

Principal Feedback Summary From Teacher Preparation Institution Reports FY2009-10

Background:

During academic year 2009-10, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) asked teacher preparation institutions to survey or hold focus groups with administrators in local schools or schools that hire their graduates, to further higher education understanding of the needs, gaps and strengths of teacher preparation, as seen in local schools. The formats for collecting feedback were left to the institution—MDE offered model surveys and focus group protocols but encouraged local adaptation.

Institutional Response:

Thirty one institutions sent MDE some report on this requirement. One sent no report and one sent a report lacking critical elements.

Of the complete reports, a set of 5 institutions in Wayne County collaborated with one focus group in their area, to reduce the load on local principals. Similarly, three institutions in the Upper Peninsula collaborated on a joint survey locally. Two institutions reported on meetings they hold with local educators without specific efforts to collect systematic administrator data. Other institutions carried out individual efforts to gain feedback from principals. A few institutions reported on their effort but did not share data on numbers contacted, response rate or findings.

For institutions reporting data, most had limited response rates to surveys, ranging from 11% to 43%, although one institution limited itself to 10 principals and achieved 100%. Most typical was a rate around 30%.

Institutions reporting focus group efforts were not always clear about the number invited, but typically reported 7 to 16 participants. One institution used a meeting of technology directors to hold a focus group on teacher preparation in technology.

Results:

Institutions moved farther this year from the MDE state-wide surveys and formats, asking more about the quality of their own graduates. Typical findings centered on the overall high quality of student teachers and/or new teachers prepared by Michigan institutions, particularly in content areas, in knowledge of HSCEs and GLCEs, and in technology. Concerns expressed by principals focused on readiness for ESL, autism or other special needs student, developing cooperative working relationships with other adults, including parents, and teachers' need for more understanding of formative assessment and using data to support learning. Once again, principals noted that there has been relatively little hiring of new teachers and some volunteered little interest in alternative routes to prepare teachers.

A few institutions reported to MDE ideas they are sharing with faculty regarding changes in their own policy or practice. One institution that has, for financial reasons, reduced limited term adjunct faculty and assigned field supervision to regular faculty, discovered a need to get more regular feedback from LEAs on the performance of field instructors. Another institution found that strengthening field instruction requires more development for regular faculty who have been out of the K-12 classroom for years. Another noted there would be value in the education faculty meeting more frequently with cooperating teachers to assure quality field experiences. Other suggested policy changes included a new requirement that student teachers attend school staff meetings, not just recommending this activity.

MDE expectations for the timing and quality of these reports will be more rigorous in future years when performance score points are available for this element.