assist with evaluations. Master or mentor teachers could help school principals with the workload of more frequent evaluation and provide more opportunities for feedback and collaboration with their colleagues.

Smart teacher evaluation is complex work that most districts and charter schools have either not fully embraced or mastered. It takes time and commitment to do it right, especially in places where annual teacher evaluations have never occurred. Sarah Earnest from Kent Intermediate School District reminded us that administrators now face vastly different expectations about their roles and how to measure success than they faced even a decade ago: “We’re changing the role of the building principal — they are the instructional leaders, and that needs to be at the forefront.”

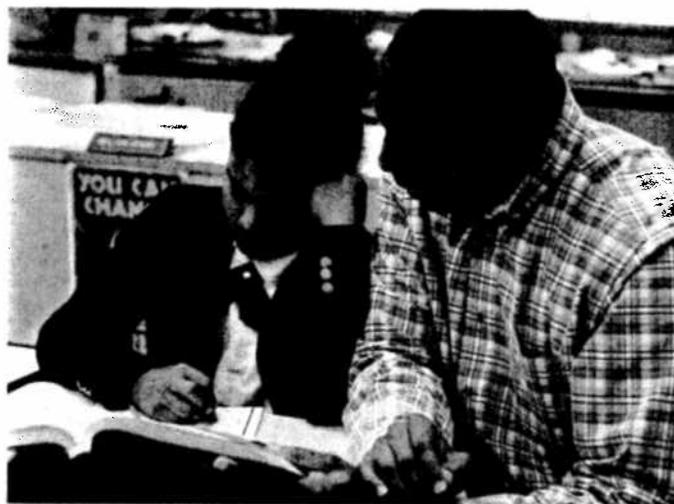
“Principals are having great conversations with teachers that they never had before,” said Jan Bermingham, Program Coordinator at Berrien Springs Public Schools. “They are spending more time in classrooms than they have in 10 years.”

Most districts and charter schools in our sample are struggling with how to manage the increased demands of evaluation and the changing role of administrators, while still maintaining accuracy and reliability. Though some districts have devised ways to do this well.

In Lapeer Community Schools, for instance, the evaluation model makes clear that every teacher is going to be observed annually. Probationary teachers receive no less than two observations each year and tenured teachers are observed at least once annually. But Lapeer also gives administrators flexibility on the length and frequency of observations for effective, tenured teachers. This combination of specification

“It used to be, if your class was quiet, you were doing a good job. Now we look at whether students are learning.”

— Cheryl Irving
Assistant Superintendent
Lincoln Park Public Schools



and flexibility ensures that evaluations will still include necessary observation data but allows administrators to determine how much observation information is sufficient.

Other districts are also building flexibility into observations. Four observations of 15 minutes each, targeted on specific teaching behaviors, may actually be more do-able for some administrators than a single hour-long observation, while still providing rich information for evaluating teachers.

In Tennessee, the District of Columbia, and Hillsborough County, Florida, some schools have handled the increased workload of evaluation by allowing master or mentor teachers to observe and give feedback to their peers. Based in part on the widely admired TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement, this method allows highly effective teachers to apply for master teacher status. Master teachers share both instructional and evaluation responsibilities with administrators. Not only does this model allow teachers more one-on-one time with evaluators, it also supports a path forward for highly effective teachers to share their expertise with others, increasing the school’s capacity and giving these teachers the recognition they deserve.

None of the districts or charters in our sample created a master or mentor teacher designation for highly effective teachers. But some of the models we studied indicated that school leaders are receptive to the idea. In Kelloggville Public Schools, for instance, the model refers to both administrators and “evaluators” conducting observations. And in Lapeer

Community Schools, the model allows for “teachers-in-charge” to evaluate teachers. These instances show that some districts and charter schools may be open to guidance from the state on how this new role for teachers might be fully embraced.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MICHIGAN

- The MCEE should recommend a process for identifying highly effective teachers as master or mentor teachers who can be trained to perform observations and give feedback to other teachers to help them improve their practice. Local district and charter schools that seek to use their own locally-developed models should provide for a master or mentor teacher option, too.
- The MCEE should recommend that all evaluation models start with tenured, highly effective teachers being observed at least once per year (more frequently for novice and/or struggling teachers), with the minimum number of observations increasing as administrators get more experienced with evaluation.

THE FUTURE OF TEACHER EVALUATION IN MICHIGAN

Most of the districts and charter schools in our sample worked hard to develop evaluation models that give teachers the data they need to improve their practice. And many of them are already beginning to see improvements in teacher morale and instruction. “The process of evaluation has been yielding nice results for students — conversations are in more depth and it has forced us to have important conversations. We are grateful for this,” said Scott Moore, superintendent of Oscoda Area Schools.

Still, building smart evaluation systems is challenging work. All of the 28 models we reviewed fell short in at least one way. This does not mean that smart teacher evaluation is impossible. It means that smart evaluation in Michigan will require the collective effort of state leaders, local educators, and educational experts. In leading states, state leadership has been instrumental in building systems that serve teachers and students well. In Tennessee, where schools have completed their first year under a new state educator evaluation system, students posted the biggest gains in learning that the state has seen under its current assessments. In Michigan, the districts and charter schools that are attempting this work say that their systems, whatever their flaws, are helping teachers grow. Indeed, progress in other states and pockets of evidence from within Michigan have convinced us that it is possible to give teachers the kind of supportive feedback and information they need to truly excel.

“Principals, teachers, and central office are all tied together,” said Sheila Dorsey from Kalamazoo Public Schools. “Central office folks can’t sit idly by and blame buildings. It’s not a ‘gotcha’ system. It is a professional development and growth system — this is to help teachers grow professionally.”

The Michigan legislature must finish the work it began in 2009 and pass the council’s recommendations into law, ensuring a comprehensive educator evaluation system that any

district or charter school can use, and a set of state standards that all local evaluation models must meet.

As the MCEE designs a statewide model for teacher evaluation, we hope it will learn from the experiences of educators highlighted in this report. By drawing on the strengths and weaknesses of local models already being used in Michigan, the council will be able to design state standards that all smart evaluation models must meet to improve teacher practice and, in turn, increase student learning. Good teaching is too important to our students’ future to leave this to chance. ■

Appendix A. This table documents how the district and charter school models in our sample measure up to research-based criteria for smart teacher evaluation. "Yes" indicates that the model met that standard.

District or Charter ¹¹	Is the observation more than a checklist, providing room for nuanced feedback?	Does plan require annual observation of all teachers?	If MEAP/MME data are available on a teacher's class, does the plan require it to be used in the evaluation?	Is student growth measured in the 2011-12 evaluations? If so, what percentage?	Does plan give specific directions on how to score all components of the evaluations?
Bad Axe Public Schools	No	Not specifically	No	Yes, but extent is unclear.	No
Berrien Springs Public Schools	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, 24%	Yes
Cadillac Area Public Schools	Yes	Yes	No	No. 25% starting in 2012-13	No
Choice Schools Associates — 11 Charter Schools	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, 50%	No
Dearborn City School District	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, "significant portion"	Yes
Dearborn Heights School District #7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, 38%	No
Garden City Public Schools	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, 25%	Yes
Island City Academy	No	Not specifically	Yes	Yes, 50%	No
Kalamazoo Public Schools	Yes	No	No	Yes, 25%	Yes
Kent ISD / Kelloggsville Public Schools	Yes	No	No	Yes, but extent is unclear.	No
Lapeer Community Schools	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, 8%	Yes
The Leona Group LLC ¹² — 12 Charter Schools	Yes	Not specifically	No	Yes, 50%	No
Lincoln Park Public Schools	Yes	No	No	No. 25% starting in 2012-13	No
Livonia Public Schools	Yes	No	No	Yes, based on the school improvement plan.	No
Macomb ISD ¹³	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Madison District Public Schools	Yes	No	No	Yes, 8%	No
Melvindale-North Allen Park Schools	Yes	Yes	No	No. 25% starting in 2012-13	Yes
National Heritage Academies — 43 Charter Schools	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	No
Oakridge Public Schools	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, but extent is unclear.	No
Oscoda Area Schools	Yes	Not specifically	Yes	Yes, 20%	Yes
Pontiac City School District	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Rockford Public Schools	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, 25%	Yes
Romulus Community Schools	No	No	No	Yes, 40% for tenured teachers, unclear for others.	No
Rudyard Area Schools	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Yes, 20%	No
Watervliet School District	No	Yes	No	No, 20% starting in 2012-13	No
Wayne-Westland Community School District	Yes	No	Yes	Yes, 30%	Yes
West Iron County Public Schools	Yes	Not specifically	No	Yes, 25%	No
White Cloud Public Schools	No	Not specifically	No	Yes, but extent is unclear.	No

NOTES

1. Robert Gordon, Thomas J. Kane, and Douglas O. Staiger, "Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job" in *Path to Prosperity: Hamilton Project Ideas on Income Security, Education, and Taxes*, ed. Jason Furman and Jason Bordoff (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), chapter 7. S. Paul Wright, Sandra P. Horn, and William L. Sanders, "Teacher and Classroom Context Effects on Student Achievement: Implications for Teacher Evaluation," *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* 11 (1997): 57-67.
2. Sarah Lenhoff, "Strengthening Michigan's Teacher Force: How a New Teacher Evaluation System will Better Equip Michigan Educators to Improve Student Achievement," (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2012).
3. Weisberg, D., Sexton, S., Mulhern, J., and Keeling, D., "The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness," (New York: The New Teacher Project, 2009).
4. Ibid.
5. TNTP, "Teacher Evaluation 2.0," (New York: The New Teacher Project, 2010). National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, "TAP Research Summary," (Santa Monica, CA: NIET, 2012). National Council on Teacher Quality, "State of the States: Trends and Early Lessons on Teacher Evaluation and Effectiveness Policies," (Washington, D.C.: NCTQ, 2011). William L. Sanders and Sandra P. Horn, "Research Findings from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) Database: Implications for Educational Evaluation and Research," *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* 12(3) (1998): 247-256. Dan Goldhaber, "Teacher Pay Reforms: The Political Implications of Recent Research," (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, 2009). Steven G. Rivkin, Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain, "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement," *Econometrica* 73(2) (2005), 417-458).
6. Thomas J. Kane and Douglas O. Staiger, "Gathering Feedback for Teaching: Combining High Quality Observations with Student Surveys and Achievement Gains," Measuring Effective Teaching Project. (Seattle, Wash.: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012).
7. In August 2012, the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness announced the 14 districts that would pilot the new statewide teacher evaluation system in the 2012-2013 school year. Garden City Public Schools, a district in our sample, was one of the selected pilot districts. Because of this, the district's evaluation model will likely be different in the 2012-2013 school year than what is represented in this paper. The 13 other districts in the pilot are: Clare Public Schools, Leslie Public Schools, Marshall Public Schools, Mt. Morris Consolidated Schools, Montrose Community Schools, Port Huron Area School District, Big Rapids Public Schools, Farmington Public Schools, North Branch Area Schools, Cassopolis Public Schools, Gibraltar School District, Harper Creek Community Schools, and Lincoln Consolidated Schools. Leslie Public Schools and Marshall Public Schools also applied to opt out of the statewide system in November 2011. Please see the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness website for more details on the pilot: <http://www.mcede.org/resources/2012-2013-pilot>.
8. William L. Sanders and June C. Rivers, "Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement," (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, 1996).
9. Thomas J. Kane and Douglas O. Staiger, "Gathering Feedback for Teaching: Combining High Quality Observations with Student Surveys and Achievement Gains," Measuring Effective Teaching Project, (Seattle, Wash.: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012).
10. Tennessee Department of Education, "Teacher Evaluation in Tennessee: A Report on Year 1 Implementation," July 2012. http://www.tn.gov/education/doc/yr_1_tchr_eval_rpt.pdf
11. Note on school responses: Of the 28 districts and charters selected, 19 complied fully with our requests. National Heritage Academies was partially responsive. Madison (Oakland) Public Schools, Dearborn Heights, Island City Academy, Macomb ISD, Melvindale-North Allen Park, Pontiac, Watervliet and White Cloud did not respond to numerous requests for interviews or declined to talk with us.
12. The Leona Group LLC operated 22 schools in Michigan in the 2011-2012 school year, but only 12 of these schools applied to opt out of the state evaluation model.
13. The 21 Macomb ISD districts applying for exemption educate 128,745 students and include some of the largest districts in Michigan, including Utica (2nd), Chippewa Valley (7th) and Warren (8th).

ABOUT THE EDUCATION TRUST–MIDWEST

The Education Trust–Midwest works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, from pre-kindergarten through college. Our goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement for all children, particularly those from low-income families or who are African American, Latino, or American Indian — in Michigan and beyond. As a statewide education policy and advocacy organization, we are focused first and foremost on doing what is right for Michigan students. The Education Trust–Midwest is affiliated with the national organization, The Education Trust, based in Washington, D.C. Ed Trust–Midwest is the second state office of The Education Trust.



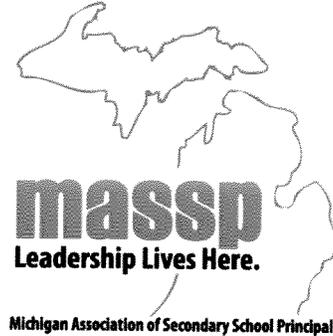
The Education Trust–Midwest

300 S. WASHINGTON AVE., SUITE 400, ROYAL OAK, MI 48067
P 734-619-3000 T 734-619-3003 WWW.EDTRUSTMIDWEST.ORG



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February 6, 2014

Dear Lawmaker,

Thank you for your leadership in ensuring that all students in Michigan are taught to the same high standards needed to succeed in college and the 21st Century workplace. National assessment data have shown that Michigan's students have fallen behind their peers across the country. We believe that efforts to raise standards, and better support and evaluate teachers, are essential to improving our education system. We applaud your on-going support of these efforts.

As we head into 2014, we urge you to invest in the training we, and many other education leaders, agree is needed to realize the full potential of higher standards and educator evaluation. Indeed, Tennessee is among the states that have adopted these two mutually beneficial strategies – and now it is the top state in the nation for gains in student learning, according to new national assessment data.

We ask that you invest in these recommendations:

- **Investment in training on Michigan's Common Core standards:** Michigan's Common Core standards will require educators to teach students at much higher levels – and to help them gain much deeper skills – than ever before. For most teachers, even in the best schools, this will require significant shifts in instruction. Educators need training on the content of the new standards as well as the most effective ways to teach students so that they learn what the standards require. Leading states, such as Tennessee, have invested in training teacher leaders, who provide training to school teams of teachers. We support this type of training because it provides teachers with access to highly skilled teachers who they can turn to for assistance.
- **Investment in high-caliber, vendor-provided observation training:** Michigan's new educator evaluation system smartly requires that teachers' evaluations are based, in large part, on observations of their classroom practice. Research shows that there are key practices that are linked to student learning, and evaluators can be trained to observe them and use them to inform conversations with teachers about what's going well and how to improve. To ensure that evaluations are improvement-oriented, administrators and other observers should be trained by the vendor of a high-caliber state-approved observation tool that is aligned with the instructional shifts required by our new rigorous standards.
- **Investment in training on making final evaluation ratings:** Michigan's statewide evaluation system will require most administrators to do something they haven't done before – combine data on observations, student learning, and other measures into a final evaluation rating for each teacher. This is a smart move, as research tells us that systems with multiple measures of teacher performance provide the most accurate ratings. Therefore, in the second year of implementation, administrators should be trained to combine data from multiple observations, state and local measures of student learning, and other components – such as student surveys – into a final rating for each teacher. A consistent process and training for administrators across the state will ensure reliability and accuracy in how teachers are evaluated.

Michigan has taken important steps toward educational improvement in the last few years. We urge you to take the next steps to ensure our educators have the support they need to teach and lead the next generation of Michiganders.

Respectfully,

Ms. Amber Arellano

Executive Director, The Education Trust-Midwest

Mr. Harrison Blackmond

State Director, Democrats for Education Reform – Michigan

Mr. Steve Cook

President, Michigan Education Association

Ms. Kathy Hayes

Executive Director, Michigan Association of School Boards

Mr. David Hecker

President, AFT Michigan

Mr. Paul Liabenow

Executive Director, Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association

Ms. Wendy Zdeb-Roper

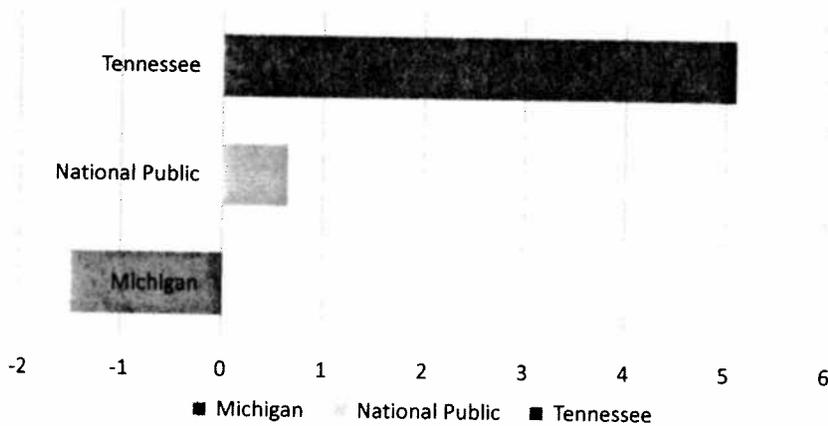
Executive Director, Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals

Tennessee: Leading the Nation for Student Growth

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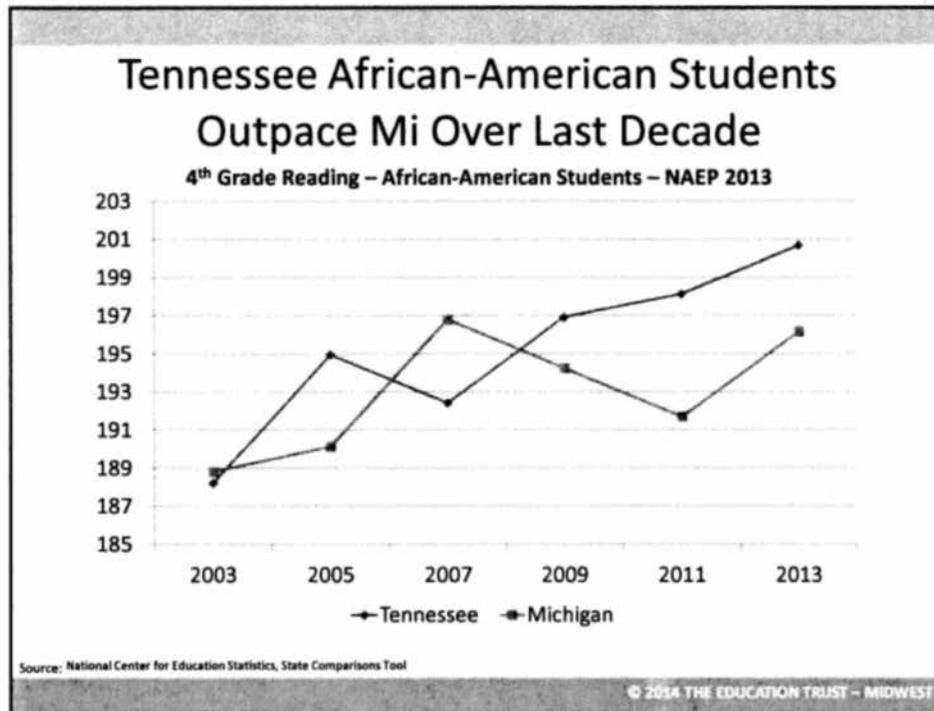
TN Made Largest Gains in the Country

NAEP – 4th Grade Reading – All Students
Average Scale Score Change 2011-2013



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, State Comparisons Tool

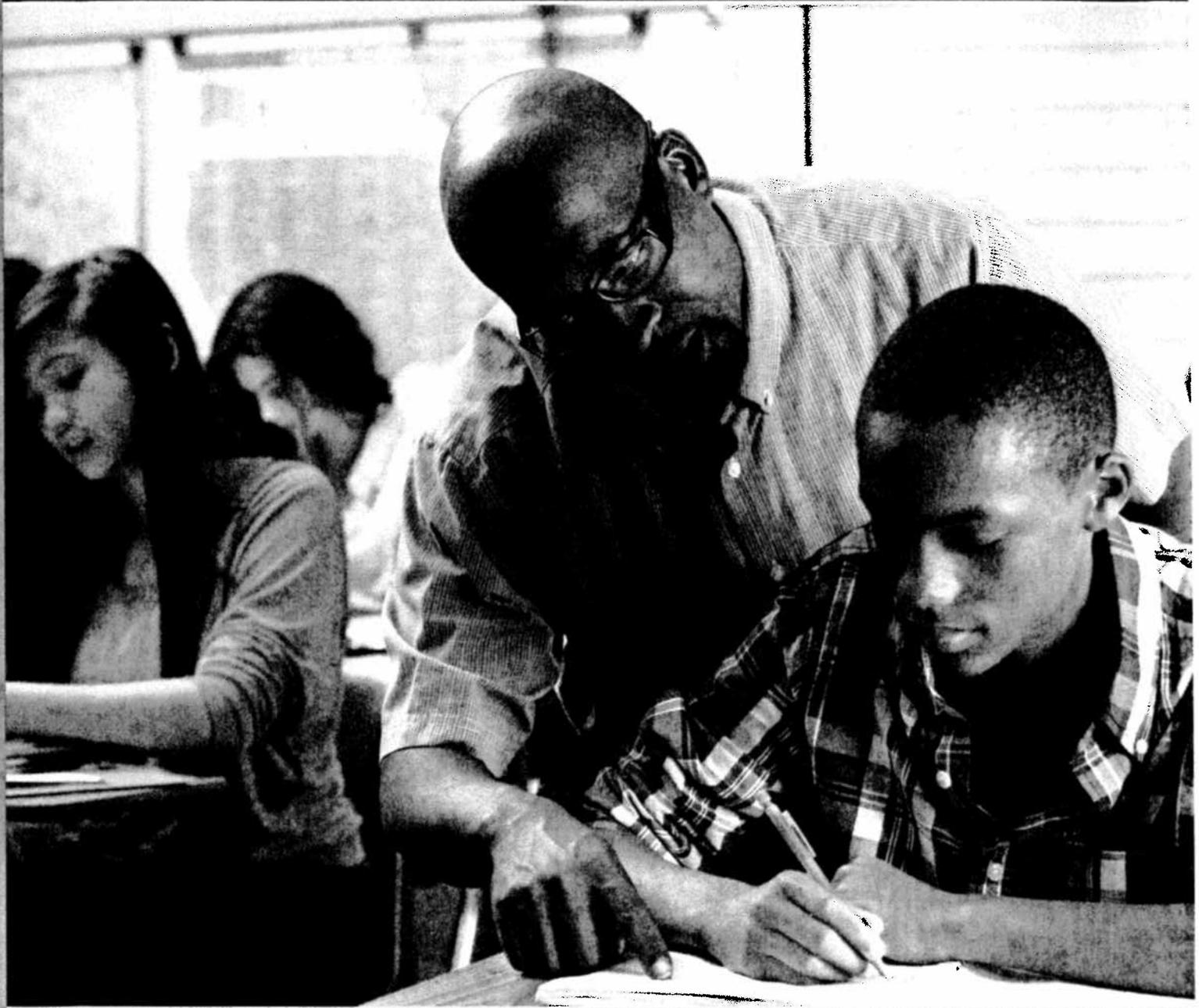
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Tennessee's State Strategies

- Statewide teacher evaluation system with major investment in data system, coaching, training teachers.
- High-caliber data system with state student growth model to inform teachers' instruction.
- TN has used a peer-to-peer coaching model to train tens of thousands of teachers across the state.
 - Aligned educator evaluation system with professional development for teachers.
 - Identified Tennessee educators with a track record of increasing student achievement to provide training on college- and career-ready standards.

Supporting Michigan's Teachers: Smart Implementation of High Standards, Training, and Educator Evaluation



Supporting Michigan's Teachers: Smart Implementation of High Standards, Training, and Educator Evaluation

BY SARAH W. LENHOFF

THE OPPORTUNITIES

Compared to their counterparts in other states, Michigan's students have lost substantial ground over the last decade. Our state has among the worst achievement gaps in the nation and new 2013 national assessment data show that our state is just not keeping up with the rest of the country – in achievement or improvement. Our African-American children are among the lowest-performing in the entire country. But even our white and higher income students are lagging increasingly behind their peers elsewhere. Clearly, we have to get moving – and fast.

For years, research has repeatedly demonstrated that teaching quality is our most powerful lever to improve student learning. Of all of the things that schools can control – including class size, curriculum, and textbooks – the quality of teaching that a child receives is the strongest determinant of student achievement. Low-income students who have effective teachers multiple years in a row can actually beat the odds – and close the achievement gap with higher-income students.¹

But in order for all students to have access to strong teachers, we must overhaul the way we prepare, support, and evaluate educators to assure that all – rather than just some – have the skills they need to prepare our students for life after high school. In the coming months, Michigan leaders have two historic opportunities to put our state on a path to do just that.

The first opportunity is the quality implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and assessment. If well implemented, this state-led effort will assure that our students learn what they need to know to be successful after high school, whether in college or a career, and also provide honest information to parents on where their children are on that journey. To teach to the new standards, teachers all over the state will need help in revising their curriculum and classroom practices

so that students are learning the critical reading, thinking, and analytical skills that set these new standards apart from our previous standards. Michigan lawmakers should follow the lead of other states by investing in intensive training of teachers so that they are prepared to meet the challenge.

The second opportunity involves implementation of Michigan's first statewide system of educator evaluation and support. At the direction of the state legislature, an internationally renowned leader in teacher preparation, Dr. Deborah Loewenberg Ball of the University of Michigan, led a group of experts in developing a blueprint for this system. Now the legislature needs to approve that blueprint and adequately fund its implementation by spring of 2014.

At first glance, these two initiatives may seem unrelated. In fact, their success is deeply intertwined. Together, they form a mutually reinforcing strategy to dramatically boost teacher support, feedback, and accountability. In time, this strategy holds great promise for improving the quality of instruction our students receive and, in turn, raising their levels of achievement so that they can compete with their peers across the country.

The Education Trust–Midwest – a team of Michiganders dedicated to raising achievement for all of our state's students – believes high expectations, in the form of Michigan's Common Core State Standards, play an important role in raising achievement. We also believe that our teachers will excel at teaching higher standards when they receive strong support. It will take time – and investment – to do this right, so that all teachers and students benefit.

Sarah W. Lenhoff is the Director of Policy and Research at the Education Trust - Midwest.

SUPPORTING TEACHERS' TRANSITION TO HIGHER STANDARDS

This fall, the Michigan Legislature smartly approved the continued funding and implementation of rigorous Common Core State Standards. But legislative approval is only the first step in ensuring that the new standards live up to their promise of raising the level of teaching and learning in our state. To see this through, Michigan leaders must commit to two steps of implementation, both of which are essential to supporting higher standards for students and teachers: Common Core-aligned state assessments and training.

1. COMMON CORE-ALIGNED STATE ASSESSMENTS

The state has now adopted rigorous academic standards in English language arts and math, which set benchmarks for what students need to know and be able to do in each grade to be on track for success after high school. In order to know whether our teachers and students are raising the level of teaching and learning to meet these standards, Michigan must adopt new assessments aligned to them. The Michigan Department of Education should choose new assessments that are aligned to the standards and will work best for Michigan. The state needs to fully fund the implementation of these assessments for the 2014-15 school year.

2. TRAINING ON MICHIGAN'S COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Michigan's Common Core standards will require educators to teach students at much higher levels – and to help them gain much deeper skills than ever before. For most teachers, even in the best schools, this will require significant shifts in instruction. Educators need training on the content of the new standards as well as the most effective ways to teach students so that they learn what the standards require. Michigan lawmakers should follow the lead of other states by investing in intensive training of teachers so that they are prepared to meet the challenge.

Tennessee, for instance, is one state that has recognized that just handing teachers the new standards is insufficient. Instead, a state and its districts must take responsibility for supporting teachers through this transition. As Tennessee was preparing to launch the standards for the first time, the state invested resources to directly – and intensively – train more than 13,000 educators across the state.ⁱⁱ Teachers raved about this opportunity to engage with the new standards and felt that it enabled them to truly make

the transition to Common Core classrooms. Earlier this year, Tennessee trained over 700 teachers to coach 35,000 of their peers over the summer.ⁱⁱⁱ

Kentucky, the first state to adopt the new standards, trained its school leaders on the Common Core so that they could support teachers in raising the level of their instruction. In addition, the state provided online on-demand Common Core professional development that every teacher in the state could access, including professional learning communities and opportunities for collaboration with fellow teachers.^{iv}

Guided by the example of leading states that have invested in training, we recommend that the legislature allocate new and existing professional development dollars to:

- Provide districts with funding specifically for supporting their teachers in transitioning to the Common Core.
- Fund optional training sessions for teacher leaders and teachers, focused on Common Core standards and best practices for instruction, for districts that need additional support for their teachers.
- Optional curricular materials aligned to the new standards, with teacher guides and instructional modules to support instruction.
- Training and infrastructure on the new technologies to support implementation and assessment of the new standards.

GETTING THE DETAILS RIGHT ON EDUCATOR EVALUATION AND SUPPORT

For years, Michigan left the hard work of supporting and evaluating teachers up to local districts, many of which did not have the expertise, data, or capacity to provide reliable, developmental feedback to teachers. In 2011, legislators created the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness, a blue-ribbon panel of evaluation experts and practitioners from across Michigan, to develop recommendations for a statewide educator evaluation system. This summer, the Council released its final blueprint for how Michigan can begin to ensure that all teachers are getting the support, evaluation, and feedback they need to be effective. Now, the legislature must fill in the Council's recommendations with the details that will ensure successful implementation of the new system.

For the past three years, the non-partisan Education Trust–Midwest has studied best practices from other states that have

revamped their educator support, evaluation, and training systems, as well as those that have invested in training teachers on the new Common Core standards.

Based on those best practices, we have outlined seven essential details the legislature must get right in order to ensure that the new system fulfills the promise of improving teaching and learning in Michigan. Some of these are mostly a matter of enacting recommendations from the Council the legislature created; in other cases, we've outlined areas where action is necessary to move work forward on matters not addressed or fully resolved by the Council.

1. STATE-PROVIDED SMART STUDENT GROWTH MODEL

The core job of teachers is to grow the knowledge and skills of their students. For that reason, the Michigan Legislature wisely decided back in 2010 to require the inclusion of a student growth measure in educator evaluations.

Michigan is not alone: according to the National Council on Teacher Quality, teachers in 40 states and the District of Columbia are being evaluated, in part, by measures of their students' learning.⁹ Reliable student growth models use state assessment data to isolate the impact of teaching quality from that of other factors that influence student learning, such as students' previous achievement. Using this method, we can determine if teachers are helping their students learn more or less than expected, no matter what their achievement level or family background.

In order to ensure that districts incorporate reliable student growth measures in their evaluations, Michigan lawmakers should:

- Require the Michigan Department of Education to work with a vendor to produce a state-provided student growth model and growth data for all teachers of state tested subjects and grades. That growth model should be based on Common Core-aligned assessments, control for prior student achievement, and include a roster verification process so that teachers and administrators can confirm that the students whose growth is attributed to them are actually their students.
- For teachers in tested grades and subjects, 50 percent of the student growth measure should be based on the state growth model. Allow districts to use local growth data for the other portion of the student growth measure and for teachers of non-tested subjects and grades.
- Require the Michigan Department of Education to establish

guidelines for measuring student growth for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects, as well as for the use of local data as "second measures" of performance in tested subjects and grades. In particular, the state should produce guidance on using student learning objectives reliably and accurately; develop or adopt assessments in high volume non-core subjects, such as foreign language; and determine when and how school-wide student growth data can be appropriately used in teacher evaluations.

- Require evaluators to be trained on how to use, interpret, and explain student growth to the teachers they are evaluating.

2. STATE-APPROVED TOOLS FOR OBSERVING TEACHER PRACTICE

Every teacher's evaluation should include observations of that teacher's actual practices in the classroom. While administrators have conducted observations of their teachers for decades, most of them have not been focused on the instructional practices research says improve student learning. Now, there are research-based observation tools that, with the proper training, guide observers – administrators and fellow teachers – to identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses and help facilitate conversations about how to improve. Instead of every observer seeing something completely different when he or she enters a classroom, these tools can help establish consistency and reliability in observations, making feedback more helpful in improving teaching and learning. The Michigan Legislature should:

- Require the Michigan Department of Education to establish a list of approved observation tools that districts can choose from. The approved list should include the four research-based observation tools recommended by the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness: Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching, the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, The Thoughtful Classroom, and 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning.
- Tie the use of one of these tools to best practices funds, which incentivize school districts to use student-focused, research-based approaches to education.
- Require all observers to participate in training on the observation tool their district has chosen to use and be certified as reliable observers.
- Require the Michigan Department of Education to

periodically review and modify the approved observation tools to ensure that they are working properly and are fully aligned with the instructional shifts demanded by the Common Core State Standards.

3. SUPPORTING QUALITY IMPLEMENTATION AND LOCAL SCHOOLS

Local districts are struggling with some parts of evaluation more than others. Beyond measuring growth, local districts and charter schools report they need the most help in learning how to fairly combine multiple measures of data (such as classroom observation, student growth and other measures) into one final annual performance rating for teachers.

In Illinois and other states, state leaders appointed a Performance Evaluation Advisory Council to establish regulations and monitor initial implementation of that state's new educator evaluation system. Similarly, Michigan leaders should authorize the Michigan Department of Education to convene a voluntary committee of leading policy experts, educators, and representatives of parents, students and civic leaders to work with the MDE to:

- Develop a common scoring framework to help administrators combine observation and student growth data for districts using a state-approved observation tool.
- Establish clear standards for districts that want to opt out of the approved observation tools. Review and approve the tools of any such districts, requiring them to submit evidence that they are research-based, implemented with fidelity, and include rigorous training to ensure inter-rater reliability.
- Assist in developing guidelines for measuring student growth for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects.
- Identify districts innovating with effective teacher evaluation practices and highlight their work in annual reports to the legislature, as examples of how other districts may improve their practices.

4. MASTER TEACHERS

For the first time, Michigan will soon be able to identify the state's best teachers — or we will, if we do this right. But just knowing who they are won't accomplish much. State leaders and local districts should create policies to reward them and leverage their expertise to improve student learning across the state:

- The legislature should establish a Michigan Master Teacher

designation for teachers who have been rated “highly effective” for at least three out of the last five years under the new evaluation system.

- Local districts should provide opportunities for master teachers to take on leadership roles in their schools, so they can assist with peer evaluation, coaching, and professional development.
- The Michigan Department of Education should create incentives for master teachers to develop adult training skills and participate in educating their peers across the state.
- Local districts should allow Michigan Master Teachers and district-identified high performing teachers to conduct observations and provide mentoring and feedback of other teachers as part of the evaluation process.

5. RESPECTING BOTH PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN PUBLIC REPORTING

In order for the new educator support and evaluation system to actually improve teaching and learning, Michigan needs to approach public reporting of evaluation data in a way that respects both parents and educators. That means, like other parts of personnel records, neither evaluation ratings nor any portion thereof—including value-added scores—should be made public for individual teachers. However, parents should have access to aggregate evaluation data, so they have a far better sense of the quality of the teaching in their public schools. Thus, the state should:

- Require districts to report building and district aggregate teacher evaluation ratings to the Michigan Department of Education.
- Starting in five years, make it unlawful to assign any student to an ineffective teacher for two consecutive years.
- Require the MDE to post the aggregate school, district, and state data on its website throughout each year on a “Teaching Quality” webpage where parents can review how their district and school is doing on this important issue, and to update the data annually. The MDE also should include the data as part of the state's Dashboard.
- Require the MDE to collect student growth data, observation ratings, and final evaluation ratings for confidential researcher access, and to share summary data on a bi-annual basis through a public report to the Michigan legislature. This would help keep state policymakers abreast of the work

happening at the state and local level.

- Like other parts of personnel records, neither evaluation ratings nor any portion thereof—including value-added scores—should be made public for individual teachers.

6. FAIR ACCESS TO QUALITY TEACHERS

One of the most important by-products of Michigan’s statewide educator support and evaluation system will be unprecedented data on teacher quality and equity in our state. For the first time, we will be able to identify which students have regular access to great teachers, and which students are taught by ineffective teachers, year in and year out. Research tells us that low-income students, students of color, and low-performing students of all races are typically less likely to be taught by effective teachers than their higher income, white, and higher-performing peers. To ensure that ineffective or minimally effective teachers do not disproportionately teach some students, the state should:

- Require the Michigan Department of Education to annually report publicly the distribution of teacher effectiveness between the highest- and lowest-poverty and highest- and lowest-minority schools, both statewide and for all districts and charter management organizations with at least 25 schools. The MDE should also report information on the percentage of students in the state and in each district who are assigned teachers who are rated highly effective, effective, minimally effective, and ineffective by student race, English language learner status, and special education status.
- Require districts to ensure that low-income students and students of color have equitable access to highly effective teachers, and are not taught disproportionately by the least effective teachers.
- Require districts with significant equity gaps to develop action plans focused on attracting strong teachers and principals to the district and on improving teaching and leadership quality in their lowest performing schools.
- Require the MDE to annually monitor districts’ progress on closing equity gaps and hold them accountable for closing them.
- Prohibit the state’s lowest performing schools from employing teachers and school leaders who are not rated effective or highly effective.
- Tie additional best practices funding to districts that have small or no gaps in access to effective teachers.

7. SMART IMPLEMENTATION: SYNCHING TIMELINES FOR COMMON CORE, EDUCATOR SUPPORT, AND EVALUATION

It is essential that Michigan move forward with implementing the educator evaluation system as soon as possible – teachers need feedback on their performance now, and our students can’t wait. But, because the Common Core standards and assessments will be new to teachers and students, it makes sense to delay using the new tests in teacher evaluation until they have been implemented for three years. In the interim, teachers and principals should be evaluated based on observations and local measures of growth, and they should receive individual growth data from the state, but for information purposes only. It also makes sense to pause school accountability ratings during the shift to the first full implementation of the Common Core-aligned assessments.

Given the potential of inadequate state funding for implementation of these initiatives, we have recommended a sensible roadmap for staggered implementation that takes into account the urgency and importance of this work, prioritizing the investments outlined in the chart on page 6.

SMART IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
CCSS IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training from ISDs and local districts continues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE provides training from a high-quality vendor to districts that need additional Common Core support. • State provides access to optional instructional modules and curricular materials. • State conducts annual survey of educators to gauge understanding of Common Core, usefulness of training, and changes in practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State continues to provide access to optional instructional modules and curricular materials. • State offers optional training to teacher leaders and leader-facilitated training to other teachers. 	
CCSS ASSESSMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field Test. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer assessments for Grades 3-8, 11. 		
MEASURING CCSS PERFORMANCE FOR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly report state, district and school results from current state assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results from new CCSS assessment reported to schools and public. • Previous year's accountability designations stay in place; no new consequences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School proficiency and growth results reported to school and public. • New accountability designations are assigned to schools. 	
TEACHER EVALUATION IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE establishes a list of approved observation tools. • Districts choose an approved observation tool or apply to opt out. • MDE and Advisory Board establish criteria for opting out and issue decisions on those districts that applied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on Common Core-aligned observation tool and incorporating and explaining student growth data for all evaluators begins in summer 2014. • State conducts survey of educators to gauge understanding of evaluation processes and usefulness of training. • MDE issues a common scoring framework to assist evaluators in combining observation data and student growth data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued training on Common Core-aligned observations and giving feedback to support Common Core instruction. • MDE reviews its list of approved observation tools and makes modifications based on initial implementation results and new research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training continues.
MEASURING GROWTH FOR TEACHER EVALUATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE issues guidance on measuring student growth, particularly for non-tested grades/subjects in summer 2014. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE establishes a contract with a vendor to produce growth data for tested subjects and grades. • Teachers and principals in tested subjects and grades get individual data for informational purposes only; these data are not incorporated into individual ratings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and principals in tested subjects and grades get individual growth data for informational purposes; these data are not incorporated into individual ratings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers in tested subjects and grades get individual growth data. • 50 percent of the growth component is based on state growth data for teachers in tested grades and subjects.
PUBLIC REPORTING OF OUTCOMES FROM EDUCATOR EVALUATION SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly report state, district and school aggregate educator evaluation ratings, including by student subgroups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to publicly report state, district and school aggregate educator evaluation ratings, including by student subgroups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly report state, district and school aggregate educator evaluation ratings and aggregate growth results for all schools, including by student subgroups. 	

ENDNOTES

- i Gordon, R., Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. O. (2006). Identifying effective teachers using performance on the job. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.
- ii “Tennessee Launches Its Largest-Ever Teacher Training to Prepare for Common Core Implementation,” accessed December 9, 2013, <http://news.tn.gov/node/9182>.
- iii “Tennessee Selects More Than 700 Teachers to Help Lead Common Core Transition,” accessed December 9, 2013, <http://news.tn.gov/node/10475>.
- iv “How Kentucky Plans to Integrate Common Core Training,” accessed December 9, 2013, <http://www.schoolimprovement.com/common-core-360/blog/How-Kentucky-Plans-to-Integrate-Common-Core-Training/>.
- v Kathryn M. Doherty and Sandi Jacobs, “State of the states 2013: Connect the dots: Using evaluation of teacher effectiveness to inform policy and practice,” (Washington, D.C.: The National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013). http://www.nctq.org/dmsStage/State_of_the_States_2013_Using_Teacher_Evaluations_NCTQ_Report.

The Education Trust—Midwest

ABOUT THE EDUCATION TRUST–MIDWEST

The Education Trust–Midwest works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, from pre-kindergarten through college. Our goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement for all children, particularly those from low-income families or who are African American, Latino, or American Indian — in Michigan and beyond. As a statewide education policy and advocacy organization, we are focused first and foremost on doing what is right for Michigan students. The Education Trust–Midwest is affiliated with the national organization, The Education Trust, based in Washington, D.C. Ed Trust–Midwest is the second state office of The Education Trust.

The Education Trust–Midwest

306 S. Washington Avenue, Suite 400, Royal Oak, MI 48067
P 734-619-8008 | F 734-619-8009 | www.edtrustmidwest.org



TEACHER EVALUATION IN MICHIGAN

The Problem

Valuable and meaningful professional feedback is one of the cornerstones of growth as a person and as a professional. In healthy workplaces, there are clear and common standards of performance. Employees are regularly evaluated against these standards and provided with timely feedback to help them improve. Not only are employees helped by this information, but so, too, are societies that use it to improve whole professions, such as doctors, scientists and professionals.

Michigan educators, parents and policymakers are being cheated out of this sort of feedback. Not only is this a disservice to thousands of individual teachers who are denied the opportunity to improve their practice, but it also hurts thousands of students in our state. A teacher's effectiveness has more impact on student learning than any other factor controlled by school systems, including class size, school size and the quality of after-school programs – or even which school a student is attending.¹

Today, there are new methods to understand how well educators are teaching their students, and what areas they need help on to grow. But in Michigan, current law and policies are unclear and unhelpful to school districts. Without greater state leadership and guidance, school districts are likely to perpetuate a useless patchwork of systems, some good, some not so good. Teachers, parents, and policymakers also will be left with no assurance that evaluation results are trustworthy or comparable. They won't know, for example, if their school district's teacher quality and classroom learning quality are better than other districts. Parents and students deserve honest, reliable and comparative information about how well their schools and teachers are educating their children.

Other states are moving forward on improving their teacher evaluation systems, using new and powerful tools to identify the strengths of individual teachers as well as the areas in which teachers need support. Since a teacher's first priority is

¹ Steven G. Rivkin, Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain, "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement," *Econometrica*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March 2005), pages 417-458.
<http://edpro.stanford.edu/Hanushek/admin/pages/files/uploads/teachers.econometrica.pdf>



growing student learning, states that are improving their evaluation systems are building measures of student learning growth into those systems. Often called “value-added,” these measures of student growth track how much a teacher’s students learn between the beginning and the end of a school year. Leading states, such as Colorado and Delaware, are combining value-added data with other measures of student learning growth, improved classroom observations, and—in many cases—student or parent surveys to dramatically improve their evaluation and coaching systems to improve their teaching quality.

Michigan must move quickly to take advantage of these tools and lessons. Indeed, without modernizing our state’s evaluation system, a whole host of other education reforms will be imperiled. This spring, for example, Governor Rick Snyder proposed modernizing teacher tenure and lay-off policies by basing them more on performance. However, it is unclear what measure of “performance” or “effective teaching” the state expects districts to use.

Sadly, this problem is not new. It dates back to 2009, when state legislators passed legislation that was supposed to address the issue. Instead, leaders pushed the problem on to budget-strapped local districts, many of which lack the capacity, expertise and resources to do it well. Starting Fall of 2011, districts are charged with creating their own evaluation systems.

To modernize and improve our state’s teacher evaluation system, we’ll have to acknowledge uneven capacity among our districts, and put politics and special interests aside to come together quickly around a common sense set of policy reforms that can greatly improve teaching and learning. Good teaching is too important to our children’s future to leave this to chance.

Fixing Michigan Law

Here are some of Michigan’s problems with reliable teacher evaluation – and the reasons why and how Michigan law needs to be changed:

1. Unreliable State Test: Presently, Michigan’s state assessment is administered in the Fall, which means it measures the learning that has occurred under two different teachers – one in the previous school year and one in the new school year. That is not a good way to measure the impact of individual teachers.



Solution: Michigan needs to move its Fall assessment to the Spring, which would allow it to more accurately assess what students have learned over the course of the school year. Spring testing also is a national norm today and an accepted best practice.

2. No Definition of What Effective Teaching Is in Michigan: Teachers and school leaders – like other professions – need clear goals to work toward, and what excellence looks like. This will advance Michigan’s teaching profession and help the public understand how challenging great teaching really is – and why it should be valued, respected and well-funded.

Solution: Leading states, such as Colorado, are taking months to define what good teaching looks like. Michigan needs to do this, as well. Our teachers and students deserve this worthwhile investment.

3. No State-Wide Standards for Evaluating Teachers: Michigan law is so ambiguous, it gives wide variation on what student growth is measured and how; and allows for many interpretations of what measures should be used for measuring student growth and even how to interpret what makes up a good evaluation system. School districts may use whatever evaluation that they want and set any standard they choose. Districts would have incentive to set their bars low so that their students and teachers look like they are performing well. And the state will have no comparable information about teaching quality and student learning growth – meaning students and parents won’t know how they are really being served in their schools and communities.

Solution: Michigan needs a state-wide definition of what effective teaching looks like, and protocols and standards for all districts to meet if they decide to develop their own evaluation system. This ensures all students are well-served, and parents get honest information about how their schools are really doing – while also preserving the tradition of local innovation for districts that want to develop their own evaluation models.

4. No Voluntary Model for Districts that Need or Want One: Good, reliable evaluation systems based on student growth data are costly – and they take



resources and expertise that few districts can readily access. States have the resources to pilot test evaluation models, too, to ensure they are fair and reliable. By making such a model voluntary, state policies can ensure they provide flexibility and respect for local autonomy and innovation.

Solution: State leaders should work with the philanthropic and higher education community to find the resources and expertise needed to develop a sophisticated, thoughtful and reliable state-wide evaluation that can be voluntarily adopted by districts.

Michigan's Pathway to Strong Evaluation

State officials must provide leadership on this critical issue. To improve teacher quality, Michigan school districts need help defining effective teaching, and creating parameters for good local evaluations, among other changes. What follows is a roadmap to assist state lawmakers, the Governor, education leaders and parent activists as they work to address this situation.

Michigan leaders should immediately:

1. Establish minimum statewide requirements for local evaluation systems, including:

- All teachers should be evaluated every year.
- Evaluations should be based upon multiple measures, including—at the very least—classroom observations by principals and/or expert peers and measures of student learning growth.
- There should be four ratings categories, such as highly effective, effective, minimally effective and ineffective.
- At least 45 percent of the rating should be based on student learning growth, and at least 40 percent on classroom observations. Up to 15 percent could be based on surveys of students and parents, professional contributions, or other important measures.



- During the initial years of the new evaluation system, while state and local leaders build better systems for measuring student growth, the weight on student growth should be phased in, expanding to 25 percent for the 2013-14 school year, and increasing to 50 percent by the 2014-15 school year.

2. Require the State Board of Education to move its assessment date to the Spring and to establish procedures for verifying the student-teacher link.

The current Fall testing date makes it nearly impossible to use state assessments for measuring growth at the teacher level. Moving that date to the Spring will fix that problem and bring our practice in line with that of other states. It is also critical that the Michigan Department of Education be directed to adopt procedures that allow teachers to verify that they have actually taught the students for whom they will be held accountable. This, too, will bring us in line with the practice of leading states.

3. Establish a Governor’s Council on Educator Effectiveness to assist the Governor and the Michigan Department of Education in fulfilling their responsibilities to help districts develop and implement high quality evaluation. Leading states like Colorado have established statewide councils to bring together experts and stakeholders, and to iron out the details that go into creating a high-quality state evaluation framework. Michigan should appoint such a council and house it in the Governor’s office to demonstrate its importance. The council should include a balance of experts on teacher evaluation and value-added growth, and stakeholders including representatives of students, parents, teachers, principals, superintendents and business and civic leaders. It should be tasked with the following immediate goals:

- **Define standards for good teaching.** The Governor’s Council should establish a common definition of what effective teaching looks like in Michigan. This important first step in creating a collective understanding of good teaching needn’t take long. There are several good models available from other states and organizations.
- **Define the “what” and “how much” of student achievement to include.** There are a wide variety of approaches to measuring “value-added” on state assessments. The council should review these and agree on one that is best for Michigan. To supplement growth data from state assessments, the council



should provide guidance to the Michigan Department of Education—and, through them, to local school districts-- about which additional sources of student achievement data districts could use for teachers in tested subject areas and grade-levels, as well as in non-tested subjects and grade-levels. Guidance should also be provided regarding the extent to which these sources should count in the evaluation system.

- **Create a voluntary default evaluation model that districts may adapt or use.** That model should include all necessary classroom observation tools, methods for measuring growth, student and parent surveys, and implementation training modules.
- **Advise on coaching and other supports to help teachers bring their practice in line with Michigan’s new teaching standards.** Better evaluation doesn’t accomplish much unless it is tied to meaningful opportunities to improve. The council should provide research-based ideas and advice on how to achieve this, especially in a tight fiscal environment.

4. Charge the State Board of Education and the Michigan Department of Education with assisting local school districts to modernize their evaluation systems. As the council completes its recommendations, the State Board and State Department of Education should:

- Adopt new teaching standards.
- Produce teacher-level data on student growth for every teacher in tested subjects and grade levels, and provide that data to teachers, as well as to their principals and superintendents.
- Issue guidance and provide tools on other measures of achievement to supplement MEAP growth data. For example, leading states are creating banks of approved evaluation measures that districts may select from for analyzing growth in non-tested subjects.
- Provide tools for a default evaluation system to districts that wish to use it.



- Develop training for all districts in the new evaluation framework. Research shows the validity and reliability of teacher evaluation goes up significantly when evaluators—either principals or master teachers—are properly trained.

5. Make sure that the Governor’s Council and education department officials have the resources they need to do this job—and do it right. State leaders need to invest public dollars in this work. The business community, civic leaders and philanthropic community also can help, especially in funding the work of the Governor’s Council, as well as training for local education leaders and evaluators. The council will need at least one or two – and probably more -- full-time staff members to do its work.

6. Require district and state officials to use the results of evaluation to improve education in our state. Better evaluation is important in its own right: that is, employees have a right to clear standards of performance and frequent opportunities for feedback on how they are doing. Many people improve just with better feedback. But to bring about real improvements in the education of all of Michigan’s students, we will need to go further. At minimum, the legislature should insist on the following:

- **Use changes in the results over time to assure that teachers who don’t perform well get the support they need to improve.** The state can monitor this in two different but mutually reinforcing ways: by measuring differences among schools and districts in terms of whether and how much teachers are improving, and by surveying teachers on their supports. Districts should be expected to improve on these measures each year.
- **Use the results to make sure that all children have fair access to effective teachers.** Local districts should be required to work to eliminate the teacher assignment inequities commonly found within many Michigan school districts today. Schools on the more affluent side of town typically have far more effective teachers than those on the impoverished side. The legislature should ban outright the disproportionate assignment of ineffective teachers to any of the state’s lowest performing schools. In addition, the legislature should require districts to report any inequities across high- and



low-poverty and/or high- and low-minority schools. They must also show how they plan to remedy these inequities and report on their progress over time.

- **Use the evaluation results in the tenure process.** As is being considered in proposals currently under review by the legislature, new teachers should have to demonstrate effectiveness through strong evaluations before being granted tenure.
- Using the results in lay-offs and dismissals. This, too, is under consideration by the legislature.

Pilot testing of the voluntary state evaluation model could be done by the 2013-2014 school year. A full roll-out of the model – for those districts that want to opt in to use it -- should be done by the 2014-2015. We have laid out a more specific timeline and deadlines to state policymakers.

Conclusion

If Michigan's leaders are serious about improving our schools, we need to do evaluation well—and we need to get moving. Leaving local school districts to figure this out for themselves will leave us with a useless patchwork of systems—some good, some terrible—and with no assurance for parents that teacher effectiveness is taken seriously. In a country that has slipped far behind other nations in student achievement, and in a state where achievement is dropping, relative to other states, Michigan's lack of action on this front is hurting our collective goal of improving the state's future. Michigan leaders need to step up, and get to work.