



The Education Trust–Midwest

In November 2015, Governor Rick Snyder signed Public Act 173 of 2015, which moved Michigan in the right direction by creating a statewide framework for educator feedback, evaluation and support. At the time, we noted that after years of asking teachers to do and achieve more, without the feedback and support to help them improve, Michigan was turning a corner.

The legislation was the result of a bipartisan effort and the leadership of Senator Phil Pavolv, Rep. Adam Zemke, Senator Margaret O’Brien and former representatives Lisa Lyons and Amanda Price, and broad support from the education community.

As we stated during prior legislative sessions, lessening the use of data in evaluations would weaken this framework. As a result, The Education Trust-Midwest opposes Senate Bills 122 and 202.

Michigan’s educator evaluation framework was developed around the goal of improving teaching quality. A wide body of research shows that the single greatest in-school factor for improving student learning is the quality of the teacher at the front of the classroom. We must do all that we can to provide the support and feedback to our educators, to help them constantly improve.

And there is no doubt that we need all the help that we can get.

This system was also strongly informed by Tennessee’s success. Today, Tennessee is among the fastest improving states for student learning in key subjects. It’s leaders widely attribute that success to the state’s focus on educator quality – including the state’s educator support and evaluation system, which is rooted in quality data as an essential starting point for continuous improvement, feedback and coaching.

For years, Michigan has been at or near the national bottom for student learning and improvement. M-STEP data released last week continues to expose serious challenges in performance across Michigan’s communities. And the most recent data shows wide gaps in achievement between historically underserved student groups – students from low-income families, African American students and Latino students- and high-income, and white peers.

With the passage of PA 173 of 2015, Michigan committed that teachers would be evaluated using evidence-based models, include thoughtful observation, as well as the use of state and local student learning data, to better understand the impact of the classroom teacher. Following thoughtful deliberation, this system was designed to ensure that no single test would dominate an educator’s evaluation.

The most effective systems in the nation for supporting educators and improving the quality of classroom learning are rooted in the strong and fair use of data. Michigan still has a ways to go for providing all educators with relevant and timely feedback, and greater support for improvement. But lessening the use of data is a mistake and ultimately holds educators less accountable for student learning.

The Education Trust-Midwest opposes Senate Bills 122 and 202, and urges members of the committee to do so as well.