

Panel recommends new Michigan teacher evaluation system

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LANSING — An independent panel of educators is recommending a new statewide evaluation system for Michigan public school teachers and administrators that would include announced and unannounced classroom observations.

The recommendations have been submitted to Gov. Rick Snyder, some state legislators and state Education officials, according to the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness.

Hearings could begin this summer if approved by the Legislature, and schools would be required to have the evaluation system in place by the start of the 2015 academic year.

Teachers would be evaluated on their teaching practices and student academic growth based on standardized tests. School administrators, including district superintendents, principals and assistant principals, would be evaluated on their ability to evaluate teachers, progress they make on school improvement plans, attendance rates and other areas.

The evaluations would give three rating levels: “professional,” “provisional” or “ineffective.” Ineffective ratings for two consecutive years could result in dismissal.

Teachers would get better and consistent feedback about their classroom work under the system, according to the council.

“Every child in Michigan deserves skillful teachers, not just some of the time but each and every year,” said Deborah Loewenberg Ball, the council’s chairwoman. “And every teacher deserves the opportunity to develop and continue to refine his or her professional skill — to receive targeted feedback and professional learning opportunities to improve instruction. We believe a fair, transparent and rigorous teacher evaluation system can help transform the culture of the teaching profession and benefit the state’s 1.5 million schoolchildren.”

One of the goals is to identify weak or underperforming educators and to give them a chance to improve their skills, Ball added.

The council’s recommendations are “oriented to student learning and instructional improvement, not building a system that is punitive,” she said.

Unlike states such as Colorado and Indiana, Michigan would not tie teacher compensation to evaluations under the recommendations. Ball said there is insufficient evidence to support pay-for-performance programs at this time.

Earlier this year, a Michigan House committee considered a Republican-sponsored bill that would make teacher job performance the primary factor in determining pay.

The council was created in 2011 and the evaluation system is part of changes to the teacher tenure system passed by the Legislature.

Parts of the new tenure law were opposed by teachers unions at the time. Representatives' from the state's major teachers unions weren't available to comment about the proposed teacher evaluation changes because they were embargoed for release to the public until after midnight.

More than 800 teacher evaluation systems currently are in place at the state's roughly 850 school districts and charter schools.