

# **Committee to Advance Educator Compensation & Careers**

## **Meeting Minutes**

Meeting #4: September 9, 2014

5:00 – 7:00pm

Milford Public Library

Milford, 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
- Emily Silberstein – Partner, TNTP
- Stephanie Corona – Project Manager, TNTP

Others present:

- Mike Jackson (Office of the Controller General)
- Nicholas Johnson (OMB)
- Dana Diesel Wallace (Vision Network)
- Phyllis Kohel (Milford School District)
- Kevin Carson (DASA)
- Kim Siegel (Lieutenant Governor’s Office)

### **Welcome & Overview of the Agenda**

Committee Chair Teri Quinn Gray welcomed Committee members as she called the meeting to order at 5:00p.m. She highlighted the goals of the meeting and provided an overview of the agenda before asking Committee Director Ryan Fennerty to introduce the TNTP staff support team.

### **Introduction of The New Teacher Project staff support team**

Ryan introduced Emily Silberstein, a Partner at The New Teacher Project, who leads the Emerging Services team which specializes in supporting large districts and states in developing alternative compensation models and teacher leadership pathways.

He indicated that during the planning phases immediately following the passage of Senate Bill 254 the Governor's Office and Department of Education had identified the need for additional staff support to ensure the Committee could meet its objectives in the timeframe indicated by Senate Bill 254. As a result, an RFP was issued by the Department of Education and TNTP chosen as the vendor from among the bidders for its experience supporting neighboring systems through similar processes (e.g. Baltimore City Public Schools) and for being the most cost effective among the responses received.

Ryan explained that Emily and her team would provide the Committee with best practice research and examples from career ladder systems implemented across the nation; help facilitate Committee meetings and stakeholder engagement activities; assist in the development of Committee presentations and materials, and provide technical assistance in the form of financial modeling expertise to ensure the proposal issued by the Committee is grounded in a rigorous analysis of cost estimates.

Emily gave a brief overview of the work her team had engaged in across the country including Louisiana, Indiana, Houston, Lawrence, Shelby County, Denver, as well as Baltimore Public City Schools, where there is an on-going partnership with between the district and the union to introduce a new compensation model based on teacher leadership pathways.

### **Continued Discussion of the Career Ladder Framework**

The Committee revisited the prior conversations on the Career Ladder Framework to recap where the conversation had progressed and where the current thinking had landed. Emily provided a brief summary of her understanding of the discussions:

- The Committee had agreed to a broad structure of having distinct career phases aligned with critical professional milestones that come with title and meaningful compensation increases
- The Committee had proposed four career ladder designations: Provisional, Emerging, Professional, and Established Professional
- The Committee had discussed summative ratings of "Effective" as the bar for progressing from one designation to the next, with those not meeting that bar "gating" in their current

designation until they had achieved the summative rating of “Effective” on the prevailing educator evaluation system

- The Committee had discussed that state-funded Teacher Leadership roles be first accessible in the Professional designation, with Senior Teacher Leadership roles accessible once the Established designation is reached
- The Committee had been unable to resolve whether Provisional educators should be limited from taking on locally-funded leadership positions (Extra Pay for Extra Responsibility) and resolved to take this question to educators for their input
- The Committee had agreed to take the current career ladder structure to educators for their input before it as a basis for future discussions around compensation

The Committee briefly discussed the summary and revisited a few clarifying questions before agreeing to take the current structure to educators for input and to turn its focus to Teacher Leadership roles.

### **Discussion of Teacher Leadership roles**

The Committee discussed a series of guiding principles in helping frame the discussion around Teacher Leadership roles. Emily spoke to the importance that the roles be widely regarded as “meaningful”, explaining that a number of teacher leadership initiatives have not met expectations because the way they were ultimately structured, compensated, and implemented left educators feeling the roles had little value and did not correlate with the true “leaders” in the building.

The Committee also discussed the importance that the roles be both flexible and equitable. The Committee spoke to the need for a threshold level of consistency across the state so that the roles come with comparable levels of responsibility and selectivity. This had to be balanced with flexibility for districts and schools to tailor the roles to meet their local needs.

Committee members also spoke to the need for these roles to be reasonably attainable by a significant portion of our educators who have demonstrated an ability and willingness to take on these roles, or risk diluting the attractiveness of the teacher leadership pathway. Some Committee members pointed to the

The Committee then revisited the Teacher Leadership handout distributed at the last discussion and reviewed the updated portion regarding Senior Teacher Leader roles.

Emily opened the group discussion of the sections of the proposal handout, with three framing questions to guide a group discussion of the handout:

- Minimum Responsibilities: what does “responsibility for student academic growth” mean to you? Should it be direct responsibility?
- Minimum Eligibility: what are the advantages and disadvantages of requiring educators to (1) serve a Teacher Leader term in a high-need school and (2) earn a summative of Highly Effective

in the most recent educator evaluation cycle in a high-need school in order to become a Senior Teacher Leader?

- Selection Process: what are the advantages and disadvantages of a state-level selection process for Senior Teacher Leaders? Which steps should the state-level selection process include (e.g., application, performance tasks, interview, etc.)?

Committee members discussed the new wording in the Teacher Leader handout which proposed that “educators must maintain significant [direct] responsibility for student academic growth” as part of their terms of service as a Teacher Leader. Some Committee members questioned whether the original language which stated that they must “maintain a meaningful connection to student learning” was more appropriate, given it provided more flexibility to districts in cases where an educator is a non-traditional academic role, such as a guidance counselor, where direct connection to academic growth would be more difficult to establish. A number of Committee members agreed that the original language was more flexible, but noted that the Committee should be clear that the purpose of these roles in most cases is to preserve a deep connection with students so that teacher leaders are regarded first and foremost as teachers and not pseudo administrators. Committee members offered an operating principle that roles require a “foot in the classroom, and a connection to teaching” whenever possible.

Committee members also discussed the difficulty in drawing a clear line between administration and teacher leadership, with others noting that as the profession evolves over time and schools and classrooms change, those distinctions may continue to evolve. The Committee agreed that districts would be best placed to refine those roles for their needs over time, and that the Committee should be careful to not be overly proscriptive in defining roles that may become less relevant in the future.

The Committee discussed how schools and districts might evaluate the success of their Teacher Leaders, noting that assessing the effect of these roles on the practice of their peers and the success of their students would be instrumental in not only improving selection processes but how the roles can contribute to schools. A number of Committee members noted the inherent challenges in administering an evaluation of Teacher Leaders in schools, given the already significant burdens placed on administrators to evaluate school-level educators, and suggested district flexibility in determining an initial approach that could be later broadened as best practices emerge.

Some Committee members raised concerns about the eligibility requirement for Teacher Leaders, noting that the Highly Effective requirement for eligibility potentially excluded a large pool of qualified teachers and that the focus should be broadening the available candidates from which districts might select their Teacher Leaders. Others noted that the Teacher Leadership principles discussed earlier had highlighted the aspiration that the roles be meaningful and regarded as such by teachers, and thus lowering the bar for eligibility might create challenges if Teacher Leaders are now asked to lead their peers but are not chosen from a more selective group of candidates. Others questioned whether the distinction between Highly Effective and Effective would be regarded by teachers as a meaningful indicator of their potential to lead others, and whether a selection process reflecting school-level educator input might be more effective. The Committee recognized that it would need to revisit this issue in future discussions given the range of opinions expressed in recent meetings on the issue.

Committee members also discussed the Senior Teacher Leader roles in the context of service requirements in designated high need schools. Some Committee members spoke to the significant and perennial challenges our highest need schools face, noting that a core goal of this Committee should be to rethink the incentives implied in our compensation practices to do much more to encourage talented educators to consider devoting a portion of their careers to serving in these settings. Some noted that by structuring a career pathway whose highest levels of responsibility are accessible to all, but only once they have experienced the unique challenge of serving in a high need school at some point in their career, where the majority of the students come from communities and/or environments of poverty, could be an incredible opportunity to tackle an intractable challenge while better rewarding and recognizing those educators who do so. Some Committee members sought to clarify what the operating principle should be in tackling the challenges facing our high need schools, asking whether the focus should be introducing financial incentives to attract and retain teachers or instead reducing burdens (e.g. higher stresses associated with teaching in these environment). Others discussed the logistical implications of the requirement that Senior Teacher Leader have served in a high need school, noting that the distribution of high need schools might require educators to leave their home district or school in order to fulfill the requirement and thus make the opportunity limited to only a tiny portion of a much larger highly qualified population. The Committee agreed that Committee staff should examine the current distribution of high need schools across Delaware's school districts and the Committee should consider that context in its next discussion in order to revisit whether to adjust this requirement in the proposal to broaden accessibility.

The Committee briefly discussed the proposal that Senior Teacher Leaders be selected from a pool of candidates who have successfully completed a state-level selection process to ensure these individuals, representing a small sub-set of the educator population, meet a common bar for excellence. Many Committee members agreed with the idea, noting that they had questions about how to implement this well, while others noted that districts should retain significant control over selection. Committee members clarified that districts would develop their own selection processes to hire from the pool of eligible candidates who had passed the state-level process, but that the state-level process would be an initial step to ensure a commensurate rigor bar in selection state-wide (as in the case of Teacher of the Year selection, currently).

### **Public Comment Period**

Dr. Kevin Carson, Executive Director, Delaware Association of School Administrators (DASA)

Dr. Carson began by reiterating that he hopes the Committee's references to "educators" in its discussions also include administrators. He noted that the requirement that a teacher retain a "foot in the classroom" while serving as teacher leader has implications for their ability to sustain a highly effective rating given that likely raises the bar for them to sustain that level of performance in the classroom.

He expressed his support for the idea that teacher leaders play a role in supporting evaluation processes, noting that expanding the number of individuals assisting principals in administering evaluations is a significant need given the current demands placed on them. He noted that there is not an appropriate level of resource allocation currently to support the huge administrative burden associated with educator evaluations.

Dr. Carson asked a few clarifying questions pertaining to Senior Teacher Leader roles and the requirement that they serve one full three-year term as a Teacher Leader in a high-need school in order to be eligible.

With regard to implementation, Dr. Carson noted that Teacher Leadership roles imply a significant budget obligation when reduced sections and release time are considered, and urged the Committee to vet this impact vigorously.

### **Next Steps and Closing**

Donna Johnson then provided an update on upcoming CAECC stakeholder engagement efforts. She indicated that in September there would be a Virtual Town Hall session, where Committee staff will share information about the background and process that led to this work, provide an overview and orientation to Senate Bill 254, introduce the current thinking of the Committee, and preview planned engagement efforts in the future. Donna indicated that the Virtual Town Hall session will be open to all educators and community members across the state.

Donna also discussed upcoming plans for the first round of Educator Working Groups, where key stakeholders (e.g., district leadership, school leaders, classroom teachers, and specialists) would have the opportunity to inform the system's design by reviewing draft proposals and sharing their perspectives through a series of conversations facilitated by Committee staff. All educators across the state are welcome to attend these sessions and will be encouraged to attend both rounds so that the Committee can continue working on its proposals with the feedback from educators spanning multiple grade-levels, subject areas, and years of experience in mind.

Teri Quinn Gray closed the discussion, asking Committee staff to analyze the distribution of high need schools using current definitions used by the Department of Education and present that context to the Committee at its next discussion. She noted that the next CAECC meeting would take place in the Bear Library on September 23<sup>rd</sup> from 5:00pm – 7:00pm.