



“Ask The Network” Survey Response

Teacher Preparation and Licensure in Michigan September 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Network of Michigan Educators, a group of recognized teachers and school leaders, gave its membership the opportunity to take an online “Ask The Network” survey in early September, 2007. 94 members provided their input on issues of teacher preparation, licensure and mentoring in Michigan.

Tiered Licensure

Although members of the Network overwhelmingly supported the concept of a tiered licensure system in Michigan, with 87% in favor of such a plan, only about half of them felt their teaching colleagues would react favorably to such a change. In their extensive comments, teachers felt that newer teachers would be more likely to support a third tier for “master teachers.” While working out details of such a plan would be a challenge, teachers felt that recognizing high levels of teaching skill could eventually benefit the profession.

Performance Assessments for Teachers

About three-quarters (74%) of NME members agreed that a research-based performance assessment for teachers has the potential to enhance our current teacher evaluation system, with 18% disagreeing, mostly over issues of time, expense and lack of trust in performance assessment instruments (i.e., administrative observations). In their comments, many teachers recommended a neutral-assessor portfolio system, similar to National Board Certification. However—about 60% of them felt that their fellow teachers would be opposed to any kind of performance assessment.

Mentoring and Induction

Members of the Network felt strongly (88%) that new teacher mentoring and induction are “weak and spotty” in Michigan. The long list of suggested remedies includes a reduced teaching load for novice teachers, better mentor-mentee matching, as well as effective training and compensation for mentors.

Teacher Preparation

Virtually all NME members (97%) believed that university education staff should have K-12 experience before working with pre-service teachers, and 85% thought that a “significant” field experience was essential. Members were about evenly divided in their preference for a semester-length student teaching experience vs. a year-long internship. Several noted that student teachers are not compensated, and asking some of them to work even longer to become prepared for teaching was a financial burden, which might keep promising candidates away from the profession.