

Committee to Advance Educator Compensation & Careers

Meeting Minutes

Meeting #8: October 30, 2014

5:00pm – 7:00pm

2nd Floor Cabinet Room

Townsend Building

Dover, 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
- Brian Pettyjohn – Senator, District 19
- 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:

- Dr. Kevin Carson (DASA)
- Elizabeth Lewis (Office of Management & Budget)
- Kim Siegel (Lt. Governor’s Office)

Welcome & Overview of the Agenda

Committee Chair Teri Quinn Gray welcomed Committee members and called the meeting to order at 5:00pm. She turned the floor over to Lindsay O'Mara and Ryan Fennerty to outline the agenda for the evening and outline the process for the Committee now through November.

Lindsay explained that the focus of the discussion this evening would be to:

- Clarify the remaining topics for discussion and anticipated timeline of meetings through November 15th
- Review and recap the feedback received during the five public town halls held this week in Sussex, Kent and New Castle County
- Review an alternative to the Base Case proposal discussed at the October 20th CAECC meeting and presented during the Town Halls

Part I: Recap of work to-date and path forward

CAECC Director Ryan Fennerty provided a brief overview of the meetings and topic areas covered to-date by the Committee, noting policy areas that had not yet been examined in detail and those that the Committee needed to revisit to resolve outstanding questions. Lindsay O'Mara outlined an anticipated timeframe for resolving outstanding policy design questions through end of November:

- 11/3: revisit teacher leadership roles, in order to clarify eligibility requirements, allocation rules, and definitions (e.g. "high-need schools")
- 11/7: Revisit salaries & supplements, clarifying opt-in scenarios and reviewing an implementation roadmap
- 11/12: Review draft recommendations while clarifying areas for continued discussion and the appropriate processes needed to have those conversations
- 11/18: Review recommendations and next steps

A number of Committee members noted that while the group had clarified a number of high-level parameters that could inform its recommendations, they felt that there was a considerable layer of detail yet to be resolved that would be difficult to achieve by the November 15 timeframe outlined in Senate Bill 254. Other Committee members expressed their concerns that this effort presented an important opportunity to do something positive for the profession and that given the vocal reaction from a large number of educators during the town halls, the Committee should consider extending its timeframe for issuing recommendations to the Governor. Some Committee members noted that the CAECC process had required engaging with substantial scope of policy questions within a narrow timeline and the public perception that this felt "rushed" would present a challenge for successful implementation.

Lindsay acknowledged those concerns, and clarified that the Committee’s mandate was never intended to include clarifying the full scope of details needed for implementation (many of which would be better resolved by educators and district-level staff), and that the goal of the Committee through end of November is to issue recommendations clarifying the next layer of detail required for drafting implementing legislation while also recommending processes essential for clarifying those details required for state-wide implementation after at least a year long planning process.

Emily Silberstein (TNTP) was asked to provide an overview for how other large districts and states had structured their career pathway design processes to help place the current CAECC process in a broader context. Emily noted that other state-level efforts in Louisiana and Florida had been initiated through framing legislation which outlined parameters and charged districts with clarifying details by a given deadline. Rather than introduce a Committee like the CAECC, those states had issued legislation similar to Senate Bill 254 but instead charged districts with forming their plans. Emily noted given the unique educator funding system in Delaware (where the state share represents the majority of an educator’s salary) that a more comparable process to Delaware is the Baltimore City Public School effort in collaboration with the local education association to transition from Steps & Lanes to a career pathway model. She noted that the district and union first collaborated to develop a career pathway, and later formed a joint oversight committee, similar to the CAECC, which includes district staff and union leadership to continue to develop details required for implementation. In addition, they created a governing panel of educators that spent a year developing the roles and responsibilities and selection processes required for movement through the career pathway.

In response, a few Committee members suggested that the CAECC adopt a similar approach, issuing its initial recommendations to the Governor but also recommending that it continue to meet while working with a sub-committee of educators to clarify outstanding issues requiring more educator input.

Part II: Town Hall meeting feedback

Donna Johnson, Executive Director of the State Board of Education, presented key takeaways and themes to the Committee from the five public town halls held on October 27, 28 and 29th in Sussex, Kent and New Castle County. She noted that the “Base Case” proposal from the prior meeting had been presented by Ryan Fennerty and Lindsay O’Mara and at the public town halls.

Key comments and themes from the attendees were summarized as follows:

- The proposal reduces primary incentives for educators to pursue higher education and the concerning message that implies
- The proposed salary level for established professionals is less competitive compared to our neighbors for experienced educators with advanced degrees, and undervalues their contribution

- The current magnitude of Teacher Leadership stipends introduces volatility and instability in educator earnings
- The benefit from raising salaries for BA degree holders and those in their first 8 years of teaching is undercut by the less competitive base salaries later in a career where Masters degrees are more common
- A number of current educators would like to see National Board Certification recognized and rewarded
- Strong desire for more clarity about the details of Teacher Leader and Senior Teacher Leader roles, specifically: core responsibilities, selection process, the number of roles, terms, oversight, etc.
- Concerns about how educators balance core classroom duties while taking on additional responsibilities, and a desire of educators to receive recognition and compensation for the work they are doing with their own students during school hours
- Specialists would like additional information about how this system will affect them given that many of them serve in unique roles and serve multiple buildings
- Teacher Leadership roles may introduce an element of competition in schools that is not conducive to improving outcomes for students
- Concerns regarding the pace of the discussions and a desire for more direct educator input in developing the details of the new system

Committee members who attended the public town halls shared some of their own reactions to the town hall discussions. A number of Committee members pointed to some of the Committee's own concerns raised during the October 20th meeting, specifically the competitiveness of experienced educator salaries who do not attain Teacher Leadership and the volatility of earnings for those who do and do not keep the role after three years. Other members noted that the vast majority of participants in the public town halls were more experienced educators with advanced degrees, so the reaction to a proposal that invests primarily in raising early to mid-career salaries and incentivizes Teacher Leadership over the attainment of advanced degrees no doubt represents a significant shift for current educators. A number of members agreed that there was a clear need for more clarity regarding Teacher Leadership roles – specifically, roles and responsibilities and the selection processes – because many educators were assessing these opportunity through the lens of EPER and department chair roles for which there seemed to be considerable frustration. Multiple Committee members noted the strong reaction to introducing a uniform salary schedule tied to each designation in the pathway which removed the distinction in pay between those with a Bachelors and those with a Masters, noting that many of the educators at the town halls regarded their Master's degrees as critical to their development and felt that by removing the incentive to pursue advanced degrees the proposal devalued the importance of continual professional development for the next generation of educators.

Part III: Alternative Scenario Overview

Ryan Fennerty introduced a revised proposal to the “Base Case” presented at the October 20th discussion intended to address the concerns raised by Committee members and by educators and members of the public during the town hall discussions. The focus of this second proposal was to address the competitiveness of salaries for experienced educators not in Teacher Leader roles while also retaining a meaningful number of Teacher Leader roles.

Ryan noted that increasing the Established Professional salary level to the current Master’s degree salary level would be cost-prohibitive for the state given it would in effect provide a substantial raise to all Bachelor Degree educators and incentivize a large number to opt-in immediately and at a rate the state could not likely sustain given budget constraints. He suggested an alternative approach that would reintroduce some elements of the current system while preserving investments in raising starting salaries and introducing state-funded Teacher Leadership roles.

He summarized the changes versus the “Base Case” as follows:

- Reintroduced a salary distinction between Bachelors and Masters degrees after the 8th year of teaching
- Introduced additional salary “steps” in the Established Professional designation, intended to mirror the current Master’s degree salary trajectory through Step 16
- Reduced the target number of Senior Teacher Leader and Teacher Leader roles relative to the opted-in population to 17% from the 25% proposed in the Base Case
- Reduced the annual Teacher Leader stipend to \$5,000 versus the \$7,000 in the prior proposal and reduced the Senior Teacher Leader stipend to \$17,000 versus the \$20,000 initially proposed

In response to the request from the October 20th meeting that Committee staff analyze the competitive context for Delaware salaries versus neighboring districts, Ryan Fennerty introduced a handout summarizing average Delaware salaries for educators with a Master’s degree at year 5, 10, 15, and 20 years of experience versus a selection of neighboring districts in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland on a nominal and cost-of-living-adjusted basis. The Committee noted that Delaware’s current salaries for Master’s degree holders with 10, 15 and 20 years of experience are broadly commensurate with neighbors and thus the Base Case proposal would ensure that only 25% of educators who held Teacher Leader roles would be compensated more competitively than Delaware’s peer group.

Committee staff noted that further examination of Delaware’s educator data indicated that the majority of educators with 20 years or more experience have advanced degrees and thus while a large number of educators leave the profession in their first 10 years due to a number of factors, those who persist often have advanced degrees within a competitive context that cannot be ignored. Committee members acknowledged that the competitive dynamic would have to be addressed and that the alternative proposal presented a potential path forward.

Some Committee members voiced their support for moving forward with the alternative to the base case, but noted their discomfort with reintroducing the distinction in pay between Bachelor and Master’s degrees, expressing their support for educators pursuing more education but noting that research does not support the credential as a critical success factor for children. Others asked how to

support continuous development in the absence of salary incentives for pursuing the Master's degree. Committee members noted that the primary assumption behind incentives tied to gaining knowledge and skills through advanced degrees is that they are effective in helping children learn, and thus the Committee should assess how a state-level compensation system could more flexibly align pay with the pursuit of skills and knowledge that matter rather than institutionalizing pay for credentials that may or may not be effective or may become less relevant over time. Some Committee members pointed out that this was perhaps a broader conversation, which might include incentives for National Board Certification and other credentials.

Public Comment Period

Kevin Carson (DASA):

Dr. Carson asked that the outstanding minutes be updated and posted to the website. He recommended that the Committee survey districts to better understand their current teacher leadership positions. Dr. Carson also asked that the electronic library referenced in prior meetings that Committee members had used as a resource for research on Teacher Leadership be added to the public website. He also recommended that the Committee ensure that it plans for the loss of sections associated with implementing Teacher Leadership and ensure that those costs be included in budget calculations. He noted that many vocational / technical teachers will need to be accounted for given many are paid according to the Master's degree lane despite having Bachelor degrees.

Next Steps and Closing

Teri Quin Gray closed the discussion, asking Committee members to reflect on whether the alternative proposal is consistent with its proposed design principles, especially with regard to whether the proposed career pathway demonstrates a commitment to excellence and is impactful for children. She noted that the Committee would next meet on November 3rd in Dover.