

# Minnesota State Teacher Development, Evaluation and Peer Support Model Pilot: Initial Evaluation Report Executive Summary

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## Executive Summary

Minnesota Statutes 122A.40, Subdivision 8 and 122A.41, Subdivision 5 requires that districts begin evaluating teachers in the 2014-2015 school year. In response to the statute, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) convened a work group in early winter 2011 to consult with the MDE Commissioner to develop a state model for teacher growth and development. In winter 2013, MDE released the Minnesota State Teacher Development, Evaluation, and Peer Support Model (hereafter “Model”) and began planning for a pilot of the Model during the 2013-2014 school year (hereafter “Pilot”).

The Model consists of three components for evaluating teachers: 1) teacher practice, 2) student engagement, and 3) student learning and achievement. Sixteen school districts and one charter school from across Minnesota agreed to participate in the Pilot. Six of the districts are implementing the full Model (all three components) and nine districts are implementing one or two components (see Appendix I). The size of participating districts varies widely, from 287 students to 7,356 students.

In August 2013, the Joyce Foundation funded the University of Minnesota’s Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) to conduct an evaluation of the Pilot. This report summarizes results of surveys and interviews conducted with Pilot participants during November and December 2013 and is the first of three reports. The report for the entire Pilot year will be available in August 2014, and a final report, which will include information on the value-added assessments (an element of the student learning and achievement component) will be submitted to the Joyce Foundation in December 2014. The data in this report are preliminary and encompass only the first three months of the school year; thus, readers should not over-generalize the findings or conclusions presented here. The purpose of this interim report is to provide formative feedback to MDE.

**Data Sources and Response Rate.** The data collected for this report are drawn from online surveys and in-depth interviews of summative evaluators (usually principals, other school administrators, and district leaders) and teachers. The summative evaluator survey was administered as an online questionnaire in 14 of 17 pilot districts in November and December 2013. The overall response rate was 68% (25 out of 37). The response rate for individual districts ranged from 0% to 100%, with 12 of the 14 districts having a response rate of 50% or greater. The teacher survey was administered in 14 of 17 pilot districts in November and December 2013. The overall response rate was 41% (293 out of 723). The response rate for individual districts ranged from 17% to 82%, with 8 of the 14 districts having a response rate of over 40%.

Fourteen summative evaluators were interviewed across eight districts in November and December 2013, and 40 teachers were interviewed across eight districts in the same time frame. A range of experience was represented, from first-year teachers to veteran teachers with 37 years of experience. There was an even distribution of elementary and secondary teachers who were interviewed (17 elementary, 17 secondary, and 10 middle school, with some overlap) along with a balance of classroom teachers and subject specialists.

## Initial Findings

**Training and Technical Support.** On the whole, the summative evaluators were very impressed with the quality of the MDE trainings. They expressed a high level of satisfaction with the presentations, although they reported that the amount of information tended to overwhelm their teachers. Teachers echoed a similar sentiment in their interviews, expressing a desire to have training topics broken into shorter sessions.

Eighty-six percent of teachers stated they attended the MDE training and 55% of those respondents stated that the MDE training provided adequate guidance for developing their Individual Growth and Development Plan. The majority of teachers, 77%, referenced the Handbook and reported it provided adequate guidance while working on their Individual Growth and Development Plan.

**Implementation of the Pilot.** Teachers expressed support for the way in which the Model and a statewide teacher evaluation system in general serves as a stimulus for districts to provide professional development. At the same time, teachers also expressed serious concerns about the sustainability of the Model with the limited funds available for professional development and release time for peer reviewers. Teachers noted the heavy burden placed on principals as summative evaluators.

Comments that came out in interviews with summative evaluators acknowledged that their own enthusiasm in implementing the Model had a strong positive effect on the perceptions of faculty and staff about the Model.

**Individual Growth and Development Plan.** Almost all teachers, whether surveyed or interviewed, reported that they had made some progress toward completing their Individual Growth and Development Plans, although more than half the teachers described their work as partially complete. About two-thirds of teachers surveyed found the performance standards rubric useful for identifying areas for professional growth, and an equal number of teachers responded that it was an effective tool for identifying areas of instructional practice that could be evaluated. Teachers interviewed found the Individual Growth and Development Plan form to be clear, and for many, it was familiar because they had written similar growth plans in the past. Most teachers consulted with at least one colleague while developing their Individual Growth and Development Plan and reported this collaboration as helpful.

**Points of Contact.** Half of the summative evaluators surveyed and interviewed indicated that they had planned their points of contact. This was consistent with the responses from teachers about points of contact with summative evaluators. Fewer than half of summative evaluators had completed any points of contact at the time of the survey and interviews. Both summative evaluators and teachers expressed concern about the time necessary for completing points of contact going forward.

Over half of the teachers surveyed had decided on points of contact with their peer reviewers, and over one-third of teachers surveyed reported they had completed one point of contact with a peer reviewer. Again, both summative evaluators and teachers had concerns about the time needed to complete points of contact with peer reviewers. During interviews, teachers and summative evaluators alike expressed hopes for increased collaboration through the peer reviewer relationship.

**Student Learning Goals.** Summative evaluators whose buildings had selected school-wide Student Learning Goals found that the uniformity of the goal made developing and approving these goals manageable. In settings where there was a building-wide goal, summative evaluators had high completion rates with their teachers and expressed satisfaction with the process. Roughly half of the teachers surveyed and interviewed had either completed or made some progress on developing their Student Learning Goals. Over half of teachers surveyed indicated that they had benefitted from consulting with a peer reviewer while developing their Student Learning Goals. Interviewed teachers talked positively about how they used student data to set starting points and decide upon benchmarks.

However, many summative evaluators found that their specialist teachers and non-teaching staff struggled much more to adapt the Student Learning Goals for their situations. This frustration was echoed in the interviews with specialist teachers and non-teaching staff whose goals could not easily be connected to a wider building goal and whose number of students made designating Student Learning Goals a challenge.