

## Delaware Committee to Advance Educator Compensation and Careers: Frequently Asked Questions

### Why do we need to change our current educator compensation approach?

- Delaware's current "steps and lanes" compensation system ties educator compensation exclusively to years of experience and attainment of academic credits and degrees with no other state-level opportunities to earn additional compensation or advance in their career while staying in the classroom. Educators earn additional pay in small, incremental steps and often have few opportunities to take on additional responsibility or lead their peers unless they pursue administrative positions.
- Many of our very best and most experienced educators are forced to leave the classroom if they want to advance their career, earn more money, and participate in school-wide decision-making. At the same time, the state's salaries for our newest educators are not on par with surrounding states. About forty percent of our educators leave within the first five years, at least in part due to low early career salaries.
- Any proposal by the Committee will involve more state funding for educator salaries to better recognize the invaluable role they play in the lives of our children. Current educators will have the option of remaining in the current system or switching to the new system designed by the Committee.

### What are the goals of the new educator career ladder?

- Educators deserve the opportunity to earn more pay and responsibility based on the leadership they contribute to their schools and the model they set in their classrooms, where students need them the most.
- Our goal is to create a career ladder that accomplishes the following goals:
  - **Recognize educators as valued professionals by providing them with meaningful opportunities to advance in their careers** by creating opportunities for teachers to serve in leadership roles where they have increased influence and responsibility – and earn additional compensation without having to leave the classroom.
  - **Attract and retain the next generation of great educators** by raising starting salaries to better compete with neighboring states and keep more of our great teachers. In addition, the new system will allow educators to advance to the highest ends of the pay scale much sooner to help keep more of our best teachers in the profession.
  - **Attract great educators to serve in high-need schools** by ensuring enough leadership positions exist at high-need schools to give them more access to outstanding educators to support our students most in need.
- Creating more leadership opportunities for great teachers will help ensure that our schools will have outstanding teachers and leaders for years to come. That's why we need to do everything we can to identify and develop the next generation of leaders and the great teachers already working in our classrooms.

### Why are we focusing on creating leadership opportunities?

- Great educators shouldn't have to choose between working with students in the classroom – or in their core role – and advancing their careers through administrative positions. Teacher-leader roles will provide all our educators with the opportunity to take on more leadership responsibilities without leaving the classroom.
- Teaching is a collaborative profession, and teachers are often the most valuable sources of support, development, and mentorship for one another. Leadership positions will let great teachers put their hard-earned expertise to good use by helping their colleagues improve.
- We are committed to providing teachers with opportunities that recognize and value just how important they are to our students' success. By giving teachers the recognition and career opportunities they deserve, we will support them in building a meaningful career in Delaware's schools.

### Who is included in this new career ladder?

- We are focused on developing a new career ladder for all classroom teachers, specialists, counselors, and nurses who are compensated through Regulation 1305 – roughly 10,000 educators across the state.
- All current educators will continue to be compensated through the current system unless they choose to come into the new system. The system will be mandatory *only* for educators newly hired after the system goes into full effect – no earlier than the fall of 2016.

### Will existing educators be able to participate in the new career ladder structure?

- Absolutely. Existing educators will NOT be required to participate in the new educator compensation system, although some may choose to do so through an opt-in process.
- The Committee is currently working on developing the opt-in process and timeline for current educators.

### **Will this career ladder design affect the state or local portion of educators' compensation?**

- On average, school districts provide about 30% of educator salaries and the details of the local pay scale are negotiated with the local education associations. This design process will change only the state-level portion of educators' compensation.
- School districts will not be required to adjust or renegotiate their local compensation structure based on the changes to the state system, but may choose to do so. We hope that our district leaders and our educators will see the new system as a substantial improvement, and will, over time, shift the local compensation structures to align with it for new educators and for current educators who choose the new system.

### **Will we lose additional pay for advanced degrees (e.g., Master's and PhD degrees)? If so, what happens to educators currently enrolled in higher degree programs?**

- Any compensation system should value continued education and professional development with the goal of sharpening our educators' instructional skills.
- Educators who use advanced degrees to better support their students and to better assist their fellow educators will increase their opportunities to earn teacher leadership roles that pay more.
- The new system views advanced degrees as a means to an end. The system will encourage educators to take advantage of advanced degrees when it will contribute to the success of their peers and their students. Extra salary will be based upon the ultimate impact educators have in their schools.
- We recognize that the system should account for the mandates for advanced degrees in certain specialty fields, such as speech pathology. The Committee will determine how the pay scale should be modified to recognize the commitment by educators who pursue specialized education in these areas.

### **What will be the responsibilities of Teacher Leaders and Senior Teacher Leaders?**

- According to Senate Bill 254, which laid out the parameters for the new compensation system to be formed by the Committee, all teacher leadership roles must:
  1. Contain meaningful leadership responsibilities in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and/or professional development.
  2. Maintain a meaningful connection to student learning in the classroom.
  3. Include significant responsibility for ensuring student growth.
- Teacher Leaders will increase the scope of their impact within their school building – working with a subset of teachers and/or students. On the other hand, Senior Teacher Leaders will do work at the school- and/or district-level, further increasing their scope of responsibilities.
- While the Teacher Leadership and Senior Teacher Leadership roles will need to involve broad parameters outlined by SB 254 and the Committee, there will also be flexibility for local school districts to define leadership in response to the unique needs of their schools. This flexibility will allow district leaders, school leaders, and teacher leaders to determine their priorities and areas of need, as well as how a teacher leader could be best positioned to contribute to the success of their colleagues and students in a specific district/school. Details of these leadership roles are currently being discussed with the Committee and educators across the state as a part of the design process.

### **How is the new system being developed?**

- In his last two State of the State addresses, Governor Markell set forth a vision for a compensation that better recognizes the contributions of educators in Delaware schools.
- The General Assembly passed Senate Bill 254, which established of the **Committee to Advance Educator Compensation and Careers (CAECC)** – a committee consisting of representatives from the Delaware State Educators Association (DSEA), the State Board of Education, district leadership, and the General Assembly.
- CAECC is charged with engaging the broader education community in order to develop the details of the new educator career ladder, which will be submitted to the Governor by November 15, 2014.

### **How can I follow the Committee's progress?**

- All Committee to Advance Educator Compensation and Careers (CAECC) meetings are public and open for public comment. All educators are welcome to attend these meetings and participate in public comment. Minutes are available and can be accessed [here](#).