



ECI Monthly

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Teachers: Compensation, Career Paths, and Collective Bargaining

A Conference Sponsored by the Delaware Public Policy Institute, the Delaware State Education Association, and the Rodel Foundation of Delaware

On November 9 and 10 I had the good fortune to participate in a fascinating conference in Delaware addressing issues related to teacher compensation. The sponsors of this event made certain that a diversity of views were shared by the many presenters and speakers. Even though individuals and individual organizations assertively expressed opinions about the controversial issues surrounding how teachers should be paid, all views were invited and heard.

Sponsors

Vision 2015 is a commitment by Delaware to address the most urgent issue of our time: securing a high quality education for every child in the state. Led by a 28-person Steering Committee of Delaware's education, business, government, and community leaders, Vision 2015 is a collaborative effort. Vision 2015 was the motivator behind the compensation conference that was sponsored by:

The Delaware Public Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental public policy research organization. Its mission is to conduct research and encourage the study and discussion of public policy issues affecting the citizens of Delaware. The Institute identifies emerging issues that drive Delaware's future public policy agenda.

The Delaware State Education Association, affiliated with the National Education Association, is a union of public school employees that advocates for the rights and interests of its members and outstanding public education for all students.

The mission of the **Rodel Foundation of Delaware** is to help Delaware create one of the finest public education systems in the nation by 2012. Success will mean that all of Delaware's children are excelling academically,

that its schools are inspired places to learn and work, and that parents are a welcome and integral part of the reform effort.

Conference Presenters

- Christopher Cerf** Deputy Chancellor, New York City Department of Education
- Allan Odden** Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) and Partner, Lawrence O. Picus and Associates
- Tom Toch** Co-Founder and Co-Director, Education Sector
- John Stocks** Deputy Executive Director, National Education Association
- Leo Casey** Vice President, United Federation of Teachers, New York City
- Jim Carlson** UniServ Director, Wisconsin and President, Educator Compensation Institute
- Kim Ursetta** President, Denver Classroom Teachers Association
- Clark Reinke** Superintendent, Plymouth, Wisconsin Public Schools
- Timothy Daly** President, The New Teacher Project in New York.
- Larry Nielsen** Vice President MEA-MFT (Montana) and President, Helena Education Association
- Lawrence Mishel** President, Economic Policy Institute

Sessions

Christopher Cerf was the key note speaker for Friday night's reception and welcome. According to Mr. Cerf, more money and smaller class sizes alone aren't the answer to improving schools. Rather, bold reforms that challenge the current education system are required to make the kind of drastic improvements needed, he said. Cerf described New York City reforms where principals have been given more autonomy, funding now follows the student and varies according to the child's needs, teachers can earn bonuses based on student success, and every school receives a public report card.

Allan Odden opened Saturday's session after a welcome from Delaware State Education Association Executive Director Howard Weinberg. Dr. Odden identified the goals and objectives for teacher compensation as:

- ✧ Recruit and retain talented teachers, particularly those in urban and some rural districts and in some content areas such as math, science, and technology.
- ✧ Enhance the instructional expertise of all teachers.
- ✧ Improve student academic achievement.

Odden described his view of the two components of pay; base pay (the monthly paycheck) and variable pay (pay based on performance).

Dr. Odden then moderated a ***Teacher Compensation*** panel discussion that included **Leo Casey, John Stocks, and Thomas Toch.**

Dr. Casey opened the discussion with his view about the state of public schools in New York and the potential impact of merit-based pay. "Individual merit pay sets up a zero-sum game which pits teacher against teacher," Casey said. "In a situation where pay depends on how students score compared to students in the classroom next door, can you imagine the competition that would go into which teacher gets the best student?" Casey asked.

John Stocks followed Casey with an overview of the National Education Association's positions on teacher pay, including merit pay. "If you impose education reform and you don't have the buy-in of the educators as a group, you will in fact not get very far," Stocks said. Stocks went on to say that compensation systems that reward teachers based on student test scores will not assure quality teaching. He noted that the NEA is opposed to all systems that tie pay to student test scores. Moderator Odden challenged Mr. Stocks, asking him if the "NEA is for anything?" Stocks responded that the NEA supports those alternative compensation systems that encourage the improvement of teaching skills, noting that quality teaching is the single greatest factor, over which schools have control, in determining student success. He cited Plymouth and Manitowoc, Wisconsin as two such systems.

Thomas Toch spoke mostly about the Student Advancement Program, a Milken Family Foundation approach to teacher compensation that includes:

- ✧ Multiple career paths
- ✧ Ongoing, applied professional growth
- ✧ Instructional focused accountability
- ✧ Bonuses tied to student achievement scores

I then moderated a panel discussion about ***Collective Bargaining and Negotiating Change*** that included **Kim Ursetta, Clark Reinke, Timothy Daly, and Larry Nielsen.** I opened the panel discussion by citing the four critical objectives, in my view, of any alternative compensation system:

- ✧ Attracting high quality candidates into teaching
- ✧ Keeping those teachers in the business of education
- ✧ Encouraging and rewarding enhanced pedagogy
- ✧ Adding to the collective body of pedagogical knowledge

Kim Ursetta opened her comments with observations about the ProComp in Denver. She explained the critical value of teacher participation in a plan's creation, the need for sustainable funding, and the process as it evolved in Denver. She identified the four components of ProComp as:

- ✧ Knowledge and Skills
- ✧ Professional Evaluation
- ✧ Market Incentives
- ✧ Student Growth

Ms. Ursetta later conducted a break-out session that provided greater detail about the Denver plan. (Details on www.edcomp.org)

Dr. Reinke asserted that the collective bargaining process is one of the more important leadership venues for a school district and that the negotiated agreement must be more than a contract outlining wages, hours, and working conditions. It must be a covenant that establishes a framework for a district's purpose, the relationships, and professional expectations.

Later, I joined Dr. Reinke in a break-out session describing the alternative approaches to teacher compensation negotiated in Plymouth, Wisconsin. (Details on www.edcomp.org)

Timothy Daly reported on data collected by the New Teacher Project, a national organization that strives to assist educational entities to:

- ✧ Increase the numbers of outstanding individuals who become public school teachers.
- ✧ Create environments for all educators that maximize their impact on student achievement.

Larry Nielsen explained the evolution of the alternative compensation system in Helena, Montana that encourages creativity and educators to take risks by exploring different approaches to enhancing student achievement. (Details on www.edcomp.org) He identified the three-legged approach in Helena as including:

- ✧ Career development and education
- ✧ Professional service
- ✧ Evaluation

Mr. Nielsen later provides a break-out session explaining the details of the Helena approach.

Dr. Lawrence Mishel closed out the general sessions with a report on "How does teacher pay compare?" Through a comprehensive review of the relevant data, Dr. Mishel supported his assertion that teachers are underpaid compared to comparable employees in other fields. The complete Economic Policy Institute report can be found at www.edcomp.org or www.epinet.org.

In summary, the organizers of ***Teachers: Career Paths, Compensation, and Collective Bargaining in the 21st Century*** were profoundly successful in elucidating the essence of this debate and its complexities. Of greatest importance, the conference was held as part of the evolution of potential change, not convened after the creation or implementation of change. The exploration and assessment of alternatives is a critical and necessary component step in a successful process of change. Vision 2015 and the conference's sponsors are to be congratulated.

The next issue of ECI Monthly will be released right after the first of the New Year.

Thanks for reading and for your support of the Educator Compensation Institute.

Respectfully submitted,

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