



'Pay for performance' not recommended in Michigan teacher evaluation group's report

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Classroom performance and student growth over the school year are the key components of a new evaluation system recommended by a state work group tasked with developing a way to measure the effectiveness of teachers.

(File photo)

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Updated: **Lawmakers, education groups react to recommendations**

LANSING -- Teachers in Michigan need a strong system for evaluating their performance, but those results should not be used to determine pay, according to the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness.

The group, created in 2011 to develop recommendations for how the state should judge teacher performance, **released its report** today after more than two years of study, discussion and a series of pilot programs testing certain proposals.

The report recommends that the state create and implement an evaluation requirement for both teachers and school administrators based on direct observation of performance as well as student growth as measured by testing and statistical analysis.

However, the report explicitly advises against using teacher evaluations as a basis for determining merit pay under a "pay for performance" system.

"Educator evaluations must not be used to determine merit pay," the report states. "There is insufficient evidence to support pay for performance programs at this time. Research in education and other fields suggests that performance-related pay and the monitoring systems that come with it can backfire, decreasing motivation and quality performance."

Legislators in the Michigan House are considering **a bill** which would make student performance the primary factor in determining teacher pay. Opponents of the bill at a May hearing before the House Education Committee **called on lawmakers** to wait until after the council's report was reached to make any changes to how teacher pay is determined.

Dr. Deborah Loewenberg Ball, dean of the University of Michigan College of Education and head of the council, said

the recommendations were intended to improve learning and student outcomes while giving teachers concrete recommendations on areas to improve.

"The recommendations have two big parts: classroom performance, which is using one of the observation tools to judge classroom performance, and student growth, which is measuring the change in a child's performance across the school year," Ball said.

The report recommends the state adopt one of four evaluation models for assessing the in-class performance of teachers, with a suggestion the state use competitive bidding to get the best price on both materials and training on how to use the evaluation system.

Administrators would be assessed using the same system as teachers, Ball said. The report creates a three-tiered ranking system, with grades of professional, provisional and ineffective. Teachers who receive ineffective ratings in two consecutive years would be fired under the system proposed in the report, while teachers consistently receiving professional ratings could have the opportunity to be evaluated in two-year periods.

Individual teacher ratings would be kept confidential and would not be made available under the system. "Individual educators' evaluations must be treated as confidential personnel information. They should be used to focus professional development and guide improvement-focused actions, but they should not be made public," the report states.

The recommendation to keep ratings confidential was endorsed by Amber Arellano, executive director of The Education Trust-Midwest, who provided advisory support to the council. "We agree that ratings shouldn't be made public," Arellano said. The Education Trust-Midwest also released a statement saying the state should only make aggregate data on teacher ratings available.

Ball said that budget estimates for the cost of implementing the recommendations have not been completed, but that state budget officials were evaluating the costs. "Without money from the state, this won't be implementable," Ball said.

Local districts would still have the option to use their own evaluation systems under the recommendations, but only if they could demonstrate their evaluations were as rigorous and reliable as the state system.

The Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness was established in 2011 as part of Michigan's teacher tenure reforms. The MCEE was a temporary commission with five voting members. Three were appointed by Republican Gov. Rick Snyder, and one each was appointed by Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville, R-Monroe, and Speaker of the House Jase Bolger, R-Marshall.

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