



The Education Trust–Midwest



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Quality Teaching for All Students: A Top Priority for Michigan

Michigan Council finds common sense middle ground on teacher evaluation and support for Michigan educators

ROYAL OAK, Mich. (July 24, 2013) - Calling the improvement of Michigan's teaching quality one of the most important issues facing the state, the Education Trust-Midwest applauds the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness' final report as it is released today. The report outlines Michigan's proposed first state-wide educator evaluation and support system.

"Every Michigan student should have a great teacher," said Amber Arellano, executive director of the non-partisan 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."

Led by Dean Deborah Ball of the University of Michigan's School of Education, for two years the Michigan Council has been developing a blueprint for a real state-wide system of teacher improvement and accountability. Now, state leaders and the legislature need to operationalize and fund the foundation of the system.

The Council calls for a state-wide "opt-out" system of evaluation and support, reinforcing an [Education Trust-Midwest recommendation](#). This means local districts that want to use their own local evaluation models may do so, so long as they meet rigorous state standards -- and undergo a true review process to prove it. If done right, this approach respects local control with greater accountability and quality assurances.

The report comes at a time when education issues have become polarized. The Council finds a sensible, thoughtful middle ground. For example, it calls for the state to provide value-added measures and data, based on state assessment, to local schools. This is important as value-added data can consider for variables that impact student learning, such as poverty -- issues that educators cannot control.

Teaching effectiveness is one of the most powerful predictors of student learning, widespread research shows. Access to quality teaching is a particular challenge for low-income, African American and Latino students, research has found.

Among the report's highlights and Ed Trust-Midwest's recommendations:

- **School accountability and a fair, comparable measure of teacher impact:** The Council recommends the state provide a value-added growth model and data (which estimate teachers' impact on student learning) for all schools to use in their evaluations, among other measures. This will provide parents with much more confidence when their school says their teachers are "effective" -- as well as an important mechanism for school accountability and transparency.
- **Going forward with evaluations:** The Council recommends local districts continue to implement their local evaluation systems until a state system is fully implemented in 2015-2016. This makes good sense. Students cannot wait for their schools' teaching quality to be addressed. As the state builds mechanisms to support locals' work, new helpful state-provided measures should be added to their pool of measures to be used in their evaluation processes in the future.
- **State leadership and some support:** Research has shown many Michigan school districts are struggling to carry out evaluation in a fair and developmental manner that helps teachers improve their practice. As leading states have done, the Council calls on the state to take some responsibility and provide greater support and leadership. For example, reliable growth data and training would help produce greater consistency and reliability in evaluation ratings, which has been a [serious problem in Michigan](#).
- **Master teacher pathway needs more work:** Ed Trust-Midwest supports the identification of truly high performing teachers to be master teachers, who could assist with evaluations and mentoring. The Council's work on this issue is incomplete. Further work is needed.
- **Saying "No" to making individual evaluation ratings public:** Ed Trust-Midwest supports this recommendation from the Council, and believes aggregate data only should be available to researchers for school accountability purposes.

The Education Trust-Midwest is Michigan's only data-driven, non-partisan state-wide research and advocacy organization focused on what is best for Michigan students. Our mission is to work for the high achievement of all students, particularly low-income, African-American, Latino and American-Indian students in Michigan, and to provide honest, reliable information and expertise to our state's families and policymakers.

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