



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
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November 6, 2014

Ryan Fennerty, CAECC Director
Committee to Advance Educator Compensation and Careers
Department of Education
John G. Townsend Building
401 Federal Street, Suite #2
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Mr. Fennerty:

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has been given the responsibility to provide advocacy and advice on the educational and related services needs of students with exceptionalities in Delaware. On behalf of the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens, I would like to share comments obtained from GACEC members on Senate Bill 254 and the proposed information from the Committee to Advance Educator Compensation and Careers (CAECC).

Council agrees with many of the findings from the Educator Work Group discussions. There is very little consistency in the way teacher leadership roles are currently implemented across the state. However, the proposed salary framework will introduce instability in educator earnings and may also lead to a more competitive environment in our schools which will not be conducive to improving student outcomes. At the end of the day, education should always be about the needs of the students. After hearing some of the comments made by teachers at the public forums, Council feels the money might be better spent if it is used to provide more direct services/education to students rather than providing a temporary increase in pay to limited educators.

Teachers or educators in leadership roles and/or positions where their salaries are increased significantly must have the educational expertise and knowledge of various learning styles and how best to work with the ability of the students in their classrooms. It is not enough to be a highly educated professional if you cannot relate to and assist all students to reach their maximum potential in the classroom. Council does not note anything in the discussions or the proposal that is addressing the needs of students with exceptionalities. All educators need training in order to provide individualized instruction for all students. Teacher Leaders must lead the charge to see all students as theirs, not the separation of regular and special education students.

Council is concerned by the potential to take teachers out of the classroom even more than they are now in favor of providing additional training and adding more administrative level responsibilities. We often say that education cannot occur if the student is absent from the classroom and it is also true

that consistent, stable education cannot be provided if the teacher is constantly absent from the classroom. Council notes that the proposed framework does not address additional compensation for those teachers who are currently working well within their classrooms. There are many educators who will not opt to take advantage of this career ladder because their desire is to work more closely with their students. They should not be penalized for that mindset.

Council would also like to see how this will impact specialists in the educational system since many of them serve multiple buildings and in multiple capacities. A clear definition of who qualifies as a specialist would be helpful. Does this include, for example gym or art teachers or is it limited to therapists and reading specialists?

Has there been a poll or survey taken of all educators in the state to get input from everyone who may be impacted? Council feels it is extremely important to get as much input as possible as you make such major decisions.

We understand and agree with the need to improve teacher compensation but we cannot fully support this framework as the means to accomplish that end. Council questions the overall success of a system that will provide a temporary incentive to a limited number of teachers who will be pulled away from their classroom duties even more than they are with the current educational initiatives in our state.

Please feel free to contact me or Wendy Strauss at the GACEC office if you have any questions on our comments.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Overmiller, Chair
GACEC

RDO:kpc

CC: The honorable Jack Markell, Governor
The honorable Matthew Denn, Lt. Governor
The honorable Mark Murphy, Secretary of Education
Donna Johnson, State Board of Education
Lindsay O'Mara, Office of the Governor
Kim Siegel, Office of the Lt. Governor