Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSED 2012-13 EDUCATOR EVALUATION PILOT STUDY

The Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) has recommended that a pilot study of specific elements of the teacher and administrator evaluation system be conducted during 2012-13 (see pp. 12-14) of the MCEE Interim Progress Report, April 27, 2012). A pilot study is crucial to inform the final recommendations of the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness, and to ensure the implementation of a fair, reliable, and effective approach to educator evaluation in our state. Pilots have been conducted in other states as they developed their educator evaluation systems and doing so has enabled them to improve their systems based on analysis of data and feedback from participating districts and educators before implementing a complete state-wide system.

Quick Facts about the MCEE Proposed Pilot Study

- 3 observation tools piloted in 4 districts; total of 12 districts.
- Student tests include MEAP, ACT, PLAN, Explore, and Computer Adaptive Test
- Pilot districts also receive training in use of observation tools
- Outside contractor (not a vendor of any tool) analyzes all data and combines data using different formulas
- Pilot study of administrator tool in second half of school year in pilot districts
- Total cost: $6 million for 2012-13 school year
- Pilot study completed in time for final recommendations prior to 2013-14 school year, the first year that educator evaluation is required by state law

Overall, the budget comprises approximately 0.5% of the total school aid budget in Michigan. This $6 million pilot study is a wise and relatively small investment to ensure that the money we eventually spend on the educator evaluation system is well-spent. A strong educator evaluation system will support skillful teaching in our state and contributes to the improvement of Michigan students' learning.

What is a pilot study?

A pilot study is a small, carefully designed trial of the tools and methods that may be recommended for the statewide educator evaluation system. By trying out the observation tools, the testing protocols, and the methods of using information, we will learn what works, what needs adjustment, and what is either unfeasible, uninformative, or unfair. The pilot will allow both practitioners and policymakers to understand how different tools work in actual school settings and will enable the MCEE to make recommendations for evaluation tools based on data and insight gained from educators in Michigan.

What will the pilot study yield?

- Data on what is involved in actually using specific tools in school settings.
- Information about the strengths and weaknesses of the specific tools and approaches, including the usefulness and trustworthiness of the information they yield.
- Analyses of the validity of alternative approaches to measuring student growth.
- A trial of computer-adaptive testing (CAT) as part of the student growth measures.
- Analyses of the validity and reliability of different approaches and methods of analysis as used in Michigan settings.
- A data-based appraisal of the feasibility of different candidate components in terms of cost, effort, and practicality.
- Information from education professionals on how the different tools and approaches actually work.

- Resources necessary to put a statewide system into place (including a communication system, materials for teachers and administrators, and a database for storing information).
- Improved plans for implementing a complete statewide system of educator evaluation in 2013-2014.
- Information for developing the criteria for granting waivers, because it will be important to the credibility of the state's educator evaluation system to have rigorous standards for granting exceptions to the final recommendations from the council.

What are some of the benefits of conducting a pilot of educator evaluation tools and approaches during the 2012-2013 school year?

- To surface and try to resolve specific technical and logistical challenges that may arise.
- To obtain information from education professionals on how the different tools and approaches actually work.
- To generate educator support by allowing teachers and principals to learn about the different systems, provide on-the-ground feedback, and contribute to decision-making.
- To identify and resolve problems in advance, before putting a system in place in all Michigan schools during the school year 2013-14.
- To explore possible alternative approaches for non-tested grades and subjects.
- To ensure a cost-effective approach to the statewide system by exploring costs and possible cost savings.
- To enable lawmakers to assure stakeholders that the system was tested before enactment.
- To help districts identify master teachers who can assess, mentor, and develop their peers.
- To comply with Michigan's application for a federal ESEA waiver which requires the state to begin an educator evaluation study in the 2012 – 2013 school year.

Why is it important to contract with an independent research organization to conduct the pilot study?

- An independent research organization, with no vested interest in the outcome of the pilot, can provide reliable, valid, and transparent evidence to aid in the Council's work, and to inform policymakers and educators more broadly.
- The pilot study will not be an "add-on" to someone's job requirements. A group of educators, analysts, and researchers will be assigned to the pilot project intensively, and will have the time necessary to conduct this study effectively. This will ensure the quality of our investment in the pilot and provide the highest quality data and information to aid in the development of a first-rate educator evaluation system for Michigan.
- An outside research organization can develop and host data and rostering systems, which are challenging to design and maintain properly. What is learned can assist with recommendations for such systems in our state.

Why does the pilot call for five or six observations per teacher per year?

- Observations of the same teacher by different observers will reveal if there are large variations in how observers use particular tools This is important for choosing tools that will be dependable and usable, and can be implemented feasibly in schools.
- When a teacher is observed on separate occasions, observers are more likely to see different facets of a teacher's performance and capabilities. More observations yield a greater chance that teachers strengths and weaknesses will be accurately represented. We need information about the number of observations necessary for a valid measure of teaching performance. These data are crucial to ensure that the system that we implement in Michigan is not riddled with error and misjudgments of teachers, which can be a significant challenge in observation systems.

Why does the pilot require 30 trained observers to conduct classroom observations?

- In order to conduct a rigorous pilot of the approaches to observation, it is important to have observers who can be properly trained and who can spend the time necessary to collect the observational data necessary for the pilot to be done well and to yield the information we need to recommend most reliable and fair system possible.

Why does the proposed pilot study budget seem bigger than the costs incurred in other states?

Our budget is not actually more than that of other states. Specifically:

1. Many states only piloted teacher observations, and not the student growth component. Our budget for the observation tools is **$232,975**. Compare with:

    - Colorado's 27-district pilot was estimated at $800,000 for observation tools and training only.
    - Tennessee budgeted an average of $6.5 million for their longitudinal data system per year over the next 3 years. Our data system budget is less than a half million for the pilot year. Tennessee has also budgeted over $7.5 million per year for the next three years to "use data to improve instruction."
    - Washington State's pilot program costs are $5.7 million. $2 million of this is going towards training principals to be observers.

2. Michigan's pilot study budget include the costs of testing necessary to try out approaches to student growth modeling:

    - Testing costs (MEAP, PLAN, ACT, EXPLORE, CAT) ($1,233,350.00)

    The opportunity to pilot these different approaches to testing (including computer-assisted testing) has additional benefits for educational improvement in Michigan.

3. Other states' budgets often do not make visible the following components that are included in Michigan's proposed pilot budget because pilots are conducted by state departments of education (DoE):

    - Staff overseeing the pilot ($460,693.00)
    - Observers ($2,673,900.00)
    - Student growth modeling ($250,000.00)
    - Combined observation and student growth data analysis ($200,000.00)
    - Data hosting and rostering systems ($225,000.00)