

# MOVING EDUCATION FORWARD: **BOLD REFORMS**



an NEA affiliate

**MOVING EDUCATION FORWARD**

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## **REFORM #2**

### *Institute performance pay to recognize what matters when it comes to educator excellence*

Educators are a fundamental part of our schools – and the goal is to attract and retain high-quality educators. We need to recognize and reward excellence and innovation in teaching and provide a pathway to help all educators succeed. The idea behind this proposal is to reform teacher pay systems to promote improved teaching performance in the areas that matter most.

#### ***What are we proposing?***

WEAC acknowledges the current pay schedules are outdated as they base pay only on credits and years of teaching. The system was created this way to avoid discrimination; however, it should be modernized with a new system that links pay to the areas proven to impact and improve student learning and teaching performance. This should include pay for hard-to-serve schools and hard-to-fill positions like bilingual teachers, and leadership positions such as coaching peers in effective teaching strategies, teacher-to-teacher mentoring and rewarding those teachers who challenge themselves to attain National Board Certification status. The essence of our proposed pay system is that it should pay more for the areas we know will impact and improve teaching performance.

#### ***Highlights related to this proposal:***

- WEAC's proposal shapes a new pathway to transition educators to a modern-day pay model that acknowledges their professional residency status and graduates them through a career ladder that acknowledges different levels of proficiency in the profession (initial educator status, professional and master educator).
- The system acknowledges that experience and education matter – but that we should also establish specific market incentives to encourage veteran educators to fill hard-to-serve schools and hard-to-fill positions like bilingual teachers. We also need to recognize and reward innovation and reward for specific teacher leadership positions like peer coaching, mentoring, curriculum development and research coordination.
- If we want to raise the standards of teaching and demand more from teachers, we need to be innovative in how we construct a pay system and be willing to invest more.
- The essence of our proposed pay system is that it should pay more for the areas we know will impact student learning and improve teaching performance.

#### ***Why is this reform necessary?***

The current teacher pay system (e.g. the single salary schedule), was created to address discriminatory pay practices and other abuses associated with discretionary systems. The single salary schedule addressed the problem by rationalizing the pay system and eliminating any discretionary pay practices. Under the current system administrators are primarily responsible for goals, objectives and school success, and teachers are responsible mainly for delivering a basic skills-focused, standardized curriculum. This system requires teachers to obtain a beginning set of skills through college preparation programs, and then are assessed in the process of licensure. Once in the system, teachers are paid more for each year of experience along with additional pay for earning college credits (regardless of whether those credits relate to teaching practice or content area).

WEAC believes that the single salary schedule no longer adequately serves the interests of students and teachers. In today's environment, it's clear that schools can no longer rely on administrators alone to establish the goals, objectives and strategies needed to improve student success. The fact is, that for students to succeed, teachers need to assume a larger role in creating and carrying out school improvement strategies that lead to positive student outcomes. Our teacher pay systems should reflect this new reality. As such, WEAC supports replacing the single salary schedule with career path alternatives that strive to achieve four main objectives, all structured to improve student performance:

- To attract highly talented people into the profession of teaching
- To retain talented educators
- To improve the teaching skills and knowledge of the state's teachers
- To add to the collective body of knowledge about effective teaching practices

## How it could work...

### Using pay systems to promote improved teaching performance

The state, through the Department of Public Instruction, would require every district to establish a plan to transition current pay schedules to a new pay system consistent with broad parameters outlined by the state. The new local pay systems would be locally bargained by a date certain in a manner consistent with existing collective bargaining laws. Districts and local associations would be required to address the following in their pay transition plans:

- a. Establish a career ladder with rungs for initial, professional and master educators, consistent with state licensing (PI 34) parameters
- b. Provide pay advancement based on specific professional growth and learning tied to classroom objectives and school mission. A minimum number of professional development units would be required every five years for a teacher to achieve, and then maintain, the highest salary within each of the career ladder categories (initial, professional and master educator levels)
- c. Establish a professional residency program (like a medical internship)
- d. Establish a significantly elevated entry-level salary for teachers that successfully complete a residency program
- e. Establish specific market incentives that encourage veteran educators to teach in hard-to-serve schools and hard-to-fill positions (as determined locally)
- f. Create action research systems designed to enhance the collective body of knowledge about effective teaching practices
- g. Identify and rewards specific teacher leadership positions (peer coaching, mentoring, curriculum development and research coordination)
- h. Establish how the results of formative evaluation systems could be used to inform professional growth strategies that affect compensation, promotion or advancement decisions

NOTE: While each locally negotiated system will be consistent with the state-established standards, each will be unique in design.

