

Missouri NEA Communications Briefing

Teacher Evaluation

Missouri schools work to implement change.

The Issue

The Every Student Succeeds Act, which is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, prohibits federal directives about teacher evaluation. Missouri school districts have the opportunity to change policy previously required by the U.S. Department of Education. Missouri NEA supports local school districts determining their own teacher evaluation systems as long as they meet certain state-determined requirements.

School districts across Missouri are implementing educator evaluations to serve the two purposes of professional evaluation:

1. Help every educator improve.
2. Identify underperformers, provide support for improvement, and remove those teachers who are unable to improve.

The U.S. Department of Education required districts to subscribe to some of the principles guiding these evaluations in order to receive a No Child Left Behind waiver. Now that the Every Student Succeeds Act replaces NCLB, Missouri school districts can reexamine these principles to see how well they serve students. The State Board of Education currently requires every local school district to adopt a teacher evaluation system that comprises seven essential principles:

1. Measures educator performance against research-based practices
2. Differentiates levels of performance
3. Highlights a probationary period for new educators
4. Includes measures of growth in student learning as a significant factor
5. Provides meaningful feedback

6. Requires periodic training for evaluators
7. Uses results to inform decisions regarding personnel

Missouri's NCLB waiver required student scores on state tests to be a significant part of the evaluation of teachers of tested subjects. This is no longer required of Missouri school districts. Research confirms that student scores on state tests are not reliable measures of educator effectiveness. University of California-Berkley economist Jesse Rothstein analyzed teacher value-added scores based on students' state test scores. He found the scores to be only a little more reliable than flipping a coin for determining whether a teacher is effective. Forty percent of teachers in the bottom quartile scored in the top half of teachers when an alternate test was used.

Tying student scores on state tests to teacher evaluation creates a disincentive for quality teachers to work in schools with many high-need students. When new teachers in schools with many high-need students get a little experience, they leave for other buildings at the first opportunity. Removing state test scores as a part of teacher evaluation will not end this pattern without other changes, but it will reduce the stress and could reduce costly teacher turnover.

MNEA's Position

Effective evaluations rely on clear standards and use multiple indicators, including observations, work product and multiple measures of student learning. Teachers should have wide latitude to change how to show growth in student learning. Evaluations should identify strengths as well as create meaningful reflection and discussion of professional practice with the goal of improving student learning.

MNEA believes that all students deserve the opportunity to attend a quality public school.

The most effective evaluation systems are collaboratively developed in true partnership with teachers and principals at the district level. Evaluations reflecting the education of the whole child, not just what standardized tests measure, will result in improved outcomes for students.

What This Means to Educators

De-coupling state test scores and teacher evaluation can provide teachers more freedom to provide innovative, engaging instruction so students learn to think critically, to solve problems creatively, to work well in groups, and to participate in their communities as active citizens. Meaningful content can replace test preparation, especially if Missouri also reduces the impact of state test scores on district accreditation.

Challenges

Identifying effective teaching is much more difficult than it appears. All the new evaluation systems are more time-consuming for evaluators and teachers than previous evaluation systems. Administrators must be certain that documentation for evaluation does not take away the time teachers need for instructing, planning and providing feedback to students. Local requirements must also be manageable for administrators, who are often responsible for evaluating 30 to 40 teachers in addition to their many other duties.

The state of Missouri has failed to fully fund the cost of educating and transporting students for several years. This impairs the ability of districts

to provide adequate training for evaluators to help them provide effective feedback to teachers. Lack of funds prevents districts from providing sufficient time during the school day for the collaboration needed to incorporate new strategies. Missouri school districts must be given time and resources to implement and hone the new evaluation systems without new mandates.

Evaluators need:

- Training to recognize evidence of standards to produce reliable evaluations
- Routine calibration to insure reliability
- Training to provide feedback that leads to improvement
- Training to evaluate teaching in content areas outside their own experience
- Increased time for observations and conferences with teachers

Teachers need:

- Training on new standards and the new evaluation system
- Training on how to set personal growth targets
- Training on how to provide evidence of their impact on student learning
- Time to collaborate with colleagues to improve instruction
- Elevated levels of trust among all stakeholders in order to support innovation
- Non-evaluative feedback from trained master teachers in the same content area

For more information about this topic and other education policy issues, visit www.mnea.org/briefings
Find MNEA's Legislative Platform at www.mnea.org/Missouri/PlatformPriorities.aspx

What You Can Do

- **Discuss with colleagues ways to show impact on student learning.** Create an informal group to provide confidential feedback among group members.
- **Surveying school board candidates and getting involved in the school board election can make a difference.** Your local school board will make the ultimate decision on the method of teacher and principal evaluation in your district. For help getting started, contact Missouri NEA Political Director Mark Jones at Mark.Jones@mnea.org.
- **Talk to your state legislators about work in your district to improve educator evaluations.** Let them know school districts need time and funding to develop and implement effective evaluations, to incorporate meaningful measures of student learning, and to help every educator improve from good to great.

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