



## **Teacher Evaluations Could Get First Hearing In August**

July 24, 2013, MIRS.com

Recommendations for reforming the state's teacher evaluation system should get through the legislature this fall in order to be in place for the 2015 school year, said Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) Chair Deborah BALL.

"It will be important for this to happen as soon as possible," said Ball, who pointed out there were significant pieces that has to fall into place.

The council, originally called the Governor's Council on Educator Effectiveness, was formed as part of education reform legislation in 2011. A name change and more than a year after its initial deadline, the group has released its report (See "Educator Effectiveness Council Won't Be Done April 30 As Planned," 4/20/12).

The recommendation is for a three-tier model that classifies teachers as "professional," "provisional" or "ineffective" based on both the teacher's practice and the growth of a teacher's students. A similar model will be followed for administrators.

Professional teachers are both competent and excellent teachers, who are highly skilled. A teacher or administrator rated as such for three straight years may pursue leadership opportunities.

Provisional teachers have exhibited some skill, but also have substantial identifiable weaknesses. A teacher receiving this rating three straight years "should be counseled out of his or her current role," according to the report.

Ineffective teachers have specific identified weaknesses, and are placed on urgent notice to correct and improve within two years. A teacher who receives this rating for two straight years "should be terminated from further employment as a teacher" in his or her district.

Still, Ball said today the model wasn't focused on being punitive or ferreting out ineffective teachers, who Ball said were a small part of the problem.

"Our recommendations reflect the council's commitment to Michigan's teachers and administrators as they work to develop their professional practice and advance children's learning," said Ball.

The plan also includes a significant opt-out. Districts can seek a waiver if they demonstrate that their evaluation processes have the same level of quality and rigor as the state requirements.

So what's the next step?

“The legislature will have to take the report convert it into legislative language,” said Ball. She said the MCEE has been in touch with the legislature throughout the process, and has assurances that meetings on this could happen as early as August.”

Sen. Phil PAVLOV (R-St. Clair) chair of the Senate Education Committee, commended the MCEE.

“Student achievement is the top priority, and an evaluation system that supports educators and encourages professional growth will be a game changer for Michigan schools. I want to thank the Council for their dedication to this important task. Future generations of students will greatly benefit from their expertise and hard work,” said Pavlov.

Also praising the MCEE report were education groups Students First and Education Trust Midwest.

Students First State Director Andy SOLON called the recommendations fair, transparent and feasible.

“For years, Michigan's schools have been lacking crucial evaluation systems that help identify quality teachers and reward educators doing the best for their students. We strongly encourage legislators to take the necessary action to begin the implementation of high quality and meaningful evaluation systems that recognize excellence, provide targeted development and share best practices to truly value educators,” said Solon.

Part of that value, however, will not be merit pay. Ball said the system was specifically designed to categorize but not rank teachers, meaning it would not be wise to model a pay scale in accordance with the evaluation scale.

“We're not stopping any district from continuing to think about that . . . that just wasn't our charge,” said Ball of merit pay.

Ball, dean of the University of Michigan School of Education, called the academic research on merit pay “underwhelming” in both the public and private sectors.

But in terms of the polarizing issue at hand -- educator evaluation -- Education Trust Midwest said the MCEE struck a thoughtful middle ground.

“Every Michigan student should have a great teacher,” said Amber ARELLANO, executive director of Education Trust-Midwest. “And every Michigan educator should have thoughtful feedback to improve their practice. This is one of the most important opportunities Michigan has had in decades to make this vision happen.”