

Spotlight on Maryland

Student Learning Objectives and
Teacher and Principal Evaluation

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The Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center (MACC@WestEd) helps state leaders with their initiatives to implement, support, scale up, and sustain statewide education reforms. We work closely with state leaders in the Mid-Atlantic region of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia.

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I. Purpose

This study focuses on learning first-hand from frontline educators how they perceive the development and implementation of the new Teacher and Principal Evaluation (TPE) system in Maryland. In particular, because Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) are designated as a key means of measuring student academic growth and improving teacher effectiveness, this study examines educators' perceptions of the support they receive in understanding and implementing SLOs. Findings of this study are intended to help inform and strengthen the SLO component and the overall TPE system as implementation moves forward in the schools and districts in Maryland.

II. Methods of Data Collection

Both qualitative data and quantitative data were collected from educators, including (a) interviews of superintendents and teacher union/association leaders from six districts; and (b) survey responses provided by teachers, principals and other educators from nine districts.

Interviews

Confidential phone interviews were conducted from late May to early July with 13 key stakeholders in six districts and one statewide association. These include: six executive leaders (five superintendents and one deputy superintendent), six local teacher union/association leaders, and one statewide teachers' association leader. Using an interview protocol developed by the study team, each interview lasted for approximately one hour. The interviews were not audio recorded; detailed notes were taken and analyzed.

Maryland Teacher and Principal Evaluation Survey

A web-based confidential survey, developed by the study team, was launched on May 23, 2013, by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). MSDE sent an invitational email with the link to the online survey to all superintendents in Maryland, asking them to share this information with the principals, teachers, and other school-based staff in the local school districts and encourage them to respond. The study team alone had access to survey responses.

The survey questions centered on: (a) the systemic context for the implementation of the TPE system; (b) the quality of the TPE frameworks and processes; (c) the use of student assessments as a component in teacher evaluation; (d) supports teachers receive on Student Learning Objectives (SLOs); and (e) additional supports educators need.

Originally, 1,934 educators from fifteen districts responded to the survey. A total of 29 surveys were excluded from the study for the following reasons: 11 participants did not identify their district affiliations, and 18 participants were from the six districts in which fewer than 10 educators responded to the survey.

The final analysis was based on 1,905 educators from nine local school districts. These nine districts constitute 34.6% of all the districts in Maryland. They represent nearly half of the teachers (48.6%) and the students (48.0%).¹

A substantial number of the survey respondents have gained knowledge about SLOs and the new TPE system. Half of the survey respondents have participated in SLO trainings (52%), and nearly one-third have accessed some sources of information or experiences related to SLOs (30%). One-fifth of the respondents indicate that they have participated in a TPE pilot (19%).

Nearly two-thirds of all respondents have 10 or more years of teaching experience (66%). Most have a Master's degree (77%). The majority of the respondents are classroom teachers (63%). There were 124 principals who completed the survey, constituting 8.5% of all school principals in the State.² (See Table 1 in the addendum for more detail on the characteristics of the survey participants.)

The survey analysis included an examination of the responses by three teacher categories: classroom teacher, non-classroom teaching staff, and special education. However, since there were few differences in teachers' responses by their categories, they have been grouped into one category, "Teacher," for the purposes of discussion in the report, except where otherwise noted. For similar reasons, the principal and assistant principal responses have been grouped into one category, "Principal."

Limitations of the Data

To gain timely insights in and feedback on the implementation of the TPE system and SLOs, data were collected and analyzed within a relatively short time frame. Although the study team interviewed both superintendents and union leaders in six districts, and these districts cover a wide range of district characteristics such as location and enrollment, they comprise only one-fourth of all districts in Maryland. Similarly, although educators' responses from nine districts were analyzed in the survey, and these districts represent nearly half of the teachers and the students in the State, the response rates by district vary considerably. Despite these limitations, however, consistent findings emerged from both the interviews and the survey responses, shedding light on the implementation of the TPE system.

III. Findings

Finding One: Frontline educators in Maryland underscore that there is a substantial learning curve involved with Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). Teachers and principals have concerns regarding the support teachers receive when developing and implementing SLOs.

A key to effective implementation is the recognition that SLOs are, at root, an instructional reform being used for evaluation purposes. As a result of the training provided by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), district and union leaders are starting to become knowledgeable about the essential links of SLOs to instruction and assessment.

"I see SLOs as the marriage between instruction and assessment."

-Superintendent

"SLOs are a process to improve teachers' instruction and student learning. Assessments can inform teaching, but they will not improve instruction...The whole process makes SLOs powerful."

-Union Leader

"[Teachers] learned about what an SLO is and how to measure it. They liked it because you have assessments you have created which focus on what you are trying to measure. It is changing the course and you have confidence in the assessment piece."

-Superintendent

Teacher survey responses identify issues about the level and type of support they receive related to SLOs. Two-thirds of the teachers (66%) indicate they need support in receiving SLO feedback from the school or the district administration. They also strongly disagree/disagree that they receive (a) guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs (38%); (b) recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs (37%); (c) valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs (37%); (d) guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs (35%); and (e) resources supporting the use of student baseline data (34%). These are all issues that the State and districts have to address to support effective implementation.

Table 1. Principal and Teacher Responses on Student Learning Objectives

Teachers receive...	Principals			Teachers		
	Total Agree	Undecided	Total Disagree	Total Agree	Undecided	Total Disagree
Information about developing high quality SLOs.	98 (57%)	34 (20%)	39 (23%)	674 (42%)	429 (26%)	520 (32%)
Information about the use of SLO components.	108 (64%)	38 (22%)	24 (14%)	706 (44%)	431 (27%)	484 (30%)
Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.	95 (56%)	37 (22%)	38 (22%)	560 (35%)	505 (31%)	550 (34%)
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.	85 (50%)	44 (26%)	42 (25%)	524 (32%)	525 (32%)	573 (35%)
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.	77 (45%)	47 (28%)	46 (27%)	441 (27%)	573 (35%)	610 (38%)
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.	75 (44%)	46 (27%)	49 (29%)	473 (29%)	540 (33%)	604 (37%)
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.	72 (42%)	52 (31%)	46 (27%)	446 (28%)	575 (36%)	594 (37%)
I need support in receiving SLO feedback from school or district administration.	112 (67%)	26 (15%)	30 (18%)	1074 (66%)	348 (21%)	199 (12%)

NOTE: *Total Agree* is a composite of strongly agree/agree and *Total Disagree* is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree.

Compared with teachers, principals have more positive perceptions of the support that teachers receive. Over half of the principals strongly agree/agree that teachers receive “information about the use of SLO components” (64%), “information about developing high quality SLOs” (57%), and “resources supporting the use of student baseline data” (56%). However, they also have reservations about the SLO support for teachers. Over half of the principals strongly disagree/disagree or are undecided that teachers receive “valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs” (58%), “recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs” (56%), and “guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs” (55%). Two-thirds of the principals (67%) report needing support in receiving SLO feedback from the district administration.

There is a learning curve involved when implementing any major educational reform initiative. It is more pronounced when the reform is characterized by high stakes and accelerated timetables for implementation. For example, interviewees indicated a need for guidance to help ensure that SLOs are of high quality. Interviewees also noted that all seven pilot districts had insights from their experiences but there was little opportunity to discuss lessons learned and not enough time due to the schedule to inform the State. As a result, they felt pilot learnings were not considered as MSDE launched the statewide rollout of SLOs.

With respect to SLOs, professional development, leadership development and resources are essential to develop principals' and teachers' critical understandings of (a) why SLOs have been chosen as a cornerstone of the TPE system; (b) how well-crafted SLOs improve teacher practice and contribute to student learning; (c) how SLOs provide glue across a district's curricular and instructional initiatives; and (d) how the new TPE system, including SLOs, complements other initiatives underway in the State and districts. Understanding and accepting the value of SLOs is crucial to building and sustaining a broad base of support for TPE.

Finding Two: Involvement in field tests, access to meaningful information, and union/management collaboration have an impact on the credibility of and educators' confidence in the new TPE system. However, there are concerns about the quality of communication as well as uncertainties about the level of community support for the new evaluation system.

Survey responses show a clear pattern: the more educators are involved in the new evaluation system through participating in a pilot or in field test activities, participating in trainings or accessing information related to SLOs, the more positive their perceptions. For example, it is noteworthy that 37% of the all educator respondents who have neither TPE experience nor SLO experience strongly agree/agree that "TPE is based on principles of continuous improvement." Yet the percentages are much higher for those who have TPE experience only (66%), SLO experience only (65%), or both TPE and SLO experience (73%). Involvement and information contribute to higher levels of understanding and comfort which, in turn, lead to more confidence in the new evaluation system in general and SLOs in particular. (See Table 6 in the addendum for more detail on participant responses by experience with TPE and SLOs.)

Interview data indicate that when there is a more collaborative relationship between the union and management within a district, there is generally more trust in and credibility of the new evaluation system.

"We had good relationships with teachers unions. They have appreciated that the purpose of evaluation needs to be helping teachers to improve."

-Superintendent

"We were in a good position to negotiate an evaluation agreement with the management. It has evolved and changed. I think we have good processes. The management has been responsive to our concerns. There is a little blood on the floor. Our disagreement has been behind the doors. We've been participating and we have input."

-Union Leader

However, when there is a lack of strategic collaboration between the district administration and the local union, a successful implementation becomes challenging.

"Bargaining provides basic protection and really guarantees fair evaluation. It makes sure that not one sole criterion will be used in hiring and promotion decisions. The implications are very intense. Our school system tells us that we cannot bargain in this process. That's really a bad path for bargaining."

-Union Leader

"Unions will calm down. This anxiety will lessen over time. It takes years. We are getting into a bumpy year."

-Superintendent

Interview data also show that some teacher union leaders feel that they have not been adequately involved in the decision making processes related to the components of the new evaluation system.

“Race to the Top was pretty much done without unions. We were pretty much ignored.”

-Union Leader

“MSDE has not worked with affiliations or teachers. School systems received trainings, but there was never a direct invitation to us. Our organization has been completely out of the loop.”

-Union Leader

Frontline educators underscore the importance of receiving clear and consistent information when trying to develop understanding of and buy-in to the new system. However, both the interview and survey data show that there are concerns related to the consistency of information that principals and teachers receive.

“It is frustrating for a lot people when the information they receive is not consistent. There are changes of personnel, leadership, and languages...Most teachers want to know what the rules are. It is frustrating that the frontline does not have a clear understanding.”

-Superintendent

The clarity and consistency of information affects how well educators understand the new evaluation system. In the survey responses, 55% of the principals and just 41% of the teachers strongly agree/agree that “the expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.” Many respondents are undecided on this critical issue (26% of principals and 31% of teachers). Effective implementation depends, in part, on there being clear expectations for all involved.

In addition, interview data suggest a perceived gap of communications between the State and local teacher unions.

“MSDE started to send communications every week, but only to local boards, not to local affiliates...Nobody brought information in.”

-Union Leader

Reformers within districts need the support of the broader educational community. Community support is a vital component of successful educational reform. The survey responses indicate, however, that the perceived level of community support is unclear. More than half the principals (54%) and teachers (51%) are undecided on the level of community support for the TPE system.

Finding Three: Teachers and district leaders have concerns about the capacity of principals across schools to serve as effective evaluators. There are also questions about the validity and reliability of the classroom observation instruments. These concerns are exacerbated by technological challenges many districts face in implementing TPE and SLOs.

Interview data show that there are concerns regarding the capacity of principals as instructional leaders to conduct valid and reliable classroom observations. Further, several interviewees indicate that, in actual practice, inter-rater agreement is often being confused with inter-rater reliability.

"[Observation] continues to be a challenge...There are a lot of concerns on the inter-rater reliability. That's challenging."

-Superintendent

"I think we need more work on training observers. Not every administrator, good or bad, was the best classroom instructor. Teachers haven't been observed by instructional leaders. Administrators need a higher degree of credibility in conducting observations."

-Union Leader

"In some schools, principals have a lot to say on SLOs. Teachers are concerned about whether principals know what the student outcomes should be."

-Union Leader

Teachers' perceptions are decidedly mixed regarding the classroom observation component in the new evaluation system. Only 40% strongly agree/agree that "validated observation measures/instruments" are used, while 33% are undecided and 27% strongly disagree/disagree. Similarly, only 43% of teachers strongly agree/agree that the observations are "conducted by trained observers/evaluators who meet reliability criteria," while 33% are undecided and 24% disagree.

Table 2. Principal and Teacher Survey Responses Related to Teacher Evaluation Frameworks and Processes

Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes...	Principals			Teachers		
	Total Agree	Undecided	Total Disagree	Total Agree	Undecided	Total Disagree
Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.	139 (82%)	18 (11%)	13 (8%)	817 (51%)	407 (25%)	392 (24%)
Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.	115 (67%)	42 (25%)	14 (8%)	640 (40%)	529 (33%)	443 (27%)
Are conducted by trained observers/evaluators who meet reliability criteria.	117 (69%)	36 (21%)	17 (10%)	688 (43%)	538 (33%)	391 (24%)
Provide a summative rating of educator performance.	121 (71%)	35 (20%)	15 (9%)	679 (42%)	527 (33%)	409 (25%)
Provide explicit feedback to teachers.	121 (71%)	36 (21%)	14 (8%)	761 (47%)	553 (34%)	293 (18%)
Contribute to the instructional effectiveness of teachers.	113 (66%)	38 (22%)	20 (12%)	605 (38%)	557 (35%)	447 (28%)
Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.	114 (66%)	41 (24%)	17 (10%)	600 (38%)	601 (38%)	399 (25%)

Some districts are facing technological challenges in implementing TPE overall and SLOs in particular. They specifically describe a need for a well-designed SLO management platform.

“The platform we have is horrible, poorly designed...I’m really worried about the platform being used.”

-Superintendent

“We don’t have the technology to help in all the schools. That’s one thing that teachers complain about.”

-Union Leader

Finding Four: Many districts are inadequately prepared to make use of the final evaluation results to improve teaching and learning.

Data collected from the new TPE system can provide invaluable feedback to both teachers and administrators by highlighting strengths and gaps related to instruction and learning. Such a link of evaluation results to the improvement of teaching and student academic growth is the core intent of the TPE system. It is also critical for developing trust and buy-in to the new evaluation system by frontline educators. The better prepared districts are to collect and analyze evaluative data, the better positioned they will be to take informed action based on the results. Doing so will strengthen districts in targeting professional and leadership development resources where they are most needed.

Survey data show that there is insufficient confidence among teachers in the usefulness of the evaluation results in improving classroom instruction. In particular, large percentages of teachers strongly disagree/disagree or are undecided that the teacher evaluation frameworks and processes “lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches” (63%), “contribute to the instructional effectiveness of teachers” (63%), “provide a summative rating of educator performance” (58%), or “provide explicit feedback to teachers” (52%).

Compared with teachers, principals’ perceptions are more positive. Two-thirds of the principal survey respondents strongly agree/agree that the frameworks and processes “provide a summative rating of educator performance” (71%), “provide explicit feedback to teachers” (71%), contribute to the instructional effectiveness of teachers” (66%), and “lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches” (66%). However, it is also noteworthy that one-fifth to one-fourth of principals (ranging from 20% to 24%) are undecided on the effectiveness of the frameworks and processes.

Interviews indicate that many districts are not adequately prepared to use the evaluation results to improve instructional professional development or other services in support of the schools and classrooms. There is a noticeable absence of plans, processes or concrete next steps the districts intend to adopt as a result of the evaluation rankings.

“Hopefully we can use them [i.e., the evaluation results] as benchmarks to move forward. I can’t say we have a plan in place at this point.”

-Superintendent

“I don’t know well [what the district will do with the results]. We are working on evaluation documents now.”

-Union Leader

“The results illuminate issues on teacher preparation and teacher support. It also illuminates issues on the perceptions of teachers...The data will illuminate school conditions. It informs us on how we should target support.”

-Superintendent

Despite the potential benefits of using evaluative data to inform strategies related to professional and leadership development and instructional support, interview responses left unclear how many of the district leaders plan to use the evaluation results to guide their support practices. In part, this lack of clarity may emanate from the beliefs of most interviewees that the evaluative results under TPE are unlikely to differ markedly from previous evaluative results.

IV. Issues and Recommendations

The following recommendations reinforce the instructional emphasis of the new TPE system, respond to legitimate concerns emerging from the field, and build on the foundation of support established to date by the Maryland State Department of Education.

Issue 1: Implementation Capacity

Overview. MSDE has put key building blocks in place to help districts and schools launch the new evaluation system. In support of the SLO component in particular, MSDE has prepared and provided models, training sessions and support materials. It also has put strategies in place for convening key constituencies for professional development purposes and conducting communications activities. While training and re-training will continue to be part of MSDE’s scope of work, a transition lies ahead as districts begin implementing the TPE system at scale and for high stakes purposes.

Recommended Action. *Broaden capacity building to underscore the importance of instructional linkages and benefits of quality implementation.* Building on the training and resources that are currently being provided, a transition ahead for MSDE is to model for the districts the type of professional development and leadership development that the districts, in turn, need to provide to the schools. This means expanding the breadth of State-provided guidance to reinforce the instructional emphasis of the evaluation system and help districts be more effective in assisting their schools.

In particular, broadened capacity building extends to a range of issues affecting quality implementation, including:

- Research findings on SLOs and their implications for district leadership and support systems
- Strategies for addressing strains on various district systems
- Criteria for performance-based assessments and teacher developed assessments
- Refinement and use of a SLO ratings rubric for purposes of instructional planning and SLO quality improvement
- Crosswalk between SLOs and the Common Core State Standards
- Crosswalk links between SLOs and teacher observations
- Relation and implications of changeover in assessments to the SLO process
- Strategies for integrating SLOs within districts’ core instructional frameworks

It is also recommended that MSDE, districts, and schools collaborate to develop an electronic library of annotated SLOs. These SLOs should be actual, but be presented anonymously. Such an annotated library would provide teachers and principals with examples of SLOs of varying quality for thought-provoking conversations rather than exemplars to emulate. Examining strengths and weaknesses of the

SLOs will help districts and schools identify next steps needed to support the development of high quality and increasingly more rigorous SLOs.

Impact. TPE is a new system of educator support and accountability. At a time of high stakes scale-up, there is a distinct risk that compliance to the new evaluation system could overshadow its instructional roots. High quality capacity building is essential to reinforce the instructional emphases and integrity of the TPE system. Both MSDE and districts have expanding responsibilities in this area.

Issue 2: School Leadership

Overview. Superintendents, union leaders and teachers, and to a lesser extent principals, have concerns about the capacity of the principals to carry out the requirements of the TPE system with quality and consistency across all schools. The skill requirements and time demands are both significant. Supporting principals in leading the evaluation process at the school level, and integrating it within the instructional foundation at the schools, needs to be an area of emphasis.

Recommended Action. *Provide specialized support to principals.* Doing so should be a State and district priority. Implementing the new evaluation system at the school level has serious implications for principals; more is involved than understanding and acting on an additional set of to-do's. Rather, principals will need customized support in how to integrate their stewardship of SLOs and the teacher observation process with their oversight of curriculum delivery and their supervision of instruction.

The research from Denver and Charlotte-Mecklenburg makes clear that principals' leadership is of paramount importance in effectively implementing SLOs. In the context of evaluation, MSDE and districts can also be particularly helpful to principals by strengthening their abilities to conduct evidence-based meetings with teachers that incorporate SLO and teacher observation data. In addition, MSDE can consider developing certification for principals related to SLOs and teacher observations.

Impact. The quality and depth of principals' instructional leadership are key to the effective implementation of both SLOs and classroom observations. The success of the TPE system is dependent on having principals who have the skills and understandings needed to guide and support their faculties in advancing Maryland's instructionally-based evaluation model. With the TPE system now going to scale in all the districts, building these skills and understandings will be pivotal to achieving positive results statewide.

Issue 3: Use of Evaluation Results

Overview. The power of the new TPE system lies in what districts and schools do with the results. This area needs more attention from the State and the districts.

Recommended Action. *Help districts translate evaluation ratings into improved practices.* Based on the interview findings, it will be essential to support districts in examining and determining actions to take based on the teacher and principal evaluation data. More than introducing any specific tool, MSDE can provide leadership by helping districts think through the elements of a system of educator support that focuses on:

- Interpreting the evaluation data
- Identifying strengths and deficiencies that emerge from the data analysis
- Determining the causes and implications of the gaps
- Tailoring professional development and leadership development to address the deficiencies and gaps
- Examining and improving district support system capabilities

In short, this recommendation focuses on supporting districts to use the final evaluation results to inform instruction, as well as professional development and leadership development, at school and district levels.

Impact. A relevant maxim is that “data mean nothing without a planned response to them.” The credibility and viability of the new evaluation system depend on its value in informing and effectuating improvements in instructional practices and student learning.

Issue 4: Rapid Response

Overview. The hallmark of MSDE’s support efforts lies in being anticipatory regarding the needs of districts and schools as they begin to implement the new evaluation system. Now is the time to prepare for the practical reality that some districts will have significant gaps in their readiness and capacity to implement the SLO component and the overall TPE system with fidelity.

Recommended Action. *Develop a rapid response capability.* MSDE will need to be ready to respond with immediate support to districts struggling with TPE implementation challenges. Based on local learnings from Maryland’s initial pilots and national learnings from fourteen years of SLO practice, MSDE can project the most serious needs that are likely to emerge in the field. It can then identify and set priorities on which services MSDE can most effectively provide, or help districts to secure, in response to these needs and within tight timelines.

Impact. A state system is judged by its weakest links. If problems of TPE implementation go unrecognized or unaddressed, MSDE’s message about the importance of strengthening instruction through the new evaluation system will be lost. It is therefore the better part of wisdom for MSDE to develop a suite of rapid response services to help districts in need.

Issue 5: Constituency Building and Communications

Overview. There is evidence from the interview and survey data that the more educators are involved with and knowledgeable of SLOs and the TPE system, the more positive their perceptions. The survey results also show that many respondents are undecided (often 33% or more of the responses) on many aspects of the new evaluation system. Further, the interview data suggest that when there is greater collaboration and interaction between district management and the teachers union, there are higher levels of openness to the implementation of the new educator evaluation system. These findings should help inform next steps in constituency building and communications.

Recommended Action. *Focus on winning over the undecided and the skeptical.* An important step is to help ensure that all teachers and their representatives receive high quality training and information on SLOs and other components of the TPE system. MSDE needs to continue to maintain high standards for its own trainers, while helping district trainers to meet those same standards. In addition, MSDE should consider working with districts to promote two-way communications with teachers at the schools, with a particular emphasis on reaching teachers who may not be receiving direct and up-to-date information on the new evaluation system. This blend of training and information sharing has already proven helpful to educators during the piloting phase in several districts.

A key in communications is to provide a steady drum roll of information that reinforces a core message. Survey results show a considerable number of people are currently undecided about the TPE system. In interviews, there are also some leaders who express a degree of skepticism regarding Maryland’s new direction in evaluation. These reactions are not surprising given that the new system differs markedly

from previous evaluation practices in many districts. In this context, it is important for the State's message to be elevated to the bigger picture in Maryland. Doing so means reinforcing with consistency that TPE is a system of support tied directly to instruction; it is neither a Race to the Top initiative nor an accountability system alone.

Building on this message, the State can also be helpful to districts and local unions as they navigate the next round of collective bargaining agreements. In particular, MSDE can consider convening management and teacher representatives to draft model language, related to educator performance and associated procedures, that can be considered and customized by local districts and unions when they bargain their next agreements.

Impact. The effectiveness of the TPE system will be tied to its credibility at district and school levels. Building diverse constituencies that support this reform, and communicating the instructional emphasis of the new system, will enhance the prospects for effective implementation.

Summary of Recommendations

Maryland is entering a year of high stakes, large scale implementation of the new TPE system. The findings, based on feedback from frontline educators, show that initial implementation has benefited when it has been a cooperative effort of district and union leadership. Implementation has also provided opportunities for teachers and principals to participate and provide feedback on their experiences. However, they also underscore the complexity, the steepness of the learning curve, and the systemic challenges engendered in the implementation of Student Learning Objectives.

As the implementation shifts into high gear, it is critical that leaders turn participant feedback into an action plan for success. The recommendations as discussed above and listed here should be the basis of that plan for school, district, and State leaders.

- Broaden capacity building to underscore the importance of instructional linkages and benefits of quality implementation.
- Provide specialized support to principals.
- Help districts translate evaluation ratings into improved practices.
- Develop a rapid response capability.
- Focus on winning over the undecided and the skeptical.

Using the findings as goal statements, the State in cooperation with district, union, and school leaders should analyze each recommendation, determine the action steps needed, and identify the responsible parties that will operationalize the recommendations. Certainly, carrying out the first four recommendations will contribute to winning over the undecided and the skeptical. Carrying out these recommendations will support MSDE and the districts in implementing at scale a quality TPE system that inspires trust and confidence among frontline educators.

¹ Data were retrieved and calculated on August 1, 2013, from <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pubagency.asp>, based on the latest available 2010-11 Common Core Data.

² Data were retrieved and calculated on August 14, 2013, from <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pubagency.asp>, based on the latest available 2010-11 Common Core Data.