



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness?**

MCEE was created in June 2011 as part of Michigan's bipartisan teacher tenure reform efforts (PA 102 of 2011). The MCEE was an independent, temporary commission that worked through June 30, 2013, to produce educator evaluation recommendations that could strengthen classroom instruction in Michigan.

Its charge was to recommend to the State Board of Education, Governor Snyder, and the legislature an evaluation model that measures the performance of teachers and administrators in all Michigan school districts, including traditional public and charter schools.

### **Why do educator evaluations matter?**

Teachers are the single most important school-related factor in a child's education. In 2012, the nonpartisan Center for Michigan polled Michigan residents and found that 69 percent of people believe it is important or crucial to hold educators more accountable for student learning outcomes.

A broad array of groups – including advocates for parents, students, teachers, administrators, and school boards, as well as business and civic organizations – agree: Michigan needs a more systematic way to support improvement of teaching and learning. The MCEE believes that a more rigorous teacher evaluation system can help transform the culture of Michigan's teaching profession and benefit the state's 1.5 million schoolchildren.

### **Why now?**

Until now, Michigan school leaders have had little objective information about educators' effectiveness. Since 2009, at least 36 states and the District of Columbia have altered their teacher evaluation systems, including increasing the number of times teachers are observed or tying teacher ratings to student achievement.

The new evaluation system, if approved by the legislature, would require all Michigan schools to have an educator evaluation system in place by 2015-16.

### **How was the council selected?**

In September 2011, Gov. Rick Snyder appointed three council members. Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville and Speaker of the House Jase Bolger appointed one council member each.

### **Who served on the MCEE?**

The council had five voting members:

- Deborah Loewenberg Ball, dean of the University of Michigan School of Education and MCEE chair
- Jennifer Hammond, principal, Grand Blanc High School
- Mark Reckase, professor, Michigan State University College of Education
- Nicholas Sheltroun, director of measurement, research and accountability, National Heritage Academies in Grand Rapids
- David Vensel, principal, Jefferson High School in Monroe

Joseph Martineau, the Michigan Department of Education deputy superintendent for accountability services, served on the MCEE without a vote and was the designee of the superintendent of public instruction.

### **What was the MCEE goal?**

The council's recommendations will:

- Help Michigan develop a fair, transparent, affordable, flexible, and feasible evaluation system for teachers and school administrators.
- Be based on high standards of professional practice and of measurement.
- Contribute to enhanced instruction, improve student achievement, and support ongoing professional learning.

### **What are the MCEE's five key policy recommendations?**

MCEE provided recommendations for the following items required under the state law:

1. Student growth and assessment tool
2. An evaluation tool for teachers
3. An evaluation tool for administrators
4. Changes to the requirements for a professional teaching certificate
5. A process for evaluating any local evaluation tools for educators to ensure that they satisfy the state evaluation tool standard

### **How will educators be evaluated?**

Teacher effectiveness evaluation is based on two criteria:

1. Professional practice, which is determined primarily by teaching observations and other local measures.
2. Student growth, which is determined by state assessments, student learning objectives, and other local measures.

Based on these two criteria, teachers are rated "professional," "provisional," or "ineffective." Administrators – a category that includes superintendents, principals, and assistant principals – will be evaluated on the same criteria and receive the same rating classifications.

**How will overall evaluation scores be calculated?**

Beginning in 2015–2016 schools must evaluate their educators, with half of their score coming from professional practice scores and the other half from student growth data. Those two dimensions will be combined for the overall evaluation score. One possible example of how this might look is below:

		Practice		
		Professional	Provisional	Ineffective
Student growth	Meets expectations	Professional	Professional	Provisional
	Does not fully meet expectations	Professional	Provisional	Ineffective
	Below expectations	Provisional	Ineffective	Ineffective

**How was the MCEE’s work funded?**

The MCEE members were volunteers who received no financial compensation from the state of Michigan for their service. The legislature appropriated \$4.9 million in mid-December 2011 to pay for 13 school districts to pilot four evaluation tools selected by MCEE during the 2012–13 school year. The nonprofit Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) funded a project manager and provided technical support.

**What will Michigan’s educator evaluation system cost?**

Legislative hearings will be held to examine potential costs. The MCEE has proposed that the state use a competitive RFP process to select one of four piloted teacher observation tools and one of two administrator evaluation tools.

**Which educator evaluation companies is the MCEE recommending?**

The MCEE recommendation to the legislature is that any of the following four teacher evaluation tool vendors are qualified to serve Michigan:

- Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model (Learning Sciences International, based in Blairsville, Pa.)
- The Thoughtful Classroom (Silver Strong & Associates/Thoughtful Education Press, based in Ho-Ho-Kus, N.J.)
- The Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (The University of Washington, Center for Educational Leadership, based in Seattle, Wash.)
- Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching (The Danielson Group, based in Princeton, N.J.)

The council also recommended to the legislature that either of the following two administrative evaluation tool vendors is qualified to serve Michigan:

- The Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA) School Advance Administrator Evaluation Instrument
- The Reeves Leadership Performance Rubric

### **Did the MCEE consider Michigan-based companies that offer teacher observation tools?**

There are no Michigan-based companies that currently offer teacher observation tools deemed qualified by MCEE. Hundreds of observation and evaluation systems exist nationally. The MCEE examined systems that were developed by researchers as well as systems produced by educators committed to providing sound support for early-career teachers. MCEE also reviewed systems introduced by several states – Rhode Island, North Carolina and Colorado, for example – that created their own protocols. The MCEE believes its recommendations will result in the best possible outcomes for students, educators, and, ultimately, for Michigan.

### **Where will the funding for Michigan’s new educator evaluation system come from?**

The state will select and pay for one of the four approved tools that will be used to observe classroom teaching. MCEE recommends the state should provide a still-to-be-determined amount of base funding per school district based on staff-training requirements to support the use of one of the four approved tools.

The state will also provide technical support and training for one of the four observational systems that will be selected through the competitive RFP process. The technical support includes gathering and managing the observational data for districts that use the state’s preferred system. Observers must be trained in the use of the observation tool chosen by their respective districts.

### **Are school districts required to use the state’s preferred observation tool?**

No. Any district that chooses to use one of the other three piloted observation tools must pay for any expenses above the base cost supplied by the state, including the costs of technical support, training, and data management. Additionally, schools may develop or purchase their own observation tool, but they will have to provide significant evidence that it is as rigorous as the state-approved tools.

### **How will educator evaluations be used?**

The new educator evaluation system is grounded in improvement-focused feedback for all educators, including new and veteran teachers. Teachers and administrators will be provided with specific substantive feedback that is accompanied by targeted professional learning opportunities to improve in needed areas. Teachers and administrators rated “provisional” or below for three straight years will be counseled out of their current position. Educators deemed “ineffective” for two consecutive years could face dismissal from their positions.

### **When will the new educator evaluations begin?**

Some Michigan school districts have already begun implementing evaluation systems for teachers and administrators as allowed by a 2011 state law. Others have waited for the MCEE to complete its work in order to review the report and determine how to move forward pending state legislative approval. The MCEE plan is for all Michigan school districts’ evaluation systems to become fully operational and aligned with state standards by the start of the 2015–2016 school year.

**Will Michigan's evaluation system include merit pay?**

The MCEE does not recommend that the state tie teacher compensation to evaluations. Research in education and other fields suggests that performance-related pay and the monitoring systems that come with it can backfire, decreasing motivation and quality performance. Moreover, there is no evidence that teachers' performance improves through merit pay systems.

**How does the debate on Common Core affect the educator evaluation system?**

The evaluation system requires that educators have clear content standards – whether they are the Common Core state-led standards embraced by most governors nationally, Michigan's previous content expectations, or some other standard – to be fair and effective. Additionally, to gauge student growth fairly, the Michigan-adopted content standards must have assessments aligned to what is being taught at each tested grade level.

**Will the evaluation system take into account factors beyond educators' control – such as poverty or students with other challenges?**

Yes. MCEE recommends incorporating value-added modeling (VAM) scores into the student growth portion of the evaluations. VAM is a statistical tool that takes account of outside factors beyond a teacher's control that influence student learning, such as poverty, special education status, and other factors. VAM measures the progress of each student compared with his/her past performance in order to measure the student's growth. So, even if a student's performance in a subject is below grade level, the teacher is evaluated based on that student's growth and improvement across the year.

**What if a student has a bad year due to behavioral problems or difficulties at home? Would the teacher's score suffer?**

No. A single student's test scores should not dramatically change a teacher's evaluation. Additionally, a teacher may appeal to have any specific student removed from his or her VAM score.

**Is there a role for parents in the educator evaluation?**

Yes. MCEE does not require parental input for the teacher evaluations; however, feedback from parents, students, and teachers is required for the administrator evaluations. School districts also may choose to include parent feedback for teachers if they determine it is appropriate to do so.

**Can school districts develop their own local educator evaluations?**

Yes. State law requires all traditional public and charter schools to evaluate their teachers and administrators. However, parents, school boards, and educators will still retain local control. School districts have the option of choosing their own observation tools and student growth methods, as long as the local evaluation standards and practices align with state policy.

**Who will determine local school district compliance with state standards?**

School districts choosing to create their own evaluations must submit a waiver request to the state. School districts applying for a waiver must demonstrate that their tools and methods will have the same level of quality and rigor as the state-recommended process.

**Were Michigan's pilot study findings useful to MCEE?**

Yes. More than 70 districts across Michigan applied to participate in the MCEE pilot initiative. MCEE used the findings from the 13 selected districts to address technical, logistical, and affordability issues before recommending a statewide system. The pilot also assures key stakeholders that the system was tested before enactment.

**How is this being done in other Great Lakes states?**

Michigan is unique among the Great Lakes states in that MCEE has recommended four vendors as qualified to provide educator observation tools to school districts. Other states have contracted with a single provider to implement educator evaluation services or have developed their own.

**Will public hearings be held to discuss the MCEE recommendations to the legislature?**

Yes. State Sen. Phil Pavlov (R-St. Clair Township), who chairs the Senate Education Committee, has indicated that legislative hearings on Michigan's proposed educator evaluation system will be held in 2013.

The MCEE is committed to promoting awareness and understanding about the plan across the next months. The MCEE will host a series of webinars this summer with key stakeholder groups to ensure that they are fully informed about the changes. The webinars will provide MCEE with the opportunity to clearly identify the legal foundation and rationale for change as well as to communicate the importance of teacher quality in student learning.

**Where can I find more information?**

Visit the MCEE website for an in-depth look at the council's work: [www.mcede.org](http://www.mcede.org).