

Maryland Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE)
Minutes from Meeting of December 15, 2011

Absent:

Dr. Mary Kay Finan

Mr. Enrique Melendez

Co-Chair Betty Weller welcomed everyone and introduced her new Co-Chair, Dr. Bernard Sadusky, Interim State Superintendent of Schools.

Dr. Sadusky said that the group will hear about the hard work being done in the school systems in Maryland and, in particular, from the seven school systems that are piloting the new proposed Principal and Teacher Evaluation Systems. He explained that it is the intention of the Council to build a model for Maryland that is based on professional development and student achievement.

Ms. Weller said that the Council will hear from representatives of school systems that are piloting the Evaluation System to hear of their challenges, opportunities and recommendations.

Overview of the Pilots

Richard Wenning, Consultant, US Department of Education

Mr. Wenning explained that educator effectiveness systems are asked to serve both public accountability and internal improvement purposes. He reported that each pilot district expressed a clear intent to use their system for instructional improvement, professional development and attracting and retaining effective teachers and that some districts are considering how their systems might be used for compensation and tenure decisions.

Mr. Wenning explained that the Maryland pilot districts are primarily at an early discovery and exploration stage in their design of systems that are consistent with the Council's initial recommendations and cited some examples.

He discussed the three categories of effectiveness for teachers and principals specified in the Maryland Race To The Top (RTTT) Application, noting that several districts raised concerns about this and recommended that the state move to a four-category system that

also corresponds to the number of categories used in their professional practice rubrics. He said the four-category approaches generally add a “developing” or “approaching” category.

Mr. Wenning said that each of the pilot districts is developing qualitative measures consistent with recommendations of the Council in their interim report. He reported that among all of the measures involved in the pilot process, districts expressed the most confidence in their progress to date with their frameworks for evaluating professional practice, particularly through observations. He reported that most of the districts are using or adapting the Danielson Framework as their primary criteria for evaluation of professional practice. He reported on the assistance needed by districts in identifying models or best practices for rating teachers on their professional practice.

Mr. Wenning explained that the evaluation of principals is at a much earlier stage than that for teachers in the piloting districts. He explained that piloting districts decided to focus on the teacher evaluation component because the use of assessment scores for principal evaluation was a more common practice. He reported on the use of student perception surveys to inform evidence of professional practice.

Mr. Wenning explained that each of the pilot districts saw a great challenge in determining how to measure student academic growth in “untested” subjects. He said that pilot districts are generally using the pilot phase as an opportunity to explore, with teachers, the growth measures for untested subjects they find most useful. He said that in considering the use of different local measures, districts indicated that they were grappling with tradeoffs related to validity, reliability, fairness, usefulness, and potential unintended consequences. He noted that a number of districts were examining Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) as a means for integrating the use of multiple measures in a manner strongly connected to teaching and learning.

Mr. Wenning explained that while Maryland has not yet officially adopted an approach for measuring student growth for grades and subjects in which assessments are administered on a statewide basis, MSDE has calculated and furnished a measure of student academic growth on statewide assessments to districts for use in the pilot phase. He said the measure is calculated using a growth model known as Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) which has been adopted for statewide use by twelve states, with Maryland considering adoption. He explained that an SGP defines how much growth a student made relative to other students with an equivalent achievement history. He reported that each pilot district is exploring the use of SGPs and has indicated that they plan to use them in their evaluation systems. He said that one district has also developed a different value-added model and is examining the respective merits of each approach. He reported that several districts expressed a desire

to incorporate other student performance data such as attendance, suspensions, and graduation rates in teacher evaluations, but were uncertain about how to go about it.

Mr. Wenning discussed the attribution of responsibility for student outcomes. He reported that pilot districts were focused on attributing the outcomes of students assigned to a single “teacher of record” for a specific subject or course. He said, however, to promote collaboration and ownership of broader patterns of student outcomes, several pilot districts were also considering how to attribute the outcomes of students associated with a team of teachers or associated with school wide performance. He said that none of the pilot districts had completed their work in this area.

He explained that to assemble evidence from multiple measures and arrive at an overall determination of effectiveness, school districts and states around the country are considering at least three approaches: decision matrix, compensatory index or conjunctive decisions. He noted that all of the pilot districts are considering how they might approach determinations of the overall rating but none have determined how to do it.

Mr. Wenning explained that the expectation of annual evaluations for teachers presents a challenge to school and district capacity. He said each pilot district expressed an interest in finding an approach to differentiate the elements of annual evaluations to provide more targeted support to novice and less-effective teachers.

He concluded by reporting that pilots consistently expressed an interest in technical assistance regarding evaluation measures and data analyses and that MSDE is working to address these requests.

In response to a question by Ms. Bost about “incentives for evaluators” noted in his report, Mr. Wenning said it refers to “what is progress for ineffective, effective, and highly effective teachers?”

In response to a question by Senator Kelley, Mr. Wenning said that all RTTT states are working simultaneously with higher education personnel. Mr. Pataniczek said that he reports to deans on the work being done and that every teacher preparation institution is looking at the changes being made.

In response to another question by Senator Kelley about the use of student portfolios, Mr. Wenning said that the pilot districts are working on the variables regarding student assessment in the areas of untested subjects.

In response to a question by Dr. Leak about a comparison of Maryland's challenges to other RTTT states, Mr. Wenning said that Maryland's System must provide consistency across the state.

In response to a question by Delegate Kaiser, Mr. Wenning replied that no states have figured out the quantitative measures, although he cited Colorado as working on this challenge.

In response to a question by Dr. Sadusky, Mr. Wenning said Colorado has worked on evaluating schools referred to as "institution accountability." He said that tenure is earned and retained and that school-wide performance is included in teacher accountability.

Senator Kelley asked about a pay-for-performance program and Mr. Wenning said it is being revised at this time.

In response to a question by Mr. Barclay, Mr. Wenning said that most districts are not doing a lot of work on principal and evaluator evaluations yet and that principal standards are already identified.

Support to the Pilots

*Dr. Megan Dolan, Senior Research Scientist
Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center*

Dr. Dolan said that Maryland pilot districts are making great strides in progress and noted the following support provided to MSDE and the seven pilot districts:

- Disseminated research and resources about teacher and principal evaluations
- Conducted a webinar for pilot district participants on using criteria for selecting measures of student growth
- Hosted one-on-one meetings for district planning teams
- Assisted with the development of a web-portal with resources and a communications platform for pilot participants

Dr. Dolan said she will provide an update on other states and the role of higher education when she receives this information in January.

Individual Pilot Updates

Baltimore City

Ms. Tisha Edwards, Chief of Staff, Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS)

Ms. Edwards reported that eight schools, with approximately 300 teachers, are participating in the pilot. She said that monthly meetings with principals and school site visits are conducted to collect feedback and that the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) is provided regular updates on teacher input. She said there are a lot of classroom observations, professional development and teacher engagement being conducted and noted that student surveys are being used to glean student input. She also reported that the schools are looking at a professional responsibility checklist and exploring a value-added model of student growth. Ms. Edwards noted that a discussion about principal evaluation has just begun. She explained that the biggest challenge is in the untested subject areas and said they are looking for guidance from the Council in this area. She noted that the Student Growth Percentile (SGP) aligns with the value-added model.

In response to a question by Mr. Burton, Ms. Edwards said that the schools volunteered to participate in the pilot project after gaining support from their leadership, teachers and union representatives.

In response to a question by Ms. Bost, Ms. Edwards said that other ways of measuring student growth in untested areas such as portfolios are being used.

In response to a question by Mr. Barclay about principal experience levels in the piloting schools, Mr. Edwards said “it varies.”

Dr. Leak requested Ms. Edwards provide a written report to the Council.

Ms. Edwards expressed the desire of the principals in the piloting schools to use a rating system with four components instead of three. She noted the anxiety in the schools regarding the untested areas and reiterated the need for guidance from the Council. She said the schools want a timeline for implementation and want the Council to take a leadership role.

In response to a question by Mr. Rutledge, Ms. Edwards said that school staff is very supportive of the instructional framework.

Ms. Pipken stressed the need for clarity regarding SGP versus value-added and asked Ms. Edwards to elaborate on professional development. Ms. Edwards said that focus groups for

teachers and principals were carried out to show what a good teacher looks like. Dr. Alonso said that the SGP versus value-added approach is their greatest challenge and that they are looking at a portfolio approach in untested areas.

Senator Kelley suggested several ways of testing applied learning such as Science fairs, taped speeches, debates and other artifacts.

Baltimore County

Mr. Billy Burke, Executive Director, Professional Development

Ms. Abbey Beytin, President, Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABCO)

Ms. Beytin explained that focus groups were conducted with more than 300 teachers in an intensely collaborative process. She noted that the qualitative piece is very similar to the Charlotte Danielson Model and will be piloted in the second semester. She reported that the “no fault” piloting has brought opportunities to explore the evaluation system without constraint.

Mr. Burke said that Baltimore County is experiencing the same challenges as those mentioned in Mr. Wenning’s and Ms. Edward’s reports. He discussed the following suggestions:

- Fifty percent on the quantitative side should not be a super majority. It should be less than fifty percent.
- The evaluation cycle should be multi year, three years at a minimum
- There should be four rating categories instead of three
- The pilot should be extended through at least school year 2013-2014.

In response to a question by Senator Kelley, Ms. Beytin said that the piloting schools volunteered to participate and were schools that are middle to top rated in terms of student success.

In response to a question by Dr. Leak about the exclusion of co-teachers, specialists, service providers, etc. in the evaluation process, Ms. Weller noted that the Danielson Framework does address this area.

In response to a question by Ms. Walker, Mr. Burke said that the principal evaluation process will be addressed after the teacher evaluation process is concluded.

In response to a request by Mr. Pataniczek for any suggestions for the Council, Ms. Beytin said that an online program to address questions and concerns from piloting personnel would be helpful. Mr. Burke stressed the importance of monthly meetings and suggested that more meetings would be helpful.

Charles County

Sean McDonald, Human Resources Specialist

Ms. Elizabeth Brown, President, Education Association of Charles County

Mr. Cliff Eichel, Director of Research and Assessment

Mr. McDonald said that two elementary, two middle and three high schools are included in the pilot project and that the participation was voluntary. He said that principals participated based on input from school staff. Mr. McDonald said there is a focus on the Danielson Model and that they are continuing to work on quantitative measures. He explained that school administrators and teachers are working to create goals for student achievement and that committees are looking at portfolio assessments.

Mr. McDonald said that time is a challenge since they do not want to rush the process. He said that going to full implementation next year is a huge challenge and asked for clarification from the Council as to whether the State intends to provide a model to schools. Mr. McDonald noted that they are struggling with the cycle of evaluations and explained that the school system has not worked on the principal evaluation system and plans to address this after the teachers' portion is completed. He expressed concern that teachers will leave Charles County schools if there are different requirements in each subdivision.

Ms. Brown said that the school system is recommending a fourth category such as "developing" effectiveness. She urged that school systems be given less structure and the freedom to work out an evaluation system on their own.

Dr. Sadusky said that the Department is aware of the concerns expressed today and hopes that the Council will have oversight of the proficiency levels. He assured the presenters that there will be no disparity among school systems.

Senator Kelley said that a significant portion of the evaluation system is to be determined by local school systems and that the Council wants to hear from pilots about what is working.

Ms. Streckfus expressed concern about the public's perception of a teacher designated as "developing" effectiveness.

Kent County

Mr. Ed Silver, Supervisor of Education Services

Ms. Melissa Maenner Walters, President, Kent County Teachers Association

Mr. Silver reported that they are piloting in all seven schools in the county and that progress is being made highlighting more consistency in classroom observations. He noted that the SGP has been a good measure of student growth and discussed using Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) as part of the evaluation. He reported on the many benefits of SLOs such as consistency and collaboration.

Mr. Silver reported that the school system is testing out a Student Perception Survey, grades and assessments with growth indicators, pre and post-tests, etc.

He discussed the challenges faced by the school system noting the use of a “developing” category in teacher evaluations.

Mr. Silver said that they are using a portfolio Model and the Maryland Instructional Framework to evaluate principals.

Senator Kelley urged that induction and mentoring programs for new teachers are critical.

In response to a question by Ms. Pipkin, Mr. Silver said that they worked with principals to make sure that SLOs are connected to common core standards.

In addressing the addition of a fourth category in teacher evaluations, Senator Kelley cautioned about the “statutory underpinnings” of this area.

Prince George’s County

Mr. Doug Anthony, Director of Human Capital Management

Mr. Lewis Robinson, Executive Director, Prince George’s County Educators Association (PGCEA)

Mr. Anthony reported that thirty-six schools with more than one hundred teachers are participating in the pilot project. He noted that they are using the Danielson Framework in most schools and explained that administrators are being certified to be evaluators in the schools.

Mr. Robinson reported that the certification process for principals is important and has provided confidence on the part of the teachers. He noted the importance of collaboration and the complexity of teaching.

Mr. Anthony reported that one of the challenges they face is dealing with the “teacher of record” and building a structure to require collaboration. He also noted that the timing of data received in the school building is another challenge to be met.

Mr. Robinson said that training is very important and that the school system is building the training component as they go along.

In response to a question by Mr. Burton, Mr. Anthony said the school system is working to streamline the yearly evaluation requirement.

Senator Kelley suggested distance learning such as webinars where resources for training are inadequate.

Queen Anne’s County

Ms. Kathy Draper, Supervisor of Instruction

Ms. Tomi Fabri, Queen Anne’s County High School

Ms. Draper reported that seven schools are piloting the new evaluation program. She provided demographics of the schools involved and the process used to develop the models. Ms. Draper provided information on the stakeholders involved in a Teacher Evaluation Committee. She discussed what has been accomplished surrounding the Danielson Framework, student growth measures, student growth portfolios and combining a professional development component with the observation/evaluation documents.

Ms. Fabri discussed the major challenges to be addressed such as building trust, creating an equitable and fair system, determining who is measured and accomplishing the goals with limited time, resources and funding. She reported on the stakeholders involved in the Principal Evaluation Committee and noted that qualitative measures based on the Maryland Leadership Framework were agreed upon and revised. She also noted that a proposed plan for quantitative measures for principals and supervisors was developed.

Ms. Draper reported on their concerns noting the need for a fourth rating component “developing” to account for new teachers or for teachers in certain circumstances. She reported that the Committee believes that if the evaluation is truly fifty percent student growth and fifty percent professional practice, the student growth component should

remain fifty percent and not “trump” the professional practice component. She expressed concern about applying student growth measures when evaluating co-teachers and special education teachers.

Ms. Draper explained the need for additional resources and/or technical assistance by 2012-2013.

St. Mary’s County

Wanda Twigg, President, Education Association of St. Mary’s County (EASMC)

Scott Smith, Director of Secondary Schools and Strategic Planning

Mr. Smith reported that schools representing all levels are participating in the pilot project and stressed the importance of sessions conducted by Dr. Dolan and Mr. Wenning. He also reported that the school system has been using the Danielson Framework for more than a decade and is very familiar with the four domains. He urged the use of a four-tiered scale to include “developing” as one of the tiers. Mr. Smith stated that the school system and the union are collaborating to create an excellent evaluation system.

Mr. Smith discussed the various ways to determine evidence of student achievement noting that portfolios need to attribute back to a teacher and that grade books can be considered a portfolio.

He discussed the challenge of providing annual evaluations of every teacher.

Ms. Twigg reported that teachers created a form to address the complexity factors in teaching. She reported that the school system lost seventy-two staff positions stressing the lack of funding and resources to meet the challenges in this project.

Discussion With Pilots

Mr. Burton and Dr. Leak requested written reports from each of the pilot groups.

Ms. Weller and Dr. Sadusky thanked the presenters noting that each pilot school and school district is doing an excellent job. He urged them to “stay the course.”

Ms. Bost urged the Council to discuss the suggestion by many groups to add a fourth category in the teacher evaluation model.

Mr. Barclay urged a fourth category as well and urged that work done by Dr. Dolan's group be more effectively used by the piloting schools. He expressed his concern that the principal evaluation system is lacking.

Dr. Leak identified the following five themes expressed by the presenters:

1. timeline of implementation of pilot programs
2. performance standards
3. explain the complexity factor
4. student growth outweighing performance growth
5. teacher of record

Mr. Rutledge said he wants to see confidence intervals about measures and suggested three categories with superimposed "developing" in any category.

Senator Kelley expressed concern about adding a fourth category of "developing."

In response to a question by Ms. Kitchens, Ms. Weller asked Council members to filter any questions to her for dissemination to the pilot school systems.

Dr. Alonso suggested that teachers who have been deemed highly effective for two years in a row may not need to be evaluated in the third year. He noted the need to target resources.

Ms. Walker expressed concern about lack of work being done on principal evaluations. She explained that the National Association of Elementary and Secondary Principals is putting together national guidelines to help school systems work on this area.

Dr. Sadusky asked the Council to provide their input and questions as soon as possible and suggested a meeting of the Council in mid-February.

Ms. Bost thanked the Council for creating a collaborative approach to this project.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.