

Committee to Advance Educator Compensation & Careers

Meeting Minutes

Meeting #3: August 21, 2014

5:30 – 7:30pm

2nd Floor Cabinet Room, Townsend Building
Dover, Delaware

Attendance:

Committee members present:

- Teri Quinn Gray (CAECC Chair) – President, State Board of Education
- Lindsay O’Mara – Education Policy Advisor to Governor Markell, Governor’s Office
- Mark Murphy – Secretary of Education, Department of Education
- Frederika Jenner – President, Delaware State Education Association (DSEA)
- Jeff Taschner – Executive Director, Delaware State Education Association (DSEA)
- Mark Holodick – President, Chief School Officers Association (CSOA); Superintendent, Brandywine School District
- Darryl Scott – Chair, House Education Committee and Representative, District 31
- David Sokola – Chair, Senate Education Committee and Senator, District 8
- Harvey Kenton – Representative, District 36

Committee staff present:

- Ryan Fennerty (CAECC Director) – Special Advisor, Governor’s Office
- Donna Johnson (CAECC stakeholder engagement lead) – Executive Director, State Board of Education

Others present:

- Kevin Carson (DASA)
- Elizabeth Lewis (OMB)
- Mike Matthews (Red Clay EA)
- Melissa Hopkins (Rodel)
- Kim Siegel (Lieutenant Governor’s Office)
- Dana Diesel Wallace (Vision Network)

Welcome & Overview of the Agenda

Committee Chair Teri Quinn Gray welcomed Committee members as she called the meeting to order at 5:30p.m. She highlighted the goals of the meeting and provided an overview of the agenda before presenting a revised version of the proposed Committee design principles based on the discussion at the prior meeting.

The Committee reviewed the revised design principles, noting the changes highlighted and after a round robin of final comments conceded that the revised version could serve as a guide for future discussions. Teri asked that Committee staff convert the slide into a poster for posting in the room during future Committee discussions.

Discussion of Current Career Ladder Proposal (continued from last meeting)

The Committee revisited the career ladder framework offered as a starting proposal at the last discussion by discussing the three questions posed to the group for reflection: (1) what are the critical professional milestones that should inform the structure of the career ladder? (2) What are the professional opportunities that should come with each progression? (3) What factors determine how educators progress through the career ladder?

Committee Chair, Teri Quinn Gray introduced a slide detailing the proposed Career Ladder and Committee staff to summarize the key elements for the group. The Committee reviewed the different designations, the progression requirements for movement from one level to the next, and the professional milestones associated with each. Teri asked the group to take a few minutes to collect their thoughts and then opened the floor to a group conversation with the framing that this would serve as a framework to build on to take to stakeholder groups for input in the weeks ahead.

The group debated the provision that educators wait until they have reached the Emerging designation to access EPER roles. Some Committee members supported limiting access to EPER during the Provisional phase, highlighting the challenges educators face in their first year of teaching, and the fact that many are asked to take on non-core classroom duties that present an additional burden during a time of critical development as a junior educator. Others noted their discomfort with the State playing a proscriptive role in determining what opportunities educators should access that are locally funded. The Committee resolved to take this question to educators for input during the upcoming educator working group sessions and left the current language in the proposal with the understanding that it would be revisited.

Review of a Proposal for Teacher Leadership Roles

The Committee surveyed Teacher Leadership roles from neighboring systems and model examples to help frame future discussions.

The Committee reviewed two recent efforts in detail from the Houston Independent School District and Baltimore City Public Schools. The Committee discussed the Houston ISD model which offers three broad tiers of leadership with progressive increases in adult leadership and ownership for student outcomes with the highest level designated “Master Teacher”. The district developed a number of core roles including specialists (in the areas of technology, intervention, data and analysis, assessments, curriculum), instructional coaches and mentors. The Committee also reviewed on-going efforts in Baltimore City Public Schools, in partnership with local education associations, to move from a traditional steps and lanes system to a career ladder with multiple pathways to differentiated levels of teacher leadership. The Committee discussed the roles, progression criteria, and selection processes that had been developed in the Baltimore model.

The Committee discussed the common themes for Teacher Leadership roles, noting that in the systems surveyed they typically require that a teacher retain a foot in the classroom (e.g. “meaningful connection to students”); that they take on meaningful additional leadership responsibilities, often in the areas of mentoring, professional development, curriculum and assessments, and peer evaluation; and that the roles are often structured differently from traditional 10mth teaching positions to allow and come with meaningful pay increases.

Frederika Jenner and Mark Holodick discussed examples of Teacher Leadership they regarded as particularly powerful examples of the ideal. Frederika spoke to leaders she encountered throughout her career and the critical role they played in helping mentor and coach other teachers. She also spoke to her own experiences as a classroom teacher, and how a great “teacher leader” may have been able to provide truly impactful professional development given their proximity to the classroom versus some of the district-led offerings typically available.

Superintendent Mark Holodick described a department chair in one of his schools who exemplified teacher leadership because he was not only a model teacher whose students achieved well above expectations, but someone able to scale that impact beyond his own classroom. This teacher was able to help others replicate his successes through his influence and leadership as a leader within the building. The group of educators who worked with him all saw their students grow markedly and when he left the school the loss was immediately noticed throughout the building. Mark Holodick also spoke to the fact that Brandywine School District had engaged in a similar effort to revisit the educator career pathway and considered introducing a career ladder with teacher leadership opportunities given the power effective teacher leadership when implemented well.

Stakeholder Engagement Overview

Donna Johnson was introduced as the coordinator for all stakeholder engagement efforts of the Committee. Donna provided a brief overview of planned outreach activities and strategies that had been developed in consultation with individual Committee members and critical education stakeholders including DSEA.

Donna highlighted the importance of gaining direct, meaningful feedback from a broad array of educators throughout the Committee process to ensure that any framework under discussion has been vetted by those closest to schools and classrooms. The goal would be to structure significant stakeholder outreach during key points in the Committee discussions to ensure it can iterate on draft proposals “in real time”.

Donna described a number of key events, including multiple rounds of Educator Work Groups, planned for September 30, October 1, November 3, and November 10, where educators from across the state would be invited to discuss draft proposals and help craft concrete recommendations for the Committee to consider as it develops its proposal. In addition, she planned to conduct two rounds of virtual town halls, the first planned for the week of September 21, followed by in-person town halls in every county during the last week of October. She also proposed additional town halls once a proposal had been developed to ensure the Committee could benefit from the reactions and feedback from educators not only during the discussions, but at the point of issuing a proposal.

The Committee were asked for thoughts and reactions. Members asked if there were plans to meet with additional stakeholder groups, including the Professional Standards Board and district office representatives, outside of the formal Committee efforts. Donna indicated that there would be and that those were already in the process of being initiated.

Public Comment Period

Dr. Kevin Carson, President of the Delaware Association of School Administrators

Dr. Carson again thanked the Committee for engaging in the important conversation about educator career pathways and compensation. He reiterated his hope that the Committee consider that the current definition of educator includes administrators and that they evaluate how this discussion impacts the members he represents.

Dr. Carson stated his disagreement with an earlier comment from the Committee discussion that there currently exists a “fully developed pathway to administration”, highlighting the retention challenges that exist at the Assistant Principal level where many educators are unprepared for the challenges they face when suddenly fulfilling substantial administrative duties.

Dr. Carson pointed to many of the examples of Teacher Leadership presented to the Committee, noting that the details of implementation – what Teacher Leadership means at the “student and building level” – should be vetted closely by the Committee to ensure we are not engineering fixes on the back-end by being too conceptual and abstract in the design of these roles.

Next Steps and Closing

Teri closed the discussion by calling on members to continue to reflect on the prompts presented during the discussion and indicated that the next meeting would continue the conversation on Teacher Leadership roles in detail.