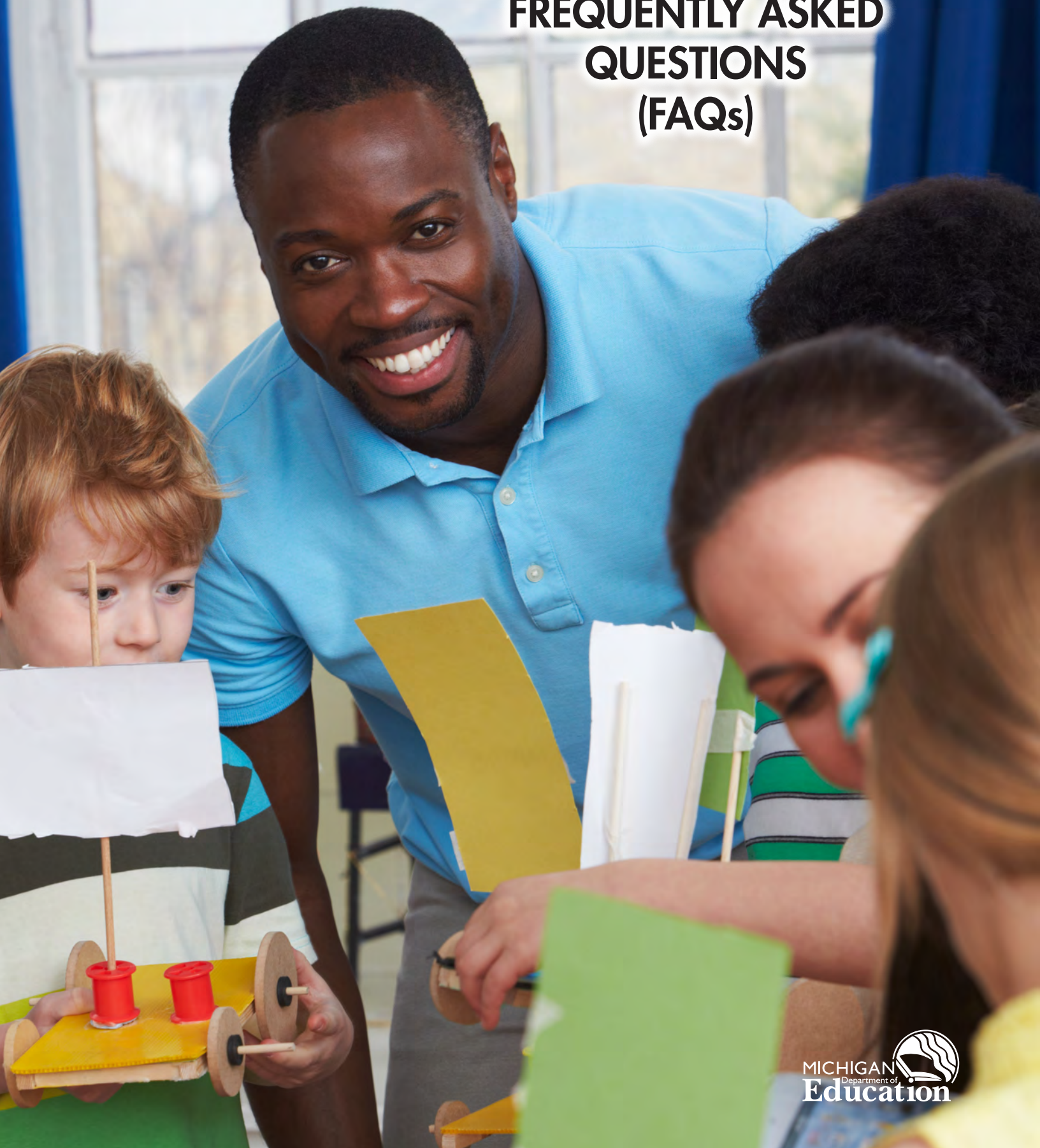


# MICHIGAN EDUCATOR EVALUATIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)



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## OBSERVATION TOOLS

### 1. Q: What are the state-approved observation tools for teachers?

**A:** For the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, the state-approved observation tools for teachers are Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching, the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, the Thoughtful Classroom, and the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning. Additional tools may be added to the state-approved list once the administrative rules establishing a process for doing so are completed in 2017.

### 2. Q: What are the state-approved evaluation tools for administrators?

**A:** For the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, the state-approved evaluation tools for administrators are MASA’s School Advance Administrator Evaluation Instrument and Reeves Leadership Performance Rubric. Additional tools may be added to the state-approved list once the administrative rules establishing a process for doing so are completed in 2017.

### 3. Q: How can an observation or evaluation tool be added to the state-approved list?

**A:** Additional tools can be added to the state-approved list after the MDE develops and adopts formal administrative rules establishing a process to do so. It is anticipated that this process will be ready by early Summer 2017, at which point additional tools may be submitted for review as established by the rules and be added to the state-approved list.

### 4. Q: Can districts use observation or evaluation tools that are not on the state-approved list?

**A:** Yes. Districts may use tools that are not on the state-approved list, provided the district publicly reports on the tool’s research base, reliability, validity, and efficacy as required by 380.1249(3) and 380.1249b(2).

**5. Q: Can districts use an observation or evaluation tool from the state-approved list, but use their own system for documentation or data gathering?**

**A:** Yes. The district must simply ensure that information about their tool, including the process for collecting evidence to be used in the evaluation, is reported publicly on their website as required by 380.1249(3) and/or 380.1249b(2).

**6. Q: Must a district submit its observation or evaluation tool to the MDE for addition to the state-approved list if the tool is not already on the list?**

**A:** No. A district is not required to submit the tool(s) it uses for evaluations to the MDE for approval and inclusion on the state-approved list.

**7. Q: Must a district implement an entire observation or evaluation tool with fidelity in order to meet the statutory threshold of “reliability, validity, and efficacy”?**

**A:** Any tool, or modification thereof, must meet the requirements of state law (380.1249(3) and/or 380.1249b(2)). Local districts determine whether or not any degree of modification to a tool changes the tool and thus requires additional assurances that the modification does not compromise the tool’s research base and/or “reliability, validity, and efficacy.”

# OBSERVATIONS

## 8. Q: What is the difference between an observation and an evaluation?

**A:** An observation is an exercise that is conducted as prescribed by a local district's observation tool, usually for one class period or portion thereof. An observation must minimally consider the teacher's lesson plan, the state content standard being addressed in the lesson, and students' engagement in instruction. An observation is one component that provides data for the annual year-end evaluation. The evaluation considers observations, student growth measures, and other factors in providing a summary of actionable feedback on a teacher's performance over the course of a full school year.

## 9. Q: How many observations of teachers are required?

**A:** Teachers must be observed at least two times per year. At least one observation must be conducted by the person who is responsible for the teacher's annual year-end evaluation. At least one observation must be unscheduled. There is no statutorily required minimum number of observations for a teacher who has received a rating of effective or highly effective on his/her two most recent annual year-end evaluations.

## 10. Q: How long does an observation need to be?

**A:** There is no time-based requirement for an observation. The law specifically states that "A classroom observation does not have to be for an entire class period" (380.1249(2)(e)(ii)). Observers should follow the recommendations and/or requirements of the district-adopted observation tool(s) related to the duration of observations.

## 11. Q: Who may conduct observations of teachers?

**A:** At least one observation annually must be conducted by the building administrator responsible for the teacher's year-end evaluation. Other observations may be conducted by individuals trained in the use of the district's adopted observation tool(s). This could include, but is not limited to, teacher leaders, master teachers, instructional specialists, and/or other district administrators.



**12. Q: Can an observer be a contractor who is hired by the district?**

**A:** Yes. Observers are required to be trained in the observation tool(s) used by the district but are not required by the legislation to be employees of the district.

**13. Q: Must the same observer or observers conduct all of the observations of one teacher within a school year?**

**A:** No. A teacher may be observed by any number of different observers. However, each observer must have received adequate training in the observation tool(s) in use and should work with other trained observers to maximize the reliability of observation feedback and its use in improving instruction.

**14. Q: By when does a teacher's first observation need to occur during the school year?**

**A:** There is no required deadline by which the first of two required observations for a teacher must be conducted in any given school year; however, all observations must be completed prior to the finalization of the teacher's annual year-end evaluation. Evaluators should follow the recommendations and/or requirements of the district-adopted observation tool(s) related to the timing and frequency of observations.

**15. Q: What are the requirements for providing observation feedback to teachers? Must it be provided in writing and/or with the opportunity for discussion?**

**A:** State law requires that a teacher receive feedback within 30 days following an observation. Although not specifically required by law, the MDE recommends that the feedback be provided in writing with an opportunity for discussion. Observers should follow the recommendations and/or requirements of the district-adopted observation tool(s) related to observation feedback.

**16. Q: Can observers use a video and/or live video chat to observe an instructional lesson?**

**A:** Yes. Observations are not required to be done in-person. Observers should follow the recommendations and/or requirements of the district-adopted observation tool(s) related to the use of technology to conduct observations.

# TRAINING

## 17. Q: What training in a district's adopted observation tool(s) is required by law?

**A:** Starting in the 2016-17 school year, the school district, intermediate school district (ISD), or public school academy (PSA) must provide training to all of its teachers, administrators, evaluators, and observers on the adopted observation tool(s) pertinent to individuals in each of these roles as well as how each tool is used.

Teachers and others being evaluated must receive training on the tool and how it is used. Evaluators and observers must receive training from experts in the observation tool(s) on how the observation tool should be implemented with fidelity.

## 18. Q: How will the required training be provided?

**A:** For the 2016 fiscal year, formula grant funds will be awarded to intermediate school districts (ISD) to provide support for training for their constituent districts. ISDs and districts are encouraged to form collaborative partnerships within and across intermediate school districts and regions to best serve the needs of all local evaluation systems. Districts will work with their ISDs to determine the best mechanisms for the provision of the required training.

## 19. Q: When will the required training be provided?

**A:** Districts are required to provide training beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. ISDs will work with their constituent districts to determine specific timelines for training supported by the grant funds described in question 18.

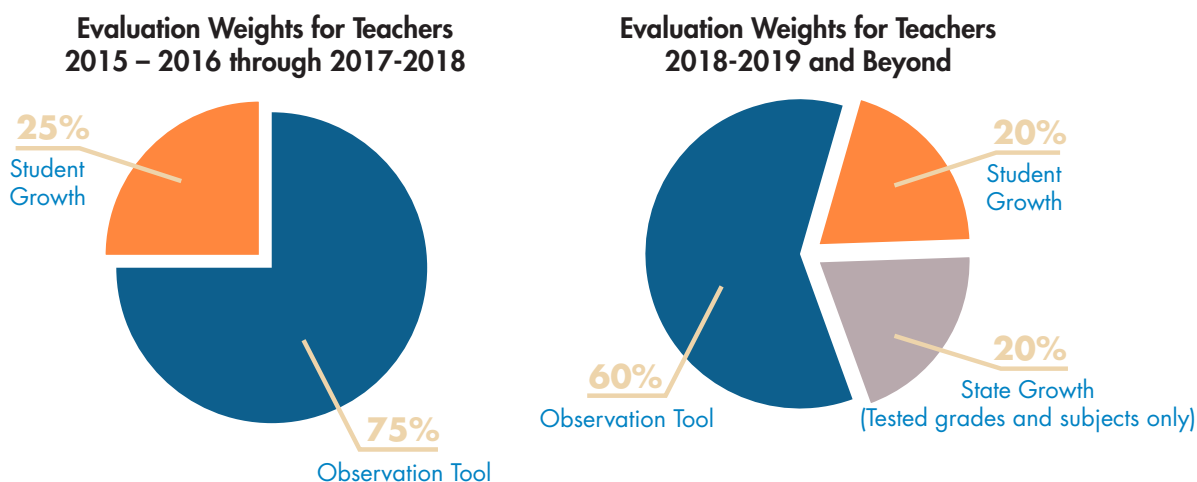
## 20. Q: How often must teachers, administrators, observers, and evaluators go through a "refresher" training on the observation tool(s) in use within their district?

**A:** There is no statutory requirement for a prescribed recurrence of training. The MDE recommends that all participants in the evaluation process receive ongoing training as needed to continuously improve the local evaluation system.

## STUDENT GROWTH AND ASSESSMENT DATA

### 21. Q: What are the required weightings of student growth measures for teachers?

**A:** For the 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 school years, student growth and assessment data must account for 25% of the annual year-end teacher evaluation. Beginning in 2018-2019, student growth and assessment data must account for 40% of the annual year-end teacher evaluation. Also beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, for teachers of grades and content areas measured by state assessments, half of the student growth portion of the evaluation must be measured by the state assessments.

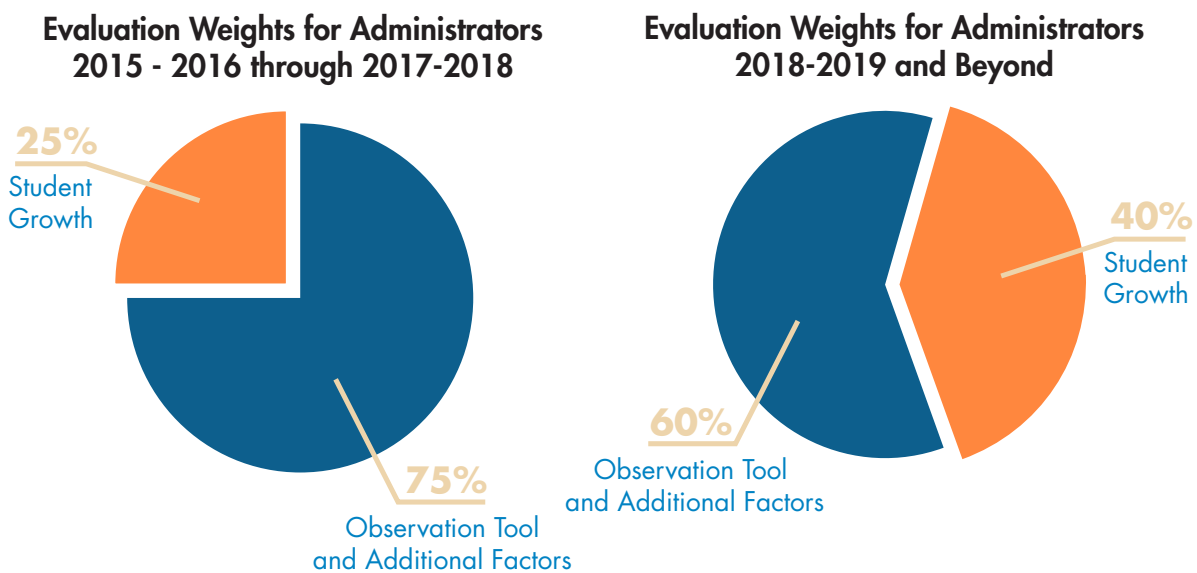


### 22. Q: Must all teachers in a specific grade level and/or content area be evaluated using the exact same measures and weightings of student growth?

**A:** No. With the exception of the required 50% of student growth measured by state assessments for teachers of tested grades and subjects (starting in 2018-2019), there is no requirement that teachers' student growth measures and weightings be the same. While the MDE recommends that teachers of the same grades and/or content areas within a building and/or district be evaluated on student growth measures that are as similar as possible to ensure equity, there may be cases in which differences may be appropriate and equitable.

### 23. Q: What are the required weightings of student growth measures for administrators?

**A:** Student growth and assessment data must account for 25% of the annual year-end administrator evaluation for the 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 school years. Beginning in 2018-2019, student growth and assessment data must account for 40% of the annual year-end administrator evaluation.



### 24. Q: What measures of student growth must be used for teachers of grades and subjects not tested by state assessments?

**A:** State law requires that multiple measures be used in determining student growth for the purposes of educator evaluations. For teachers of non-tested grades and subjects, and for the portion of the student growth component not measured by state assessments for teachers of tested grades and subjects, student growth must be measured by “multiple research-based growth measures or alternative assessments that are rigorous and comparable across schools within the school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy” (380.1249(2)(a)(ii)).

Districts may also measure student growth using student learning objectives (SLO), “nationally normed or locally adopted assessments that are aligned to state standards,” or the achievement of individualized education program (IEP) goals. The MDE will provide additional guidance regarding the use of student growth measures in educator evaluations, including how to incorporate student growth into the overall annual year-end evaluation.

**25. Q: What measures of student growth should be used for an administrator’s evaluation? Must data from all students and content areas be included?**

**A:** State law requires that the student growth and assessment data used in an administrator’s evaluation be the aggregate student growth data that are used in all of the teachers’ year-end evaluations in each school for a building-level administrator or in the entire district for district-level administrators. This means that the portion of the administrator’s evaluation based on student growth and assessment data must include all students and measures included in the evaluation of all teachers in the building or district, but does not require that all students and measures be weighted equally.

**26. Q: How can student growth based on state assessments be included in the annual year-end evaluation when that data will likely not be available prior to June 30, which is the deadline for reporting educator evaluation effectiveness levels to the state?**

**A:** With the shift in the assessment window to spring testing, state data will not be available when schools and districts are finalizing their end-of-year evaluations. The use of state assessment data in educator evaluations will therefore be based on prior years’ assessments. Many schools, districts, ISDs, and PSAs will find ways to balance summative state data from prior years with timely local assessment data to derive the student growth component of educator evaluations.

**27. Q: Will the MDE provide districts with growth data based on state assessments? How will schools and districts be expected to utilize this data?**

**A:** Yes. Student growth percentiles (SGP) will be provided for individual students with valid scores on consecutive state assessments of the same type in a content area. These SGPs are included in data files available to schools. Districts or PSAs using SGP data for teacher and administrator evaluations will be responsible for tracking which student SGPs should be linked to individual teachers and aggregating those SGPs.

The most common method for aggregating SGPs at the teacher level in other states has been to calculate the median of all SGPs for that teacher. This aggregation at the teacher level is often called a “median growth percentile” or MGP. More information about student growth percentiles can be found at [www.michigan.gov/mde-edevals](http://www.michigan.gov/mde-edevals).

**28. Q: State law specifically requires that state assessment results be used for teachers in tested grades and subjects. However, guidance from the MDE stated that the M-STEP should not be used for growth measures. Which is correct?**

**A:** The MDE discouraged using the 2014-2015 M-STEP (and MI-Access) results for educator evaluations (see the June 11, 2015 memo [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Educator\\_Evaluation\\_Efforts\\_491528\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Educator_Evaluation_Efforts_491528_7.pdf)). This is consistent with the MDE policy of not using the first year data from the transition year M-STEP in high-stakes accountability decisions.

The SGPs calculated for the 2015-2016 state tests and future administrations of the state tests can be used in educator evaluations going forward, although there is no mandate that any state assessment data be used in any teacher evaluations until the 2018-2019 school year. Local districts should make informed decisions on how to use state and/or local student growth and assessment data.

**29. Q: Must the MDE approve student growth measures and/or tools in order for districts to use them in educator evaluations?**

**A:** No. Districts must determine whether or not their student growth measures meet statutory requirements. However, the MDE will provide guidance to districts on how to choose these assessments and/or tools, and may additionally share information about assessments and tools in use that meet statutory requirements.

## APPEALS

**30. Q: The law states that a teacher may appeal a rating of “ineffective” to the district superintendent or chief administrator. May a teacher formally appeal a rating of “minimally effective” and/or “effective” if s/he feels that the rating is inappropriate?**

**A:** The law states that the appeals process applies only for a teacher who is not in a probationary period and who is “rated as ineffective on an annual year-end evaluation” (380.1249(2)(l)). However, local district policy may allow a teacher to appeal ratings other than “ineffective.”

**31. Q: If a teacher does not agree with the outcome of the local appeals process, can s/he appeal his/her annual year-end evaluation to the MDE?**

**A:** The MDE does not have the authority to grant and/or hear an appeal of the outcome of a local appeals process. There is no statutory process for an appeal beyond that defined in 380.1249(2)(l).

**32. Q: Is there an appeals process for building and/or district administrators?**

**A:** There is no appeals process required by law by which building and/or district administrators may appeal an annual year-end evaluation rating. A district may develop its own appeals process for building and district-level administrators if it so chooses.

## PUBLIC REPORTING

### 33. **Q: What should a district post on the district website to meet the public reporting requirements for an observation tool that is not on the State-approved list?**

**A:** A district must post the following information on its website:

- The research base for the observation tool and an assurance that any adaptations or modifications do not compromise the validity of the research;
- The identity and qualifications of the observation tool’s author(s) and/or the identity and qualifications of a person with expertise in educator evaluations who has reviewed adaptations or modifications to the observation tool;
- Evidence of “reliability, validity, and efficacy” of the observation tool, or in the absence of this evidence, a plan for developing that evidence;
- The evaluation frameworks and rubrics with performance level descriptors;
- A description of observation, feedback, performance improvement, and evaluation processes; and
- A description of the plan for training all participants in the use of the observation tool.

Templates for these reporting requirements will be developed by the MDE and posted to its website at [www.michigan.gov/mde-evals](http://www.michigan.gov/mde-evals).

### 34. **Q: Where on a district’s website should the required documentation be posted?**

**A:** Districts should post the required information and documentation as part of the budget and salary compensation transparency reporting (the “transparency mitten”) on their district homepage.

### 35. **Q: If a district uses an unmodified observation or evaluation tool that is on the state-approved list, what information do they need to post on the district website?**

**A:** The MDE will develop and share the required documentation for observation tools on the state-approved list. Once developed, this documentation will be available at [www.michigan.gov/mde-evals](http://www.michigan.gov/mde-evals). A district that has adopted one of these approved tools may simply post the MDE-developed documentation to its own website to meet the public reporting requirement.



**36. Q: What happens if a district is unable to avoid assigning students for two or more consecutive years to teachers in the same content area who have received “ineffective” ratings on their two most recent evaluations?**

**A:** Starting in 2018-2019, the district must notify parents in writing with an explanation about why they have been unable to meet the requirement that a student shall not be assigned to teachers in the same content area for two consecutive years who have been rated “ineffective” on their two most recent evaluations. This notification must be delivered to parents or guardians by July 15 preceding the beginning of the school year.

**37. Q: Must a district notify parents/guardians of students the first time their child has been assigned to a teacher who has received two consecutive “ineffective” annual year-end evaluations?**

**A:** No. Starting in 2018-2019, notification of parents/guardians is required when a student has been assigned for two consecutive years to teachers in the same content area who have been rated as “ineffective” on their two most recent evaluations. No notification is required the first time, or in non-consecutive years, that a student has been assigned to an individual teacher who has received two consecutive “ineffective” ratings.

## TEACHER CERTIFICATION

- 38. Q: Teacher certification rules state that a person needs five consecutive “effective” or “highly effective” ratings to apply for the Advanced Professional Educator Certificate. State law requires that a teacher needs at least three “highly effective” out of the five most recent annual year-end evaluations to apply for the Advanced Professional Educator Certificate. Which is correct?**

**A:** With the enactment of PA 173 (2015), the requirement that a teacher receive three “highly effective” ratings in the five most recent annual year-end evaluations to be eligible for the Advanced Professional Educator Certificate went into immediate effect. The teacher certification rules will be updated to reflect this new codified requirement.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 39. Q: How is “teacher” defined for the purposes of required educator evaluations?

**A:** For the purposes of evaluation required by Public Act 170 of 2016, “teacher” is defined as an individual who has a valid Michigan teaching certificate or authorization; who is employed, or contracted for, by a school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy; and who is assigned by the school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy to deliver direct instruction to pupils in any grades K to 12 as a teacher of record.

### 40. Q: How is “administrator” defined for the purposes of required educator evaluations?

**A:** For the purposes of required evaluation, “administrator” is defined as an individual holding a valid Michigan administrator’s certificate (unless exempted by MCL 380.1536) and who is employed (or contracted) and assigned by an ISD, LEA, or PSA to administer instructional programs. PA 173 further clarifies that only those administrators who are “regularly involved in instructional matters” need to receive annual year-end evaluations.

### 41. Q: Who is responsible for the evaluation of teachers who are shared between buildings?

**A:** It is up to the local district to determine who will be responsible for the evaluation of teachers in unique circumstances, such as those who deliver instruction in more than one building and/or under the supervision of more than one building principal.



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