



## **State policies on teacher evaluation practices in the Midwest Region**

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REL Midwest received a request to provide policymakers and practitioners with a view of state-level teacher evaluation policy in seven Midwest states. This technical brief builds on the Issues & Answers Report *Examining district guidance to schools on teacher evaluation policies in the Midwest Region* (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?id=30>).

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## Summary

**This technical brief describes state-level policies and procedural requirements for guiding teacher evaluation practices at the district level in the seven states served by the Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Building on the Issues & Answers report *Examining district guidance to schools on teacher evaluation policies in the Midwest Region* (Brandt et al. 2007), this technical brief reveals how teacher evaluation practices are addressed by state policies and other state-level initiatives that include teacher evaluation features.**

During June–August 2007 researchers completed a systematic search for publicly available policy data and conducted short interviews with key department of education staff in each of the seven Midwest Region states based on 13 key characteristics of teacher evaluation procedures used in previous large-scale investigations (Ellet and Garland 1987; Loup et al. 1996). The information is intended to provide policymakers and practitioners with a view of teacher evaluation policy at the state level in the Midwest Region.

# Technical brief

## Why this brief?

Despite claims that the evaluation of teaching practices is an important means for improving teacher effectiveness (Danielson and McGreal 2000; Howard and McColskey 2001; Shinkfield and Stufflebean 1995; Stronge 1995), sources detailing policies meant to guide teacher evaluation are scarce (Peterson 2000). To help fill that gap, the Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory recently conducted a study across a demographically diverse sample of districts in the Midwest Region that described district-level teacher evaluation policies and procedures (Brandt et al. 2007).

This technical brief builds on that study by describing state-level policies intended to provide guidance to districts on evaluating their teachers. Using data gathered from state legislation and from state education agency documents and personnel, Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory researchers sought to answer the following research questions:

- What policies and procedural requirements on teacher evaluation at the district level are in place in each state in the Midwest Region?
- What other state-level initiatives are under way in the Midwest Region that include teacher evaluation features?

The information is intended to provide policymakers and practitioners with a view of state-level teacher evaluation policies in the Midwest Region states.

## Approach

Following the approach used in the Midwest Region study of district evaluation policy (Brandt et al. 2007), researchers searched policy and procedural documents and conducted informant interviews during June–August 2007 to identify state teacher evaluation policies and procedures and other related initiatives and then to determine whether they contained the same 13

key characteristics of teacher evaluation procedures used in previous large-scale investigations (Ellet and Garland 1987; Loup et al. 1996).

Table 1 lists the 13 characteristics, grouped into three broad categories: teacher evaluation standards and criteria of teacher practice or performance, teacher evaluation processes, and teacher evaluation results. While the 13 characteristics were selected based on expert opinion, they have not been subjected to empirical study using rigorous experimental methods. Thus, the 13 characteristics should not be considered a list of policies that will improve evaluation and instruction, and the absence of any of them in a state's policies and procedures should not be construed as evidence of a need for concern. It should also be noted that other characteristics of state teacher evaluation policies are not presented in this brief if they do not map to the 13 characteristics used as an analysis framework.

## Results

State legislatures and state education agencies often leave decisions about teacher evaluation up to local education entities such as school districts, bargaining representatives and unions, and school principals (Loeb and Miller 2006). Despite such local control, all seven Midwest Region states have some type of policy to guide or regulate teacher evaluation. Table 2 categorizes state policy addressing teacher evaluation according to the 13 characteristics.

The majority (six of seven) of Midwest Region states have policies specifying criteria for evaluating teachers. Two states require specific resources to inform the evaluation, such as practice guides, models, or research-based frameworks. Two states require that administrators receive training to conduct the evaluation. And none of the Midwest Region states has policies differentiating the criteria for evaluating teachers based on the student populations they teach or on their content-area expertise.

**This technical brief describes state-level policies intended to provide guidance to districts on evaluating their teachers, using data gathered from state legislation and from state education agency documents and personnel**

TABLE 1  
**Characteristics of teacher evaluation procedures**

Category	Characteristics of teacher evaluation procedures
Teacher evaluation standards and criteria of teacher practice or performance	Specific criteria to be evaluated
	External resources used to inform the evaluation (for example, evaluation models, frameworks, and literature to support the evaluation process)
	Training required of evaluators
	Different evaluation policies for content areas and special populations
Teacher evaluation processes	Frequency of evaluations
	Evaluation tools used
	Methods suggested or required
	Responsibility for conducting the evaluation
	Time frame for conducting the evaluation
	Communication of evaluation policy to teachers
Teacher evaluation results	Use of results
	Reporting of results
	Grievance procedures for teachers

Source: Ellet and Garland 1987; Loup et al. 1996.

TABLE 2  
**State policy addressing the 13 characteristics of teacher evaluation, 2007**

Category and characteristic	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	Ohio	Wisconsin
<b>Teacher evaluation standards and criteria of teacher practice or performance</b>							
Specific criteria to be evaluated	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
External resources used to inform the evaluation		✓	✓				
Training required of evaluators	✓		✓				
Different evaluation policies for content areas and special populations							
<b>Teacher evaluation processes</b>							
Frequency of evaluations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evaluation tools used			✓				
Methods suggested or required	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Responsibility for conducting the evaluation	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Time frame for conducting the evaluation		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Communication of evaluation policy to teachers							
<b>Teacher evaluation results</b>							
Use of results	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Reporting of results	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Grievance procedures for teachers		✓	✓				

Source: Authors' analysis based on June–August 2007 data review described in text.

All seven Midwest Region states specify multiple procedural requirements to address specific evaluation processes, with more than two-thirds including policies articulating who is responsible for conducting the evaluation (six of seven), how often teachers should be evaluated (seven of seven), and which evaluation methods should be used (five of seven). Four states establish a time frame for conducting an evaluation, and one state has formal guidance requiring administrators to use a specific evaluation tool. No state provides guidance on

how to communicate evaluation policy to the schools or teachers.

Six of seven Midwest Region states have policies addressing how evaluation results should be used. More than half the states (four of seven) specify how to report results. Two states require districts to include grievance procedures for teachers,

### State-specific policies

Tables 3–5 describe state-specific policy and procedural requirements related to each of

TABLE 3

#### State policy on teacher evaluation standards and criteria of teacher practice or performance, 2007

State	Policy
Illinois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires the evaluation to describe each teacher’s duties and responsibilities and the standards to which the teacher is expected to conform. Requires the evaluation to consider the teacher’s attendance, competency in content area, and performance rating and to describe the teacher’s strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>References the framework of Danielson and McGreal (2000), but the state does not require, recommend, or endorse particular resources when districts ask the state for resources to inform their evaluation plans.</li> <li>Requires evaluators to attend training workshop every two years.</li> </ul>
Indiana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describes criteria for evaluation in terms of what cannot be included, but does not outline requirements for the method to be used. Specifically prohibits basing teacher evaluation in whole or in part on the state’s standardized test scores, Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress–Plus (ISTEP+).</li> <li>Requires the evaluation plan to be consistent with state academic standards and student performance improvement levels.</li> <li>Indianapolis Public Schools require only the use of objective standards developed by the Indianapolis Board of School Commissioners in the staff performance evaluation plan for measuring teacher performance.</li> </ul>
Iowa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires teachers, with their evaluators, to develop individual professional development plans based on teacher need, the Iowa Teaching Standards, and student achievement goals.</li> <li>Requires multiple measures for teacher evaluation. Minimally, requires evaluation to include a performance review based on state standards, progress toward individualized career professional development plan, and supporting documentation from others.</li> <li>Requires evaluators to be licensed through the Indiana Board of Educational Examiners.</li> </ul>
Michigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stipulates that criteria include assessment of a teacher’s progress toward individualized development plan.</li> </ul>
Minnesota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not specify criteria.</li> </ul>
Ohio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires a system of multiple measures to assess skills but does not specify measures. Requires that “expected job performance” criteria be established in the teacher’s areas of responsibility.</li> <li>Requires that evaluators be “licensed administrators.”</li> </ul>
Wisconsin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires—in addition to observations of classroom performance—documentation portfolio to evaluate beginning teachers. Requires portfolio assessment and approval to move from initial teacher’s license to standard teacher’s license.</li> <li>Allows each district’s board of education to adopt evaluation criteria, provided the criteria are articulated in job description and job-related activities.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors’ analysis based on June–August 2007 data review described in text.

TABLE 4  
**State policy on teacher evaluation processes, 2007**

State	Policy
Illinois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specifies that probationary teachers on a remediation plan are to be evaluated every 30 days.</li> <li>• Requires nontenured teachers to be evaluated once a year, and tenured teachers once every two years.</li> <li>• Requires the evaluation to include at least one personal classroom observation.</li> <li>• Specifies that the principal must conduct or provide evaluation.</li> </ul>
Indiana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires nontenured teachers to be evaluated once a year and another evaluation to be provided if requested.</li> <li>• Requires that teachers receive their evaluation before January 1 each year.</li> <li>• Specifies that the principal must conduct or provide evaluation.</li> </ul>
Iowa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specifies evaluation for tenured teachers once every three years.</li> <li>• Requires, at minimum, classroom observation.</li> <li>• Requires that beginning teachers receive comprehensive evaluation by the end of their second year.</li> <li>• Requires a licensed administrator to conduct the evaluation.</li> <li>• Requires use of uniform evaluation tools in all districts but allows districts to develop their own systems.</li> </ul>
Michigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires that the two evaluations required of beginning and probationary teachers take place at least 60 days apart.</li> <li>• Requires classroom observation and documentation from other evaluators, teachers, parents, and students.</li> </ul>
Minnesota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires that beginning teachers be evaluated three times a year for first three years of service; does not specify frequency for tenured teachers.</li> <li>• Requires districts to establish mandatory peer review for nontenured teachers; interview with state education agency representative suggests that the principal is most likely to conduct the evaluation.</li> </ul>
Ohio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires beginning teachers be evaluated twice a year; specifies “on a regular basis” for tenured teachers.</li> <li>• Requires teacher observation by the evaluator on at least two occasions per evaluation for no less than 30 minutes on each occasion.</li> <li>• Requires a licensed administrator to conduct the evaluation.</li> <li>• Establishes January 15 as the deadline for first of two evaluations for beginning teachers; establishes a window from February 10 to April 1 for the second evaluation.</li> </ul>
Wisconsin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specifies evaluation for tenured teachers once every three years.</li> <li>• Requires observation of teacher performance.</li> <li>• Requires that a licensed administrator conduct the evaluation.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' analysis based on June–August 2007 data review described in text.

the 13 characteristics, by category, providing a more in-depth regional sense of teacher evaluation policy in the Midwest Region.

### State-level initiatives with teacher evaluation features

Researchers interviewed the state education agency staff member responsible for overseeing teacher evaluation in each of the seven states. The following summary highlights the

programs and initiatives identified by interviewees that were closely linked to teacher evaluation policy and practices in each state.

- *Indiana.* The Indiana Mentoring and Assessment Program (IMAP), a program for beginning teachers being phased in by the state, may eventually include a formative evaluation component that complements the state's summative evaluation

TABLE 5

**State policy on teacher evaluation results, June–August 2007**

State	Policy
Illinois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires teachers with a poor evaluation to participate in an intensive assistance or individualized remediation plan.</li> <li>Addresses how to report the results of teacher evaluation, requires that results be kept in the teacher's employee file, and specifies how and when to report evaluation results to the teacher. Reporting requirements are largely governed by decisions regarding employment and contractual status.</li> </ul>
Indiana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicates that evaluations may be used "as a basis for making employment decisions" but does not enumerate concrete consequences.</li> <li>Forbids basing teacher evaluation on students' state standardized test scores.</li> <li>Addresses how to report results of teacher evaluation, specifies how and when to report evaluation results to the teacher, and requires reporting evaluation results to the teacher before January 1. Reporting requirements are largely governed by decisions on employment and contractual status.</li> <li>Defines grievance procedures tied to nonrenewal of teacher's contract.</li> </ul>
Iowa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires teachers with a poor evaluation to participate in an intensive assistance or individualized remediation plan.</li> <li>Links positive evaluations to career advancement or obtaining tenure.</li> <li>Addresses how to report the results of teacher evaluation; requires districts to report beginning teachers' evaluation results to the Iowa Department of Education for the state to authorize licensing from beginning level to tenured status.</li> <li>Gives responsibility for negotiating grievance procedures to local school boards and bargaining representatives.</li> </ul>
Michigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires teachers with a poor evaluation to participate in an intensive assistance or individualized remediation plan.</li> </ul>
Minnesota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not mandate to districts any particular consequences for teacher evaluation; however, consequences are a vital piece of the state's Quality Compensation for Teachers (Q Comp) program.</li> </ul>
Ohio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specifies that unsatisfactory evaluation may result in nonrenewal of teacher's contract.</li> <li>Addresses how results of teacher evaluation should be reported; specifies that teachers receive written report of evaluation within 10 days of the evaluation. Reporting requirements are largely governed by decisions regarding employment and contractual status.</li> </ul>
Wisconsin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Links positive evaluations to career advancement or obtaining tenure.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' analysis based on June–August 2007 data review described in text.

procedures. IMAP is organized around portfolio assessments based on standards set forth by the Division of Professional Standards.

- Iowa.** The Iowa Department of Education emphasizes the Educator Quality initiative, and the state's teacher evaluation policies represent part of this broader initiative. For example, Iowa code requires that districts form a Teacher Quality Committee to assume responsibility for ensuring that

performance evaluations are conducted according to state standards.

- Minnesota.** Teacher evaluation is an essential part of Minnesota's Q Comp program, which is designed to increase teacher recruitment, retention, and efficacy by linking teacher pay to performance and student achievement. District participation in the program is voluntary, and because of the link to performance pay, teacher evaluation is a high-stakes issue.

Q Comp's evaluation component involves multiple methods—such as instructional observations and standards-based assessments—and must include several criteria in determining school and teacher performance and pay. In addition, teachers must be evaluated multiple times a year by a team of trained evaluators against the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice.

- **Ohio.** Ohio is working to extend some of the programs it has developed for the mentoring, coaching, and assessment of administrators (such as the Ohio Principal Evaluation System) to teacher evaluation. In addition, the Educator Standards Board has developed a career ladder model on teacher quality and is encouraging statewide conversations on reengineering the teaching profession. And several of the state's largest districts are piloting programs with master and mentor teachers who are doing formative assessments, coaching, and mentoring to improve teacher quality.
- **Wisconsin.** The Wisconsin Quality Educator initiative is designed to build teacher training programs and ongoing professional development opportunities that are competency based and consistent with the state teacher standards. To move from the initial license to the professional teacher's license, a teacher must pass a portfolio assessment that documents progress on a professional development plan. A team of educators—consisting of a representative from higher education, an administrator appointed by the district, and a peer—approves the goal of the professional development plan and verifies that the teacher successfully completed the plan at the end of the cycle. Although this process is separate from the employment evaluation process, some overlap may exist; for instance, goals can be shared between the two. And it is likely that the administrator who conducts the regular evaluation of the teacher also serves on the team to assess the teacher's portfolio.

## Appendix A

### Details on method

As a first step in June–August 2007 researchers conducted a systematic search for policy documents pertaining to teacher evaluation in each of the seven states served by the Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Specifically, researchers examined the following online sources for each state:

- Department of education and state board of education web sites.
- State legislature web site.
- Governor’s web site.
- Education Commission of the States (ECS) legislative database, which provides web links to statutes and administrative codes for each state.
- National Conference of State Legislatures bill tracking database (select state, check “Teacher Issues,” and search for key phrases).
- Prominent local newspapers published in major cities and each state’s capital city.
- General search using the Google search engine.

Researchers used a comprehensive list of search terms and key phrases to examine the information from each source. Search terms included the following: *teacher evaluation, performance assessment, observation, teacher rating, teacher tenure, grievance, unsatisfactory teacher performance, evaluation standards, teacher standards, and teacher evaluation training*. Researchers searched each state’s department of education and state legislature web sites for pertinent information and cross-checked this information by examining government and external sites (such as governor’s web sites, the ECS legislative database, prominent local newspapers).

After completing online searches, researchers interviewed a staff member from each state department of education to ensure that the data retrieved through their internal search

were up-to-date and comprehensive and to review and collect any additional policy or guidance unavailable in the online search. Researchers identified the state contact by first contacting a state department of education official who currently served on the regional educational laboratory board or worked closely with the Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory staff on other projects. These officials were asked to identify the person at the state department of education who was in charge of overseeing teacher evaluation. Each of those seven state contacts participated in an interview.

During the interviews the researcher explained the online search procedures and described the 13 characteristics of teacher evaluation procedures used to identify, verify, and obtain (if necessary) all documents that addressed each characteristic. Finally, the researcher probed for further information on other resources or guidance the state provides to facilitate teacher evaluation policy implementation as well as any emerging plans and initiatives to improve and support the teacher evaluation process at the local level.

Data analysis consisted of two steps. A priori codes, derived from questions adapted from an earlier descriptive study on teacher evaluation (Loup et al. 1996), were applied to each set of policy documents to determine whether the documents contained information related to each of the study questions. After applying the a priori codes, researchers used an emergent coding process to systematically code and categorize information contained in the policy documents. This approach enabled the researchers to categorically describe state policy guidance for evaluating teachers in the Midwest Region.

Before coding the policy documents, the researchers established a list of clear operational definitions for each study question (Miles and Huberman 1994) to reduce potential coding bias and data misrepresentation. Two researchers independently coded the state policy

documents, and the coded documents were then compared. The interrater reliability rate was 81 percent. After coding the policy documents in each state for data pertaining to each

study question, the researchers coded the relevant documentation and developed categories to describe and explain how policy information addressed each question.

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