

MOVING EDUCATION FORWARD: **BOLD REFORMS**



an NEA affiliate

MOVING EDUCATION FORWARD

weac.org

REFORM #1

Create a statewide educator evaluation system

Beyond involved parents, high-quality educators have the greatest impact on student success. Our goal is to have the highest-quality teachers at the front of every classroom across the state. As a union of 98,000 educators, WEAC has a responsibility to ensure the quality of the profession. Right now, Wisconsin doesn't have a statewide educator evaluation model and what districts do is inconsistent. It is critical for us to work together with State Superintendent Tony Evers and education stakeholders to quickly establish a valid and consistent educator evaluation system.

What are we proposing?

WEAC is calling for the creation of a statewide educator evaluation system with rigorous standards focused on what educators do.

The system allows for test scores to be used, in conjunction with other measures that demonstrate teacher performance, to inform decisions and strategies that lead to improved teaching practices.

There is also a component of peer review, a process often used in many private-sector performance evaluation models, in which a team of master educators are involved with administrators in conducting evaluations.

The evaluation system would be developed statewide and would involve key stakeholders including the UW Value-Added Research Center.

With a statewide evaluation standard in place, the details to implement evaluations are carried out and negotiated at the local level. Administrators retain authority to make final employment decisions.

Highlights related to this proposal:

- The union is accepting responsibility not just for representing the rights of our members, but also for improving the quality of the profession.
- The system includes a component of peer review. Administrators will retain authority to make the final employment decision.

- WEAC remains committed to partnering with State Superintendent Tony Evers to create a state standard, and is stepping up with bold ideas intended to accelerate discussions. Specifically:

- o We're acknowledging student test scores can be used for improvement strategies when used in conjunction with other measures.
- o With a statewide evaluation standard in place, the details to implement can and should be negotiated locally.
- o Evaluations should aim to improve instruction and support improved student learning.
- o Standards to evaluate educators should be tough – and they should focus on what educators do.

Why is this reform necessary?

Effective teaching is a very challenging job. Expectations for teachers continue to increase and today's teacher is required to have more knowledge than her/his predecessors about subject matter and the skills necessary to teach effectively. This requires knowledge of child development, learning styles and different methods of teaching to meet the needs of all students in our increasingly diverse state. Our teacher evaluation system needs to be aligned with what we know are the characteristics of effective teaching.

It is impossible for a building-level administrator or principal to be an expert in all subject areas and at all age levels. Yet, that is what our antiquated evaluation system has required administrators to do. This has led to evaluation processes that undermine efforts to maintain the very best teaching corps in our state. It is time for a new system that includes an element whereby teachers can evaluate their peers using a statewide evaluation process that is both rigorous and fair to those involved. With this approach, school administrators will still be involved, but teacher peers will be at the forefront of evaluating as they are the experts in their various subjects. They also know how students learn and how to teach effectively.

How it could work...

Improving teacher evaluation through peer assistance and review

All new teachers are reviewed annually for three years in the peer assistance and review system. The new teachers work with peer mentors who provide support through such activities as:

- Developing growth plans based on both a teacher's strengths and weaknesses
- Observing lessons and providing feedback in post-observation conferences
- Co-planning and modeling lessons
- Providing resources and materials
- Arranging visits to other classrooms to demonstrate new practices

Peer Assistance Review Panels have five to 11 members (depending on the size of the district) and include teachers and administrators. Since classroom teachers are the experts on quality teaching and subject matter, they have a majority on a Peer Assistance Review Panel selected through negotiated processes that adhere to state standards. The panel evaluates performance in the following areas:

- Planning and preparing for student learning
- Creating a quality learning environment
- Effective teaching
- Professional responsibility

Utilizing the expertise of the UW Value-Added Research Center, the evaluation system would include the review of formative, benchmark and summative student assessment data to inform evaluation decisions and to develop corrective strategies for struggling teachers (e.g. targeted professional development).

Teachers who do not demonstrate effectiveness to the panels after three years are exited out of the profession and offered career transition programs and services through locally negotiated agreements.

All veteran teachers (four years or more of experience) are evaluated every three years. The teachers are required to video record one class and submit a written commentary to their principal that describes what they were teaching, analyzes the classroom experiences and interactions, and reflects on the teaching effectiveness. The building principal is also required to do a series of classroom walk-through observations during the evaluation year. If a teacher's performance is deemed unsatisfactory, they go through this process a second year and are provided with a targeted professional development plan focused on the area(s) where improved performance is necessary. If the principal deems them unsatisfactory a second time, they may re-enter the Peer Assistance and Review program for three years or move into a negotiated career transition program.

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.

