

## Community Forums: Educator Compensation

Everyone in any community has a stake in making sure that our schools and our students do well. We also want to recruit and retain the best educators for our districts. The purpose of the community forums is to engage, in an organized discussion, a selected group of people to gain information about their views and thoughts in recruiting and retaining teachers, improving student performance, ensuring effective leaders, and determining ways to reward effective leaders.

### Introduction

The forums are meant to help us find action steps, build partnerships, and begin to work together to accomplish our goals. The forums help us begin to build the trust and relationships needed to understand the issues, find common ground solutions, create strategies for long-term success, and work together for all our students. Groups like this will be meeting all over the state. In each group, 12 to 15 people from diverse backgrounds and viewpoints will meet together for 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

### What Questions need to be asked?

1. *What type of pay structure do you favor?*
  - *Should there be a scaffold structure? If so identify the key elements.*
  - *Should student achievement be tied to educator compensation?*
  - *Are there other pay structures that you favor?*
2. *How do we retain the best educators—leaders and teachers? What are the essential elements needed to retain teachers and improve student learning?*
3. *How can we set up a career pathway in order to retain the best in our district? What is available presently and what can we encourage? How might the new Kansas regulations establishing a teacher leader license be used to support this effort?*
4. *How can legislators and state board members assist in developing and aligning pilot programs of compensation for educators?*

### Why Forums?

The initial work of the Teaching in Kansas Commission (TKC) highlighted five key areas as crucial to ensuring that teaching is raised in status so that teacher shortages can be mitigated. Work groups were formed to study more fully each of the five areas identified by the TKC. One of those five work groups, the Subcommittee on Salary and Benefits, met on several occasions between July and November 2008. Their work focused on elements of salary and benefits that are likely to raise the desirability of teaching as a profession and encourage retention of accomplished teachers over the length of a career. Additionally, the subcommittee looked at

ways to tie monetary rewards to educator performance. To participate in the federal "Race to the Top" funds program, states must look at ways to evaluate and compensate teachers tied to student achievement.

We also need to keep in mind Schlechty's premise in "Shaking Up the Schoolhouse."

"If America's system of public education is to be preserved and revitalized, its leaders must take action...action will come about only when educators accept the fact that as good as America's schools are, they are nowhere near reaching the level of productivity that is required for them to continue to survive--let alone to thrive--in the twenty-first century."

Our opinions on how to work on effective solutions may differ but we do agree that when we fail to successfully educate all of our students, our whole community is affected. Good jobs, housing, taxes, crime and community resources are all tied to the success of our students. We also know that finding solutions to these complex problems will not be easy. It will take many different efforts, and many different groups working together to ensure that all children will succeed. Community forums are one part of this effort.

### **What are the Basic Principles?**

- People care about the community they live in and want to make them better
- Complex issues call for many kinds of solutions
- People from all backgrounds and all segments of society have something to contribute
- When everybody is included in public life, everybody benefits
- When all kinds of people develop trust and relationships through face-to-face dialogue, new ideas and approaches emerge
- When people consider different points of view on a complex issue, they uncover common ground and find better solutions
- When people have a voice in the public conversation, they are more likely to take part in creating and carrying out ideas for community change
- The more people are involved, the bigger the impact
- Change is more likely to last and deepen when individual and collective actions are tied together

### **Where Will This Lead?**

We foresee many outcomes to holding community forums on educator compensation. A few might be:

- Receive "Race to the Top" funding
- More academically successful students
- Highly rewarded educators

## What is the Role of the Facilitator?

The facilitator:

### *Manages the time*

- Start and end the group on time
- Help the group monitor the distribution of "air time"

### *Manages the process*

- Provide the group with ground rules including their role as a facilitator
- Serve as the holder of the ground rules
- Serve as holder of the overall design
- Keep the discussion on topic (control "drift")
- Ask evocative questions
- Make or ask for summaries
- Help the group find common ground
- Provide written summaries of the discussion to the group as a follow-up
- Share the findings with KSDE as part of the "Race to the Top" application
- Continue the discussions in the future to determine how or what strategies will be implemented

### *Protects individuals and the group*

- Manage disputes

### *Serves as liaison*

- Act as a contact with the broader forum community
- Manage logistics

### **Facilitator Tips:**

- Stay neutral
- Set a relaxed and open tone
- Stay aware of and assist the group process
- Don't allow the group to turn to you for the answers
- Resist the urge to speak after each comment or answer every question; the most effective facilitators often say little, and are constantly thinking about how to move the discussion forward
- Once in awhile, ask participants to sum up the most important points that have come out of the discussion
- Don't be afraid of silence
- Don't let anyone take over the conversation
- Remember this is a dialogue not a debate
- Help the group look at various points of view

- Ask open-ended questions that don't lend themselves to easy answers

**What is the Role of the Participants?**

- Actively participate in the forum and group discussion
- Support and abide by the ground rules
- Listen carefully to others
- Maintain an open mind
- Strive to understand the positions of those who disagree with you
- Help keep the discussion on track
- Address remarks to the group members rather than the facilitator
- Give feedback to the facilitator
- Value your own experiences and opinions
- Share the air
- Engage in respectful disagreement