

Committee to Advance Educator Compensation & Careers

Meeting Minutes

Meeting #7: October 20, 2014

5:00pm – 7:00pm

Bear Library
Conference Room 1A
101 Governor's Place
Bear, 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
- Alex Spurrier – Analyst, TNTP

Others present:

- Susan Mitchell (Christina EA)
- Donte Davis (organization not disclosed)
- Jennifer Twardowski (Christina EA)

- Jackie Kook (Christina EA)
- Elizabeth Lewis (Office of Management & Budget)
- Kim Siegel (Lt. Governor's Office)
- Mike Matthews (Red Clay EA)

Welcome & Overview of the Agenda

Committee Chair Teri Quinn Gray welcomed Committee members as she called the meeting to order at 5:10pm. She explained that the goals and focus of the meeting would be to:

- Review the costs of the current educator compensation system
- Revisit the career ladder approach we discussed last week
- Discuss a revised career ladder proposal and alternative options

Teri then turned the floor over to Emily Silberstein (TNTP) and CAECC Director, Ryan Fennerty, to walk the Committee through a proposal. Ryan framed the discussion by noting that prior discussions of a proposed alternative career ladder and teacher leader roles had been discussed in the abstract, and that the goal for today's discussion was to present examples for how to structure compensation to illustrate what those alternatives might look like in practice. The focus is to understand key cost drivers, the competitive context for compensation relative to neighboring districts, and assess alternative approaches the Committee believes are worth exploring.

Part I: Review the current and proposed system

The Committee reviewed a number of topics reviewed at the October 9th discussion, including a survey of the current compensation system in Delaware noting the key drivers of compensation over time, the maximum earnings achievable, and the distribution of educators at each point of the current career ladder. The Committee also reviewed the guiding principles proposed at the last meeting intended to frame discussions about how best to prioritize compensation investments in the alternative system including. The Committee revisited many of the debates from the last discussion about how debated how these principals and specific compensation priorities, including how high to set starting salaries, how quickly an educator's compensation should grow in the early stages of their career, the size of the supplements for Teacher Leader and Senior Teacher Leader roles, and the maximum salary available to educators who do not choose to pursue a teacher leadership.

Part II: Policy options & considerations

Ryan Fennerty introduced a series of compensation proposals based on the proposed career ladder framework. He presented a "Base Case" scenario in addition to two alternatives, described as "Option 1"

and “Option 2”. The Committee reviewed the specific salary levels proposed, the distribution of educators at each salary level, and the pros and cons associated with the initial proposal. The Committee reviewed the primary cost drivers of the career pathway, including salary levels at each band of the career pathway, increasing the starting salary, maximum earnings achieved in the Established Professional designation, supplement sizes for Teacher Leadership, number of Teacher Leadership and Senior Teacher Leadership roles, and the assumed voluntary teacher opt-in rate to the alternative system.

Committee staff introduced a proposal described as the “Base Case” scenario, and explained that it assumed 25% of all educators opted-in to the alternative career pathway at any given time would hold Teacher Leader or Senior Teacher Leader roles. They noted that the proposed career pathway assumed a simplified, uniform state share for all educators as they progress through the pathway, with increased earnings for the vast majority of educators in their first 8-10 years of teaching, and then higher earnings for those in Teacher Leader and Senior Teacher Leader roles than the state share offered to Master’s degree educators under the current system. The intention with the “base case” is to present an example of a professional career pathway with salary increases tied to movement through higher designations of the pathway and eventually into Teacher Leadership in contrast to the salary increases tied to individual years of experience and advanced degree level in Delaware’s current “Steps & Lanes” system. They noted that all scenarios assumed an annual increase to total state investment in educator salaries between \$10 - \$15MM above trend growth of the current system. They also noted that the assumed opt-in rate among current educators would be approximately 20%, skewed heavily toward junior educators with a Bachelor degree who would see the largest gains to their base salary by transitioning to the alternative pathway.

Committee members discussed the pros and cons of this proposal in detail. While pleased that entry-level salaries had been increased – and substantially for current educators with a Bachelor’s degree – a number of Committee members were concerned that the proposal would impact Delaware’s competitiveness after the first 8 years of teaching, where the salary level for a large number of educators would be lower than is currently achievable with a Master’s degree. While some accepted that the Bachelor degree educators with more than 8 years of experience would be significantly better off, concerns remained that Delaware would become less competitive relative to neighbors for more experienced educators with a Master’s degree. Committee members asked that the group look at Delaware’s salary competitiveness versus neighbors in detail during a future conversation to ensure members had full context for assessing future iterations of the proposal.

Other Committee members noted that the salaries for Senior Teacher Leader and Teacher Leaders seemed attractive relative to what most educators earn today, but noted that given both are structured as roles, with no guarantee that the role will be retained after three years, the earnings volatility for an educator could be significant and thus make the opportunity to progress to Teacher Leadership less attractive from a recruitment and retention standpoint. Others noted that there have been numerous attempts to get individuals with experience and high skill in industry into the classroom, and that since many of these individuals carry advanced degrees, the future system might have an even more difficult

time attracting them to the profession given the uncertainty involved in whether they might become a Teacher Leader and thus earn a competitive salary.

The Committee discussed areas for Committee staff to explore in developing alternative proposals for consideration. Some Committee members indicated that their primary concern was competitiveness of salaries for the vast majority of educators who do not seek or attain Teacher Leadership roles and suggested reducing the size of the leadership stipends and/or the number of roles and reallocating those investments to raise the Established Professional salary. Other Committee members suggested that they approved of the simplified salary structure tied to movement through the career pathway, but suggested reintroducing the distinction between Bachelor's degree and Master's degree pay at some point to reduce the size of the investment in raising Bachelor degree salaries which would allow for Teacher Leader roles while also maintaining a competitive salary for Master's degree holders. Some Committee members took issue with reintroducing the distinction between Bachelor and Master's degrees, noting that the Committee's charge is to create an alternative system that creates a professional career pathway that incentivizes teacher leadership and that the distinction in pay between Bachelor and Masters in the current system incentivizes the attainment of higher degrees above all other factors and would remain the primary incentive in the future system. Other Committee members expressed concerns about the projected costs, noting that the "Base Case" implies large new investments in educator salaries that may not be realistic given the current budget outlook.

Committee staff presented alternatives to the "Base Case" intended to illustrate cost drivers and help the Committee brainstorm and provide direction for future proposals. "Option 1" staggered the number of Teacher Leader roles available over time to reach a slightly lower target of 20%, or 1/5th of all educators opted-in to the alternative pathway holding a Teacher Leader role. "Option 2" modified the size of the increases to salaries in the first 8 years of teaching while holding the Teacher Leadership roles constant. In each case, total project costs were several million dollars lower than the "Base Case".

Committee staff asked the Committee to consider which approach they preferred in developing an alternative for discussion at the next meeting: reducing the size of the investment in Teacher Leader roles (by reducing the number of roles and/or the size of the supplement) or reducing the scope of the investment in early to mid-career salary increases. Some Committee members reiterated their primary concern that the alternative proposal not solve one problem (e.g. low-starting salaries) and create another (e.g. less competitive salaries for experienced educators not in Teacher Leader roles), and asked that the Committee prioritize reallocating investments from Teacher Leadership and/or starting salaries into ensuring a competitive salary for all educators with greater than 10 years of experience. A number of Committee members agreed that reducing the number of Teacher Leader roles and/or the size of the supplement would be preferable to reducing the size of the investment in raising starting salaries, and asked the Committee staff to come up with options for increasing the proposed salary for Established Professionals.

Committee staff noted that they would develop additional proposals for the Committee's review in its subsequent discussions and would bring additional context about the competitive landscape for educator salaries.

Public Comment Period

Mike Matthews (Red Clay EA):

Mike Matthews introduced himself as a 5th grade teacher and the President of the Red Clay Education Association representing 1200 teacher members. He thanked the Committee for the meeting and the opportunity to listen and comment. He noted that he had sent an email blast to his membership notifying them of the planned public town hall dates and CAECC meeting dates, noting that he had received about three dozen responses which is an unusually high amount of interest. He noted that in his discussions with members, veteran educators have concerns that national board certification has not been addressed in this Committee, noting that the State has devalued it by not continuing to compensate those who have attained it, despite educators considering it the gold standard. He recommended that the Committee incentivize more educators to pursue national board certification, especially since it costs teachers a considerable sum to achieve the credential, indicating it would be difficult to get his members behind any plan that did not address national board certification. He also noted the points made by Committee members during the discussion, noting that the current “Base Case” implies a devaluing of educators with more years of experience in the absence of their taking on Teacher Leadership, noting that this runs counter to efforts to elevate the profession. He also noted that he represents a large number of specialists, including psychologists, reading specialists, and nurses who do not fit the standard definition of an instructional teacher in the classroom, and encouraged the Committee to ensure that these Teacher Leadership opportunities be open and accessible to them as well. He closed by predicting that given the number of open questions and concerns he and his members share, that he would predict a “no” vote from his members if the proposal were to be put to a vote in its current form.

Jackie Kook (Christina EA):

Jackie Kook introduced herself as a 6-8th grade teacher and the Vice President of the Christina Education Association. She noted that the University of Delaware canceled their Master’s degree in Agriscience and as a result can only receive a Bachelor’s, and that as a result, Delaware was struggling to find agriscience teachers. She noted that in her school, Career / Technical educators are required to help run a student organization, which would put her at a disadvantage for the proposed Teacher Leader roles because her plate is already full. She noted that another major concern of hers in the stated proposal is that offering higher salaries to educators in their first eight years of experience but then “maxing out” at year 10 unless an educator seeks Teacher Leadership roles is poor timing, given that is when the average American is starting a family and/or buying a home. She also noted that the Established Professional salary was too low and needed to be elevated significantly from the current proposal. She also spoke to her discomfort with a proposal that does not distinguish pay for

those with advanced degrees from those who don't, noting that she had to taken on nearly \$33,000 in debt to receive her Masters and thus most teachers would no longer do the same without being reimbursed or compensated for it. She noted that while most educators do not teach for the pay, the reality is that many also have families and that the proposal does not offer enough to educators with more than eight years of experience to stay in the profession.

Next Steps and Closing

Teri Quin Gray closed the discussion, and asked that Committee staff develop additional proposals for the Committee's review in its subsequent discussions based on the feedback provided during today's discussion. Teri also asked that Committee staff work to develop additional context about the competitive landscape for educator salaries to help guide discussions at the next CAECC meeting scheduled for October 30th in Dover.