

Committee to Advance Educator Compensation & Careers

Meeting Minutes

Meeting #10: November 7, 2014

11:00am – 1:00pm

12th Floor Conference Room
Governor's Office, Carvel State Office Building
820 North French Street
Wilmington, DE

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, Delaware Department of Education (DDOE)
- 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
- Meaghan Brennan – Director, Budget Development, Planning & Administration, Office of Management & Budget
- Mike Morton – Controller General, Office of the Controller General

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:

- Kevin Carson (DASA)
- Kim Siegel (Lt. Governor's Office)
- Elizabeth Lewis (Office of Management & Budget)
- Mamie Mannell (Rodel Foundation)

- Melissa Hopkins (Rodel Foundation)

Welcome & Overview of the Agenda

Committee Chair Teri Quinn Gray welcomed Committee members as she called the meeting to order at 11:00am. She explained that the goals and focus of the meeting would be to:

- Discuss a proposal for the extension of the CAECC process and the scope of work through November 15
- Review feedback from the November educator working group sessions
- Revisit Teacher Leader and Senior Teacher Leader roles by examining “model” roles and exemplars from other school systems nationally and reviewing working proposals developed by Committee staff regarding role allocations across schools and districts and in high need schools

Teri then turned the floor over to Lindsay O’Mara and Ryan Fennerty to outline the next steps in the Committee process.

Part I: Discuss key decision points for the proposal

Lindsay explained that a number of Committee members had expressed concerns that though significant progress had been made, there were a number of critical issues requiring more thoughtful exploration before members could agree to a package of recommendations that would appear in formal report by November 15. Other members had relayed concerns that the Committee should make every effort to fulfill its legislative charge to the extent possible by the November deadline, and proposed that an “interim” or “status report” be issued to explain the current state of Committee discussions. Lindsay indicated that the Governor had heard and understood both concerns, and agreed to extend the Committee process through January to provide additional time for the Committee to resolve outstanding debates and clarify how best to incorporate educator voices in the next phase of its work.

Ryan Fennerty indicated that Committee staff are working to develop a draft “Status Report” which will provide a summary of the current areas of consensus and outstanding questions in the core policy areas of the Career Pathway Framework, Teacher Leadership, Senior Teacher Leadership, and Implementation Considerations. The draft will be shared with the Committee before the next meeting for review and discussion before submitting it to the Governor.

Part II: Educator Working Group feedback

Donna Johnson, Executive Director of the State Board of Education, provided a summary of the educator feedback from the November educator working group sessions:

- Educators were more receptive to the alternative proposal, which reintroduced the separate pay schedules for Master’s degree and Bachelor degree educators after the eight year of teaching, but many were still hesitant about the proposed investment in teacher leadership roles without more details and specifics about the roles and responsibilities, how eligibility will be determined, and what the selection process will look like at the school-level.
- The selection of Teacher Leaders remained an area of concern; a number of educators spoke to a lack of transparency and perception of unfairness in how educators are selected for EPER positions and department chair roles. Though they understood the goal for teacher leadership was not “state-supported EPER”, they indicated that transparent, consistent state-wide processes that include educators in some form during the decision-making process would be beneficial.
- Educators felt that obtaining their Master’s degrees was often a far more valuable learning experience than any of the professional development they have received through their school district. The reasons cited were that district-led professional development is often “one-shot” and not sustained over a period of time, whereas a Master’s degree program offers a structured and sustained opportunity to reflect on one’s practice in the classroom and through hands-on/internship experience.
- Several educators questioned whether they should opt in if their salary is already above the Master’s degree earnings indicated (e.g. because they hold credits toward a second degree) and asked if they would have to take a cut in salary to access the state-supported teacher leadership roles.
- A number of current educators would like to see National Board Certification recognized and rewarded through salary stipends that the state had provided in the past.

Committee members discussed the broad themes and shared some of their impressions and takeaways from the town halls and working sessions they attended. The general consensus was that educators had been vocal in their concerns about the initial proposal, but had appreciated the Committee’s responsiveness to their feedback as the alternative had been proposed. Moreover, it was clear to a number of members that many current educators’ experiences with “Teacher Leadership” in so far as they have been conceived and implemented traditionally has been mixed at best, and that implementing a model Teacher Leader system that truly elevates the profession, retains great educators, and more broadly distributes leadership across schools would require significant cultural shifts. It was also proposed that the Committee clarify how educators could more directly shape a number of detailed policy questions best addressed by educators and district staff perhaps through an extended design phase once the fundamental structure of the system had been clarified by the Committee. Committee staff agreed to explore opportunities to do so and introduce those proposals in subsequent meetings.

Part III: Teacher Leadership roles – model examples

Emily Silberstein (TNTP), introduced a series of handouts to the Committee detailing “model” Teacher Leader roles pulled from a selection of districts around the country that had implemented Teacher Leader models. The Committee reviewed the handouts and discussed common themes in the areas of core roles and responsibilities.

Some Committee members noted that many of the roles were sufficiently flexible as to be highly adaptable for the role of a specialist or non-traditional classroom educator. Committee members asked Emily to clarify how performance is typically evaluated in these roles to ensure the individual is performing adequately and asked how meaningful performance expectations were developed for the roles. Some Committee members expressed concerns that it did not seem that all roles could be performed easily during a typical school-day – especially in the case of many elementary school teachers – without additional resources to support release time or a rethinking of typical school schedules. Emily provided examples for how districts had tackled the challenge without significant additional financial burden by reworking class and school schedules but acknowledged that the larger the number of educators in a building accessing Teacher Leadership roles at one time, the greater the chance that release time from normal classroom schedules is required and the more resource intensive the effort becomes. Committee members acknowledged that this would be an on-going design consideration requiring customization based on role-specific and school-based considerations, noting that the potential cost implications for large-scale release time would need to be analyzed in detail if they become part of the Committee’s recommendations.

Part IV: Teacher Leadership – allocation considerations

The Committee reviewed a proposed set of guiding principles to help frame the conversation about how best to establish rules to allocate Teacher Leadership roles across schools and districts. The Committee revisited some of its earlier discussions regarding Teacher Leadership role allocations and noted that the Committee had voiced concerns that current definitions of “High Need School” used in developing the list of Talent Co-op schools did not create an appropriately broad footprint of schools across grade levels, school districts, and counties. As a result, there were concerns that Teacher Leadership might in practice be available only to educators who are willing to move to certain districts or to other grade levels where more roles might be available. Other Committee members had expressed concerns that some districts have large populations of high-need students that are dispersed between multiple schools, and as a result, may not receive as many Teacher Leadership roles as other districts with high-need populations concentrated in a handful of schools.

The Committee revisited the parameters of SB 254 which require that a higher proportion of roles be allocated to high need schools, and agreed that an appropriate definition of “high need school” should (1) target resources to a broader range of schools serving significant populations of highest need students; (2) strive for a fair distribution of high need schools across grade levels served and (3) ensure a fair distribution across counties. Ryan Fennerty presented a number of potential examples for how Teacher Leadership roles might be allocated based on a working definition of “high need school” and

“high need population”, but pointed to the unintended consequences of each as well as the implementation considerations involved in guaranteeing minimum numbers of roles per school versus allowing districts considerable flexibility in how to allocate roles among schools.

Some Committee members proposed that given the technical details involved in determining appropriate definitions of “high need school” and “high need population”, developing specific rules for role allocation, and analyzing the implementation considerations involved, a Technical Advisory Group comprised of appropriate district representatives should work closely with the Department of Education to issue recommendations to the CAECC during a clarifying phase of the policy development process. Other Committee members proposed that the CAECC issue guiding principles to frame the working groups approach to developing the allocation rules for the Committee’s consideration and that it retain the right to have final say on official policy recommendations.

Public Comment Period

Dr. Kevin Carson (President, DASA):

Dr. Carson thanked the Committee staff for releasing the first set of minutes on the website. He pointed to the Committee discussions about potential release time from classroom duties to accommodate the extra responsibilities of certain Teacher Leader roles, indicating that the costs of doing so are substantial and that he looked forward to discussion about how best to keep do so in a manner that is also revenue neutral. He expressed concerns that state funding might supplant local funds that are already supporting existing teacher leadership models, and recommended that the Committee build on what we already have in place in many districts. Dr. Carson also recommended that the Committee gather information about how Teacher Leader positions are currently used and structured in Delaware’s school districts today, and that it review that information and solicit the insights of HR directors.

Next Steps and Closing

Teri Quin Gray closed the discussion, noting that the Committee would reconvene in early December once Committee staff had clarified the next set of meeting dates.