

EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE - TEACHER INCENTIVE FOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM - BACKGROUND MEMORANDUM

Section 1 of Senate Bill No. 2217 (2019) directs the Legislative Management to study the feasibility and desirability of creating a teacher incentive for leadership program. The study must include an evaluation of whether a program would improve student learning through improved instruction; reward effective teachers by providing increased leadership opportunities; attract new teachers to the state by offering competitive starting salaries and professional development; promote collaboration and new career pathways for teachers through mentoring, coaching, and project-based learning; and retain effective teachers through new career opportunities and advancement. The study also must include a review of the types of data to be tracked to determine the success of the program; the correlation and effectiveness of the program in relation to other teacher development programs; and how the program operates in relation to the statewide education strategic vision.

BACKGROUND Study Directive

Senate Bill No. 2217, as introduced, would have created a new section to North Dakota Century Code Chapter 15.1-07 relating to a teacher incentives for leadership in education program. The bill would have created a new program, administered by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, to provide professional development to teachers and to offer project-based incentives to teachers working on academic initiatives in their respective school districts. The program would have provided \$10 million in available funding and calculated the funding available for each district in the state by dividing the \$10 million by the total number of students enrolled in K-12 in the state, and then multiplying that number by the total number of students enrolled in each school district. The Senate amended the bill to provide for this study. According to the legislative history on this amendment, there is a need for an in-depth study of whether a teacher incentive for leadership program is needed, a long-term vision of the program, and how best to implement the program before creating the program and allocating resources. Testimony indicated a need to identify a proper funding source and communicate with stakeholder groups before creating the program.

Testimony further indicated studying the types of data to be tracked to determine the success of the program require reviewing the initiatives on which districts are attempting to make progress and determining necessary reporting requirements to best understand how districts are spending potential funding. The goal of the program would be to use funding to move the strategic plan of the district forward, and the study may be used to develop metrics to determine whether the districts are accomplishing goals through the use of the program and funding. Another purpose noted in the testimony for the program and the study is to incentivize great teachers to remain in the classroom. It was noted more than 50 percent of teachers in the state do not reach the 5-year mark.

Testimony indicated the bill and the study were based upon work conducted by the Governor's innovative education task force. The task force determined teachers wanted more flexibility in seeking leadership positions that allowed them to remain in the classroom. The task force also determined teachers wanted to collaborate, build their knowledge base, and share their skill sets outside the traditional classroom setting. Testimony indicated the study would enhance the innovative education bill passed during the 2017 legislative session and would align with the K-12 strategic vision. Representatives of North Dakota United, North Dakota Small Organized Schools, the North Dakota School Boards Association, and the Department of Public Instruction testified in support of the study.

Relevant North Dakota Legislation

Senate Bill No. 2186 (2017) created Section 15.1-06-08.2 relating to an innovative education pilot program under which the Superintendent of Public Instruction may accept proposals from public and nonpublic schools to participate in an innovative education program. Under this section, the school may apply to the Superintendent for a waiver from certain statutory requirements if participating in the program. Section 15.1-06-08.2 requires the Superintendent to adopt rules and administer the program. The section requires:

- Schools interested in participating to include in their proposal evaluation criteria and specify the innovations to be pursued by the school under the program;
- The school to specify how the innovations proposed will meet certain criteria, including the manner in which the proposal will improve the delivery of education, the administration of education, increase educational opportunities for students, and improve the academic success of students;
- The school to develop a comprehensive implementation plan and work with the Superintendent to ensure the long-term viability of the proposal; and
- All schools participating in the program to provide evaluation data to the Superintendent and requires the Superintendent to provide annual reports to the Legislative Management regarding the program.

Senate Bill No. 2025 (2019) requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to facilitate a process to review and update annually the statewide prekindergarten through grade 12 education strategic vision. This bill, codified as Section 15.1-02-04(9), requires the process to include input and participation from a steering committee that includes representatives of all state-level entities receiving state education funding and education stakeholder groups. Each steering committee member entity receiving state education funds is required to provide the entity's strategic plan aligned to the statewide strategic vision. The Superintendent provides a report to the Legislative Management each interim, and to a joint meeting of the standing Education Committees during each regular legislative session, of the collaborative reports of the strategic plans of each committee entity receiving state education funds, as well as any updates to the strategic vision.

Governor's Innovative Education Task Force

In September 2017, Governor Burgum established a 15-member innovative education task force through Executive Order 2017-15. The goals of the task force were to:

- Investigate and identify the conditions necessary to unleash the potential of our teachers and students;
- Create a system of identification and support for schools and districts implementing innovative practices;
- Highlight practices providing an effective and equitable 21st century education; and
- Identify changes to state education policies that will promote the strategic adoption of student-centered learning experiences.

Upon completion of its work, the task force made numerous policy recommendations. One of the recommendations was that the state should invest in district educational initiatives aligned with student-centric instruction, and that funds be set aside to support the initiatives and supplement the traditional education funding formula. The task force looked to programs implemented in other states, such as Iowa, which have invested in teacher leadership compensation systems. The task force determined teacher leadership compensation systems are forward-looking and designate specific leadership positions that provide educators professional development opportunities or added compensation for additional work outside standard contract language. The task force determined must be invested in or used to compensate current teachers providing career track opportunities, or added professional development. Furthermore, the task force determined to be eligible for leadership funds, individuals must be employed by a school district and complete a competitive application process. It was recommended contracts last no more than 2 years to ensure continuous alignment between current district goals and educator skillsets.

Iowa

Division VII of Iowa House File 215 (2013) created the Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) System. The program was designed to "promote continuous improvement in Iowa's quality teaching workforce and to give Iowa teachers the opportunity for career recognition that reflects the various roles teachers play as educational leaders." According to the Iowa Department of Education, the TLC System seeks to improve student learning by improving teacher instruction. The system rewards effective teachers with leadership opportunities and higher pay, attracts promising new teachers with competitive starting salaries and more support, and fosters greater collaboration for all teachers to learn from each other. The philosophy of the system is improving student learning requires improving instruction.

To support the program, the Iowa General Assembly appropriated \$3.5 million for planning grants in fiscal year 2014, for which every district applied for and received, and approved \$50 million for the 2014-15 school year, the 1st year of implementation. The \$50 million was divided among 39 districts, representing one-third of Iowa students. Each district received \$308.82 per student based on the district's October 2013 certified enrollment. In the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years, another \$50 million was added each year for a TLC total of \$150 million. The goals of the TLC System are:

- Attract able and promising new teachers by offering competitive starting salaries and offering short-term and long-term professional development and leadership opportunities.
- Retain effective teachers by providing enhanced career opportunities.
- Promote collaboration by developing and supporting opportunities for teachers in schools and school districts statewide to learn from each other.
- Reward professional growth and effective teaching by providing pathways for career opportunities that come with increased leadership responsibilities and involve increased compensation.
- Improve student achievement by strengthening instruction.

The Teacher Leadership and Compensation System establishes new career paths and compensation structures that reward effective teachers with leadership opportunities and higher pay. Implementation of the TLC System at the district level is done through the district selection of one of three models--teacher career paths model, instructional coach model, and comparable plan model. The majority of districts have adopted the comparable plan model, which requires the following minimum criteria be met:

1. Minimum salary of \$33,500 for all full-time teachers;
2. Increased support for new teachers;
3. Differentiated, multiple teacher leadership roles;
4. Rigorous selection process; and
5. Aligned professional development system.

Iowa law and the Iowa Department of Education provide guidance as to the experience required for teachers in teacher leadership positions. A teacher assigned to a teacher leadership position must have at least 3 years of teaching experience, and at least 1 year of experience in the school district. Questions have been raised about this requirement and whether this strict requirement should be lessened to allow for a larger applicant pool.

On December 15, 2014, the Iowa Department of Education released the *Commission on Educator Leadership and Compensation: Annual Report*. In this report, the commission acknowledged the challenge of the experience requirement, but stated the commission would not be recommending a change because the requirement "prevents the 'poaching' of teachers by districts that can pay more for leadership roles, helps build local capacity, and ensures teacher leaders have the credibility among their peers that they need to be successful."

Under the TLC System, teacher leaders must continue to be evaluated as required by Iowa law, which requires an annual review of each teacher's performance. The evaluation includes a review once every 3 years by an evaluator and a review annually (other than the 3rd-year review by an evaluator) by a peer group of teachers. Additionally, teacher leaders must have an annual review of their performance in the teacher leadership role completed by administration. This feedback must include peer feedback from the teachers served by the teacher leader.

The allowable uses of TLC System funding under Iowa law include raising a teacher's minimum salary to \$33,500, providing additional salary and supplements for teacher leaders, covering the salary and benefits for positions hired to replace teachers in the school district, paying for substitute teachers, funding professional development for teacher leaders, and paying other costs approved by the Iowa Department of Education.

STUDY APPROACH

In conducting this study, the committee may wish to receive testimony from interested parties and stakeholders, including representatives of the Department of Public Instruction and the Education Standards and Practices Board, to determine if a teacher incentive for leadership program would improve instruction and student learning; and representatives of North Dakota United, North Dakota Small Organized Schools, regional education associations, individual schools and school districts, and other stakeholder groups to determine if a program would reward effective teachers by providing increased leadership opportunities; attract new teachers to the state by offering competitive starting salaries and professional development; promote collaboration and new career pathways for teachers through mentoring, coaching, and project-based learning; and retain effective teachers through new career opportunities and advancement.

The committee may wish to receive testimony from the Governor or the Governor's designee and representatives from Iowa regarding the Governor's task force and the Iowa TLC System to determine the types of data to be tracked to determine the success of the program. The committee also may wish to receive testimony from the Department of Public Instruction regarding the correlation and effectiveness of a potential program in relation to other teacher development programs, and how the program operates in relation to the statewide education strategic vision.

The committee also may seek additional information regarding programs and best practices in other states, and may seek additional information from organizations, such as the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Education Commission of the States.