February 2013

UPDATE

MCEE Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness

MICHIGAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS
Executive Summary of the Update Report
February 18, 2013

This report provides an update on the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) and its approach, progress, and next steps for each part of its charge established by PA 102 of 2011.

Teacher Evaluation

- 2012–2013 Pilot of Educator Effectiveness Tools: The MCEE chose four teacher observation tools to be piloted and studied: Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching, Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, The Thoughtful Classroom, and 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning. The Institute for Social Research (ISR) agreed to design, implement, and manage the study of the pilot, which began in September 2012. ISR selected and recruited a final sample of thirteen districts. These pilot districts are currently finishing their second round of observations, which include some paired observations with independent observers and school administrators.

- Student Growth and Assessment Tools: To replace MEAP, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) plans to use computer-based tests for English (K–12), mathematics (K–12), science (3–12), and social studies (3–12) by the 2014–15 school year. MCEE will provide further recommendations about MDE's plans by the end of April 2013.

- Value-Added Modeling (VAM): The council has researched and recruited four national VAM vendors to perform services on a statewide data set as a demonstration of the type of deliverables that they could provide Michigan under an operational contract. The goal of this project is to get a practical example of the products that vendors would produce to support the components of a teacher evaluation system that is based on student growth.

- Non-Tested Grades and Subjects: The MCEE is reviewing team-based value-added measures and Student Learning Objectives (measurable, long-term academic goals) as possible methods to assess student learning for subjects in which standardized tests are not available.

- Other Components of Teacher Evaluation Systems: Observations and student test scores are only two of the components of educator evaluation systems. Although the MCEE recognizes that many other components could be effective in improving teacher practice, the council recommends that the decision to incorporate these into an evaluation should be left to the discretion of local districts.

Administrator Evaluation

The MCEE, with the assistance of ISR, is conducting a structured review of administrator evaluation tools using focus groups of educators in winter and early spring of 2013. Groups will respond to questions about the protocols, the sources of evidence used for the evaluation, and the training evaluators would need. Based on this feedback, the MCEE will recommend the development of a streamlined state system.

District Waiver Processes and Principles

The MCEE's charge emphasizes the need for regulation of homegrown tools to ensure that all educators receive fair and reliable evaluations. As a result, the MCEE is considering: (a) whether to create standards to guide the development of districts' tools or to develop criteria that align with the legislation; (b) which organization(s) should oversee this waiver process; and (c) to what extent the state should provide technical assistance to districts whose plans do not comply with the waiver standards or criteria.

Professional Certificate

The MCEE plans to make recommendations around professional certification later this spring.

Recommendations for Implementation

By June 2013 the MCEE will recommend a multi-year schedule for implementing a high-quality system of educator evaluation in Michigan, with certain responsibilities to be carried out by the state and others by local districts. In order to ensure a smooth and effective launch of this new educator evaluation system, the MCEE will recommend that the first year of implementation (2013-14) focus on developing the necessary training as well as the required systems, processes, and vendor contracts.

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Background

The Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) was established in June 2011 as part of Michigan's teacher tenure reform efforts (PA 102 of 2011). Council members were appointed in September 2011, and the legislature appropriated funding in mid-December 2011. The MCEE is a temporary commission with a life of no more than two years.

The council has five voting members, three of whom were appointed by Governor Rick Snyder, and one each by Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville and Speaker of the House Jase Bolger. Governor Snyder appointed Deborah Loewenberg Ball, dean of the University of Michigan School of Education, as chair of the MCEE. In addition to Ball, the governor appointed Mark Reckase from Michigan State University's College of Education and Nick Sheltrown from National Heritage Academies in Grand Rapids. Majority Leader Richardville appointed David Vensel, a principal from Jefferson High School in Monroe, and Speaker Bolger appointed Jennifer Hammond, a principal from Grand Blanc High School. Joseph Martineau serves on the MCEE without vote and is the designee of the Michigan Department of Education's superintendent of public instruction.

Purpose of this Update

This document contains updates on the council's approach, progress, and next steps for each part of its charge established by PA 102 of 2011. These updates are intended to provide information on the council's work over the past few months, as well as to explain our efforts to recommend an educator evaluation system that is fair, transparent, and feasible.

MCEE Working Processes

The council is conducting its work through two primary processes: (1) the conduct of a pilot study of educator effectiveness tools to provide data on implementation and validity and crucial feedback from education professionals; and (2) meetings, consultation, and research. This update draws on what the council is learning from both of these parts of our work.

Pilot Study: The 2012–2013 Pilot of Educator Effectiveness Tools, which is currently taking place in thirteen districts across Michigan, will inform the MCEE's final recommendations and support the implementation of a fair, reliable, and effective approach to educator evaluation in Michigan. Teacher evaluation tools and processes have been piloted in other states as they developed their educator evaluation systems. Trying out different approaches has enabled other states to improve their systems based on both data analysis and feedback from the field. The Institute for Social Research (ISR) at the University of Michigan agreed to design, implement, and manage the study of Michigan's 2012–2013 Pilot of Educator Effectiveness Tools, which began in participating pilot districts in September 2012.

Meetings, Consultation, and Research: The MCEE meets regularly (at least twice a month for 3–4 hours) in whole group meetings. In addition, subgroups of the council work on specific high-priority tasks such as investigating how other states have tackled particular challenges, exploring alternative methods for tracking student growth, and researching approaches to administrator evaluation. These subgroups meet several additional times between council meetings. In order to provide opportunities for stakeholder and expert input, meetings are regularly open to the public and the MCEE website (www.mcede.org) posts updates and information, and solicits comments and suggestions.

Pilot Study

In July 2012, the MCEE chose the following four teacher observation tools to be piloted and studied in the districts participating in the pilot study:

- Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching
- Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model
- The Thoughtful Classroom
- 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning

In July and August of 2012, ISR processed more than 70 applications from Michigan school districts interested in participating in the pilot. ISR selected and recruited a final sample of fourteen districts based on a number of factors including school size, free and reduced lunch percentages, and geographic location. One district, Lincoln Consolidated Schools, has not been able to continue in the pilot.

The current pilot districts include:

- Big Rapids Public Schools
- Cassopolis Public Schools
- Clare Public Schools
- Farmington Public Schools
- Garden City Public Schools
- Gibraltar School District
- Harper Creek Community Schools
- Leslie Public Schools
- Marshall Public Schools
- Montrose Community Schools
- Mt Morris Consolidated Schools
- North Branch Area Schools
- Port Huron Area School District

Participating districts pledged to comply with the pilot design and protocols, agreeing—among many other requests—to adopt the assigned observation tool, participate in observation tool training, administer the pilot testing regime, and allow ISR researchers to conduct teacher observations, surveys, and interviews throughout district schools. The pilot design also requires administrators to complete three observation sessions with each classroom teacher using their observation protocol.

ISR advertised for, recruited, and hired eight research staff to act as independent observers, all of whom have classroom teaching experience and a degree in education or a teaching certificate. These observers have been assigned to pair with school administrators for specified teacher observations using that district's assigned tool. ISR's research team will use these independent yet simultaneous observations as data to analyze the validity and reliability of observation tools.

School administrators in all pilot districts as well as ISR's independent observers completed observation tool training in late August or September of 2012. Each tool vendor sent trainers to conduct four-day training sessions, all of which included an overview of the tool, in-depth lessons on the tools' domains, guided practice for learning observers, and some calibration training to ensure that observers will generate accurate assessments when conducting teacher observations. Three tools also provided training on technology-based data management applications, which allow administrators to conduct observations and store observation data on a computer, iPad, or other wireless device.

Currently, pilot districts are finishing their second round of observations, which include some paired observations with independent observers and school administrators.

In addition to this focus on educator observation tools, the pilot study has also undertaken efforts to measure student growth. Because testing is not in place that would allow measurement of changes in students' levels of achievement in many subjects and at many grade levels, the pilot study is using additional testing not currently part of standard assessment practice in Michigan. Specifically, as part of the pilot testing regime, fall student assessments have been completed in pilot districts; these were: the first of three Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) administrations for grades K–6, the PLAN for 9th and 10th grades, and the ACT for 11th and 12th grades.

Next Steps

Based on the pilot design, ISR and the MCEE have planned the following next steps:

- Administrators and ISR's independent observers will complete the second round of teacher observations by the end February 2013; the third round of teacher observations will be completed during March and April 2013.

- The second administration of NWEA-MAP testing will occur for K–6 grade students in early 2013; the "spring" testing (NWEA-MAP for K–6 grade, EXPLORE for 7th and 8th grade, PLAN for 9th and 10th grade, MME for 11th grade, and ACT for 12th grade) will occur in May 2013.

- ISR will establish an online forum to allow pilot district administrators and teachers to voice opinions about the pilot experience, surface challenges in implementing pilot protocols, and share how the pilot has shaped their schools. ISR will use this feedback as contextual, qualitative data to inform its final report to the MCEE.

- ISR will collect all data from teacher observation sessions and student testing to conduct analyses on observation scoring and student growth, and to calculate value-added measurements using multiple methods. ISR will then analyze these outcomes to contribute to the MCEE's value-added modeling (VAM) recommendations.

- ISR will collect cost estimates and plans for statewide implementation from observation tool vendors and potential VAM vendors. This will help both the state and school districts to understand and prepare for the cost and implementation process of statewide evaluation systems.

- ISR will prepare and deliver to the MCEE a final comprehensive report on pilot activities and outcomes.

Student Learning and Growth

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has briefed the MCEE on the plans to transition from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) to assessments produced by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, and to provide state-developed assessments in all core areas. MDE plans to have computer-based tests for the following subjects and grades by the 2014–15 school year:

- English language arts in grades K–12
- Mathematics in grades K–12
- Science in grades 3–12
- Social Studies in grades 3–12

These additional assessments will allow for tracking student learning in a standardized pretest/posttest design, comparing student test scores from one spring to the next, in relevant content areas for the vast majority of Michigan educators. How appropriate these will be for measuring student growth reliably is not yet known. MDE plans to make these assessments available to districts, providing services to districts

that so choose that districts would otherwise have to provide for themselves. MCEE's recommendations regarding MDE's plans will be provided by the end of April 2013.

Because the MCEE recognizes the need to identify the value that is added to student achievement by individual educators—and because simply comparing pretest and posttest scores fails to account for the many factors that can influence changes in students' scores—the MCEE launched an investigation of the techniques used to conduct what is called "value-added modeling" (VAM). A subgroup of council members with expertise in statistics, assessment, and student growth measurement focused on this task. The subgroup began this work by identifying a group of potential vendors with experience and expertise in the area of education-based value-added modeling. After making initial contact, four vendors expressed interest in working with Michigan to plan, develop, and implement value-added measures and accompanying systems for our state. These four vendors are:

- American Institutes for Research
- Pearson
- SAS
- Value-Added Research Center (Wisconsin Center for Education Research)

The MCEE subgroup submitted questions to and then met with representatives from each organization to learn more about the services that each could provide. The subgroup inquired about many facets of value-added measurement, including model characteristics, implementation logistics, communication with educators, and cost.

These consultations provided the MCEE with a closer look at the capabilities, philosophies, and strengths of each vendor. These vendors have expressed an interest in exploring what might be involved in performing these services on a statewide data set as proof of capacity and as a demonstration of the type of deliverables that they could provide under an operational contract. ISR is now working with each of these vendors as part of the pilot study. The goal of this project is to get a practical example of the products that vendors would produce to support the components of a teacher evaluation system that uses student learning as one main component. This work will be carried out in the first three months of 2013.

Next Steps

- The MCEE will work with ISR to oversee the services that VAM vendors provide in the winter and spring of 2013. This will demonstrate how these vendors conduct analysis, manage large amounts of data, and share feedback with educators and other stakeholders.

- The MCEE will assess the results of vendor work plus assessment work done in the pilot study to make fair, transparent, and feasible recommendations regarding how best to take student learning into account in the educator evaluation system.

Non-tested Grades and Subjects

With appropriate understanding, standardized measures such as state-mandated, technically sound tests might be used responsibly as part of teacher evaluation. However, it is important to keep in mind that in grades and subjects for which there are no standardized approaches to assessing and tracking student learning, educators and policymakers must create alternative ways to assess student progress. Managing this dilemma is difficult, and states across the country are using several approaches to gather data on student learning when standardized tests are unavailable.

The Michigan Department of Education is pursuing one such approach by developing assessments to cover all grades and subjects, including non-core content areas like visual and performing arts, music, health, and physical education. Districts might be able to adopt or adapt these assessments for use at their own expense. Since these tests will not likely be available until the 2014–2015 school year, the MCEE is looking to other states for guidance during this interim period.

The council has learned about alternative options for measuring student learning in untested grades and subjects (as well as for state-tested subjects). We discuss two such options here:

Team-based value-added measures: This method of measuring student growth attributes standardized test scores from specified tested courses to groups of teachers, many of whom may not teach all the students' in that subset. For example, standardized math scores for tested math classes may be attributed to all math teachers in a department. Some districts attribute English scores to fine arts teachers and math scores to physical education teachers to encourage school-wide literacy and numeracy instruction. A final example is all teachers in a school receive the aggregate school-level growth score from standardized assessments in all tested subjects. States that employ versions of this system for calculating student growth include Maryland, North Carolina, and Tennessee. This system can lead to serious validity concerns for several reasons. The MCEE will be considering these as we move forward.

Student Learning Objectives: Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) are measurable, long-term academic goals that teachers and evaluators set for groups of students. For these to be used to assess student growth, they must be accompanied by tools to measure student learning toward those goals. In some instances, SLOs are shared by a team of similar teachers across a state, district, or school. Teachers can work with a principal or other district leader to plan and develop these goals, and then track and report progress towards them to school leaders throughout the year. The MCEE consulted with Dr. James Stronge, a scholar and expert in the field of non-tested subject assessment, in order to learn more about these measurement tools. Several states and large districts currently use SLOs to measure student learning in non-tested grades and subjects, including Colorado, Rhode Island, Ohio, and Austin, Texas.

The following are examples of SLOs from Rhode Island[1]:

- Library/Media: Students will demonstrate proficiency with citing print and electronic resources in an academic research paper, including a basic understanding of:
    - when to use direct quotations, in-text citations, and footnotes/endnotes
    - how to use EasyBib for formatting in-text citations, footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies
    - plagiarism and copyright/intellectual property rights of creators

- Culinary Arts II: Students will develop culinary knowledge and practical skills needed to be career-ready for entry-level culinary-prep positions including sanitation and safety, knife skills, use of large and small equipment, varied food preparation, nutritional values, receiving and storage, management and employability skills, and customer service.

In order for SLOs to yield useful information, they must be appropriately rigorous and accompanied by tools to measure students' progress toward goals. Teachers and administrators would need training and continuous support in order to create, implement, and assess student growth on SLOs. Even with training, how to ensure fair standards and high quality in the assessment of student learning is a significant problem.

States across the country are just beginning to pilot systems and protocols for measuring student growth in non-tested subjects. Finding fair and reliable ways of measuring growth is not easy, and the MCEE recognizes the importance of carefully assessing the reliability and fairness of these systems before making recommendations.

[1] Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Educator Quality and Certification, http://www.ride.ri.gov/educatorquality/educatorevaluation/SLO.aspx

Next Steps

- The MCEE will continue to investigate options and hear from experts about measures of student growth in non-tested grades and subjects.

- When the council recommends an interim system for determining learning and growth in non-tested grades and subjects, it will also recommend a set of policies for implementing such systems, such as communication procedures between administrators and teachers, support structures for teachers to understand these policies, and guidelines for how resulting data should be used.

Other Components of Teacher Evaluation Systems

Observations and student test scores are only two of the components of educator evaluation. Others include documents that support the observations, as well as other materials contributed by teachers, principals, students, or parents. Among the components used in other states are the following:

- Pre-observation conferences
- Post-observation conferences
- Summative evaluation conferences
- Teacher self-assessments
- Professional development activities
- Educator growth plans (developed by teachers or administrators)
- Locally developed assessments of student learning
- Structured review of student work
- Teacher artifacts using portfolio or evidence binder processes
- Feedback from students, parents, and/or other teachers using structured survey tools
- Teacher self-reflection and progress on professional growth goals

Although the MCEE recognizes that many of these components could be effective in highlighting strengths and areas for improvement in teacher practice, the council will not make recommendations requiring their use. Any decision to incorporate these into a teacher's evaluation would be left to the discretion of local districts. The state might play a role in disseminating information about the range of components used statewide and research on their promise and technical merit.

Administrator Evaluation Tools

Though teacher evaluation directly impacts instruction, the MCEE also recognizes the importance of having fair, transparent, and feasible administrator evaluation tools. With the help of consultants and education leaders from Michigan and other states, the MCEE has made significant progress learning about administrator evaluation tools. As described below, the council has developed a plan to use both pilot administrators and other administrators across the state to review these important tools in order to inform a final MCEE recommendation.

The MCEE began its work on potential tools and processes for the administrator evaluation by forming a subgroup of council members who reviewed:

- National Board Standards for Accomplished Principals
- Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders
- Michigan School Code provisions and the language of the new legislation
- National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Principal Evaluation
- Research and research syntheses on administrator evaluation

As with the teacher evaluation systems, there is limited research and considerable work being done among major vendors on administrator evaluation. Those vendors include: Marzano Research Laboratories, Kim Marshall, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), and Dr. Douglas Reeves (The Leadership and Learning Center). The nation's recent attention to educator evaluation has also seen the arrival of some new tools, including Vanderbilt's ValEd and New Leaders for New Schools Principal Evaluation. The MCEE also reviewed sample reports and materials from specific states, including the Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA)-endorsed School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System. Several states have posted "model" evaluations and associated materials for principals and superintendents, including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Illinois, and North Carolina.

The MCEE also asked the Advisory Council to review materials and make independent recommendations based on their review. Using criteria that were developed by the Advisory Council with advice from the authors of the ADvance materials (Reeves and McNeil), the Advisory Council recommended Marzano, School ADvance, and New Leaders for New Schools.

Next Steps

- The MCEE, with the assistance of ISR, will conduct a structured review of these administrator evaluation tools using focus groups of principals and superintendents. In these interviews, administrators will be asked questions about the evaluation protocols and processes, the sources of evidence that are used for the evaluation, the efficiency of the rubric, and the training evaluators would need.

- The council will gather additional information on other instruments and administrators', teachers', superintendents', and others' views of critical aspects/dimensions of the administrator evaluation process. Examples include:

    - Feasibility in terms of time and other resources
    - Content and character of adequate training
    - Adaptability for a range of administrators
    - Critical components of a review process (orientation, goal setting, observations, progress reports, summative reports, etc.)
    - Adequacy of the indicators/behaviors listed in the rubric
    - Primary sources of evidence upon which administrators should be encouraged to draw
    - Adequacy of accompanying materials to support the process (professional development plan, self-assessment form, summative evaluation form, coaching protocols, etc.)
    - Significance of standards, domains, areas of responsibility, and relative value of subcategories

- Based on the feedback from administrators and superintendents, the MCEE will recommend the development of a streamlined state system (e.g., North Carolina, Illinois, Iowa, etc.). This would require districts to outsource the training on these tools, but would save considerable costs in terms of materials development. The state could collect data in order to revise the materials over time by examining relationships between the principal reviews and teacher/student outcomes.

    Components of other state systems include:
    - Rubric(s)
    - Implementation guide for principal/superintendent/other
    - Protocols for visits/observations
    - Schedule of benchmark events in the year
    - Structured forms for each benchmark
    - Summative evaluation form
    - Self-assessment forms

- Lists of participants' responsibilities (superintendent and principals for principal evaluation, school board and superintendent for superintendent evaluations, etc.)
- Training materials/events for participants

District Waiver Processes and Principles

The MCEE recognizes that many districts are currently using evaluation tools developed at the district level that are financially practical, are designed by local educators, and seem to fit the unique needs of districts' administrators, teachers, and students. The MCEE's charge, however, emphasizes the need for some regulation of these homegrown tools in order to ensure that all teachers are being evaluated with fair and reliable tools that also help to facilitate conversations about instructional improvement. The MCEE has been learning about how locally grown tools are assessed in other states, and about the processes that make up that assessment.

Next Steps

- The MCEE will continue to consider other states' systems in order to develop a fair and feasible plan for Michigan. This plan would involve either developing standards for the state's educator evaluation system that would be used to guide the development of districts' homegrown tools or developing criteria that align with the Michigan legislation to be used in ensuring the quality of local processes.

- The MCEE will also consider which organization(s) should oversee this process.

- Finally, the MCEE will consider to what extent the state should provide technical assistance to districts whose plans do not comply with the waiver standards or criteria.

Professional Certificate

The MCEE plans to make recommendations around professional certification this spring, as published in the interim progress report timeline.

Recommendations for Implementation

By June 2013 the MCEE will recommend a multi-year schedule for implementing a high-quality system of educator evaluation in Michigan, with certain responsibilities to be carried out by the state and others by local districts. In order to ensure a smooth and effective launch of this new educator evaluation system, the MCEE will recommend that the first year of implementation (2013-14) focus on developing the necessary training as well as the required systems, processes, and vendor contracts.

In order to achieve this ambitious schedule for implementation, the legislature will need to act on the MCEE recommendations early in the fall of 2013. Following that, both the state and local districts will need time to put in place the infrastructure necessary for operational implementation that is feasible and legally defensible for the 2014-15 school year. This staging is crucial in order to fulfill our charge to build an ethical, transparent, and fair system of evaluating educators, dedicated to educational improvement in the state.