

## State gets teacher review proposal

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Johnson

A teacher's classroom practice, as well how much students learn during the year, would be the main components of a new teacher evaluation system being proposed for Michigan.

The recommendation for the system came Wednesday when the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness submitted its report to Gov. Rick Snyder, the Michigan Legislature and the state Board of Education.

Under the plan, teachers and school administrators — including superintendents, principals and assistant principals — would be rated “professional,” “provisional” or “ineffective.”

Teachers and administrators rated ineffective for two consecutive years would face dismissal from their positions, said Deborah Loewenberg Ball, chairwoman of the council and dean of University of Michigan School of Education.

“Every child in Michigan deserves skillful teachers, not just some of the time but each and every year,” Ball said. “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.”

The council — an independent commission of education experts created by Snyder and the Legislature as part of the state's 2011 teacher tenure reform efforts — worked for the past 18 months to produce recommendations that would mark a major shift for Michigan's schools.

Historically, Michigan's educator evaluation standards have not measured student growth.

More than 800 teacher evaluation systems are in place at the state's 848 school districts and charter schools, including different student-growth measures. During the 2011-12 school year, more than 97 percent of the state's 96,000 teachers were rated effective or higher, including teachers working at some of the state's lowest performing schools.

Jennifer Menzer, a teacher with Detroit Public Schools, said she supports every teacher in Michigan being evaluated using the same system. But she is concerned about using student growth data to measure her performance.

“In Detroit, you have the kids who won't pick up a pencil and come to school with so many issues, and you can't break through. You worry about that. A majority come to school hungry and cannot concentrate,” said Menzer, a 15-year veteran.

Robert Floden, co-director of the Educational Policy Center at Michigan State University, said one of his concerns is the burden faced by administrators to complete the observations of their entire teaching staff.

“Distributing observations beyond principals makes sense. The burden on high schools principals is real. It will still be a big burden,” Floden said. “And the need for training people so people using the system are using it the way it’s supposed to be used. Many districts will lack resources for training people to use these systems.”

Keith Johnson, president of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, said the use of standardized test scores in evaluations should be broadened to other areas where students develop.

“We need to turn our attention to multiple measure of students growth,” he said. “There is a different set of challenges you face teaching kids in certain areas — different cultures, different climates. You have to look at the context in which teachers are teaching.”

Johnson, who represents more than 3,600 teachers, said he agrees the state needs one consistent model.

Committee hearings on the council recommendations could begin this fall in Lansing, said state Sen. Phil Pavlov, R-St. Clair, chairman of the Senate Education Committee.

“The key to what the council is recommending is they put forth more good ideas on how to improve the craft of teaching,” Pavlov said. “We hope it’s viewed by the educator community as a positive tool and not something to go after a few bad teachers.”

If approved by the Legislature, the system would require all Michigan schools to have an educator evaluation system fully implemented by the 2015-16 school year, with a year of training during the 2014-15 school year.

The proposed system would not tie teacher compensation to evaluations, Ball said. The council also is recommending that individual educator ratings should not be subject to the state’s open records law and should be treated as confidential personnel information.

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