

2012 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: CREATING A PROFESSIONAL CAREER CONTINUUM WITH COMPETITIVE COMPENSATION FOR TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS



About 40 people attended the Roundtable Discussion on “Creating a Professional Career Continuum with Competitive Compensation Teachers and Principals” as part of the National Blue Ribbon Schools 2012 Ceremony. Lisa Vazquez, an Information Resource Specialist with the U.S. Department of Education, facilitated the discussion. Participants were asked to discuss issues related to a professional career continuum and then write responses in terms of “what’s working now,” steps USDE could take, and steps that participants could take to advance education professionalism and offer career paths to administrators and distinguished teachers. Following table discussions, Lisa Vazquez asked a representative from each table to distill ideas raised.

Key themes that emerged within participants’ written responses to “what’s working” include mentoring, teacher evaluation, school culture, and professional development. Discussion about what the U.S. Department of Education can do focused on teacher preparation and professionalism, research, high school graduation, and public relations, while discussion of what teachers, principals, and schools can do now centered on consistency and continuing effective practices. Below are some details from the discussions.

What’s Working: Mentoring

- *Some districts, rather than schools provide mentors. Alaska offers a state-level mentoring program.*
- *Mentor teachers—also known as teacher support specialists—develop relationships with new teachers that evolve over several years.*
- *Mentor positions are paid positions.*
- *Mentoring is a way of “growing” teacher leaders.*

What’s Working: Evaluation and Teacher Quality and Compensation

- *District-level work on a new evaluation system that encourages professional development and improvement.*
- *School personnel are finding ways (or trying) to use student work to inform teacher evaluation.*
- *School personnel are opening a discussion about merit-based pay.*

- *Movement toward data-driven, growth-oriented evaluation systems has started to alarm mediocre, weak, or underperforming teachers.*
- *There is a role for both growth and achievement in SLOs and compensation.*
- *In Indiana, pay raises are used to incentivize teacher leadership and professional development (\$4,000 - \$8,000 additional salary). Teachers receive five formal evaluations, one by senior lead teachers.*

What's Working: School Culture and Structure

- *Leadership teams interview new teachers.*
- *School personnel working as a cohesive team on common, shared vision.*
- *Time is available for teachers to collaborate on goals and share ideas with administrators' support.*
- *Teachers work in teams with the goal of developing students in all areas.*
- *Grade level teams collaborate to discussion curriculum and plan lessons.*

What's Working: Professional Development, Especially Embedded Professional Development

- *Consultants come into the school and work with teachers throughout the school day.*
- *Consultants come into the school throughout the year to work with teachers.*
- *A staff developer does demonstration lessons with students on site three or four times a year.*
- *Embedded professional development during the school day.*
- *Supported, ongoing, differentiated professional development.*
- *Every other Wednesday is a half-day of staff planning time.*

USDE Steps: Teacher Preparation

- *Work with colleges about what is really going on in schools. Offer teacher training that is relevant to real life.*
- *Get future teachers into their classrooms earlier.*
- *Use teacher-trained cooperating teachers as student teachers.*
- *Promote the profession by supporting higher education programs that are turning out highly effective teachers.*

USDE Steps: Teacher Professionalism

- *Restructure the typical path of a teacher.*
- *Restructure teacher compensation.*
- *Develop a continuum of support for teachers (mentors, teacher leaders, instructional coaches).*
- *Rethink the student growth model—it's flawed math!*
- *If the DOE won't abandon incentivization of education then make it school-based, NOT teacher-based. Have school staff work together for the common good!*
- *Tiered compensation: base salary plus 1) personal [i.e., classroom] achievement, 2) grade-level achievement, 3) school achievement, 4) cohort K-12 schools' achievement.*

- *Consider that teachers can't control student learning. If a student is hungry or abused, how are you going to link a teacher's score to his or her performance?*
- *Mentoring needs to be a priority, with commensurate compensation.*

USDE Steps: Research

- *Fund promising programs and release data to all states.*

USDE Steps: Rethink High School Graduation

- *High schools should provide liberal arts education—not just college prep. Talk about career path: higher education is not always college.*
- *Face the fact that not all students are going to go to college, because some students focus on careers. Distinguish between college-ready and career-ready.*

USDE Steps: Public Relations

- *Publicize our accomplishments! Ask media to stop comparing the top 15 – 20% of students from other countries to test scores in the US which measure ALL students!*
- *Provide opportunities to build the profession up in the public eye.*
- *Communicate the RESPECT tenets.*
- *Do more to create a national culture of respect for teachers.*