



Highlights

National Forum on Education Policy

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The following is a summary of:

Session 347 – The New Age of Compensating Teachers

Presenters:

Caroline Novak (moderator)

President, A+ Education Foundation, Alabama; ECS Commissioner; member, ECS Steering and National Forum Committees

Jeff Buck

ProComp liaison to human resources, Denver Public Schools, Colorado

Anthony Milanowski

Senior researcher, Consortium for Policy Research, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Alice Seagren

Commissioner of education, Minnesota; ECS Commissioner

Angela Baber

Researcher, Teaching Quality and Leadership Institute, ECS

Session Notes:

Attendance reached 70 people with maximum room occupancy of 50. Many people were standing and a few took seats on the floor. Ms. Novak introduced the topic, the new age of compensating teachers. After introducing the participants, Anthony Milanowski, Alice Seagren and Jeff Buck, Ms. Novak opened the session up for brief, 15-20 minute presentations from each of the panel members. Mr. Milanowski presented first, followed by Ms. Seagren and then Mr. Buck.

View Milanowski's complete presentation online:

[MILANOWSKI POWER POINT NOTES](#)

View Seagren's complete presentation online:

[Quality Compensation for Teachers or "QCOMP"](#)

Notes From Jeff Buck's Presentation:

Mr. Buck's recommendations are summarized here, with more detailed notes included below. The handouts for the Denver Pro Comp program are available online.

The following is a summary of Mr. Buck's remarks and recommendations for policy makers considering new structures for teacher compensation systems:

- Have a more prescriptive approach all around
- Have policy and guidelines that clearly outline what is "out of bounds"
- Leave room for creativity
- Recognize the importance of collaboration
- Rethink the notion that teacher's unions are stumbling blocks for teacher compensation programs
- Embrace the need for different styles and structures of compensation programs
- Be realistic about timelines
- Be aware that implementations can be incremental
- Expect pushback

- Distribute power and decision-making authority
- Be mindful of demographics, culture and other related factors
- Know the importance of continuing revenue
- Study compensation theory
- Consider the types of data collection necessary before implementing the pay system
- Reform human resource's ability to collect the appropriate data
- Recognize that communication is integral to success
- Adopt a basic, flexible structure for redesigned teacher compensation programs with the capability of supporting existing and future diversities
- Make systems accountable
- Conduct external evaluations of new programs after implementation.

The following are more detailed notes taken of Mr. Buck's presentation.

Mr. Buck started by describing the history of the Denver Pro-Comp program. In 1999 the Denver Board of Education was interested in basing teacher salaries on student test scores for all Denver public schools. When it seemed that this initiative was in danger of reaching an impasse, a pilot program was started to examine the viability of basing teacher compensation on student performance. The research showed a correlation between qualified objective sets and outcomes in student learning gains. It became evident that everything was variable and that outcomes relied on assessments that were all over the place. The Colorado assessment, the CSAP, could not fulfill the objective. The CSAP was taken in March and the results didn't come until November, so this type of achievement was not usable for the new structure of compensating teachers being implemented. In recognizing that they needed to look at student growth, the pilot program designed a system that identified components to evaluate (see Denver Pro-Comp handouts).

In looking at the development of redesigned teacher compensation programs, Buck encouraged a more proscriptive approach all around. He suggested having policy and guidelines that clearly outline what is not allowed, or what is "out of bounds". By identifying what a program should not be instead of outlining exactly what a program should be, there is room left for creativity in design and implementation. Buck also stressed the importance of collaboration. He encouraged that policy makers rethink the notion that teacher's unions are stumbling blocks for teacher compensation programs and stated that teacher's unions were the catalyst for the Pro-Comp program in Denver.

Buck emphasized that research and development are necessary for us to eventually discover the ultimate system for for teacher compensation programs. He encouraged policy makers to embrace the need for different styles and structures of compensation programs and noted that there are no wholesale replacements. He also discussed the need to be realistic about timelines for development and implementation, as well as the need to recognize that incremental implementations are unavoidable. Policy makers should also expect pushback. Pushback is valuable in that it causes evaluators of the program to think. The Pro-Comp program distributes power and decision-making authority. Pro-Comp is not a plug-in solution, it is specific to Denver. Policy makers should be mindful of demographics, culture and other related factors when redesigning teacher compensation systems.

Buck strongly stressed the importance of finding continuing revenue for these programs. He suggested that if grant funding is available, it should be used for the development of the program, but that the program should be implemented using sustainable, continuing funds as a way to design a durable program. Buck also encouraged policy makers to study compensation theory and offered his opinion that salary should be based on knowledge and skills while bonuses could be given as performance based compensation. In considering the framework for these types of compensation programs, Buck stressed the importance of considering the types of data needed for the pay system before implementing the pay system. The necessary data collection tools for human resources, students and assessment data systems need to be in place for the new pay system to work. One of the first things to do is reform human resource's ability to collect the appropriate data.

There are two types of transitions that should be considered when switching to a new type of pay system:

1. The way teachers are paid changes from one type of system to another,
2. Data systems need to be updated and implemented that have the capability of collecting and tracking all the data necessary for the new type of compensation system.

Communication is integral to the success of these programs. Denver Pro-Comp is a very oral based system.

In conclusion, Buck recommended that policy makers adopt a basic, flexible structure when redesigning teacher compensation programs. The new structure should have the capability of supporting existing and future diversities. He also recommended making systems accountable. If it is said that a certain thing will happen, monitor it to make sure that it does.

Denver Pro-Comp will be requesting an external evaluation in a year or two; Buck believes that this assessment needs to be informative so that necessary changes can be made to the program structure.

[PROCOMP HISTORY](#) AND [PROCOMP CHART](#)

Question and Answer:

NOTE: The following questions and answers are paraphrased and/or condensed.

Q1

If knowledge and skills are to be the basis of a teacher's salary, but there is no evidence of student improvement for teachers with advanced degrees, how do you wrestle with tying compensation to knowledge and skills?

A1-Jeff Buck

Teachers can take a course that fulfills professional development requirements, thus increasing their knowledge and skills. This course, however, can be structured so that teachers study the course materials, then demonstrate what they have learned and then reflect on the process. This increases knowledge and skills as well as increasing the probability for student learning gains.

Q2

From a union perspective, how do you go about allaying the fear of evaluators?

A2.a- Anthony Milanowski

- Make teachers the evaluators
- Train all evaluators together
- Make sure that teacher and evaluators receive the same information on the evaluation process
- Have a test for evaluators to show that they are meeting some sort of standard that identifies them as qualified evaluators

A2.b- Jeff Buck

- Involve teachers and unions in the process of the evaluation and the evaluation process will be more accepted
- Get teacher's input on what is important to evaluate.

A2.c- Alice Seagren

- Have three or more evaluations throughout the year instead of a single evaluation because everyone has a bad day at work
- Have an assessment that is agreed upon.

Q3

In the Minnesota Q-Comp program, how was the per student allocation of \$260 derived?

A3-Alice Seagren

The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) recommends an allocation equivalent to \$500 per student. The Minnesota Q-Comp went with a minimum that corresponds with the 2% of funds reserved for merit based teacher compensation that already existed in the state. This 2% allows for \$260 per student. Next session the program would like to see a funding distribution tied to formula for increase.

Q4

Should there be pre-service teacher evaluations?

A4-Anthony Milanowski

Some districts are trying to require pre-service teacher evaluations. It is a good point that teachers will fit in better in a system where they are evaluated if they are exposed to pre-service evaluations.

Q5

If Q-Comp completely replaces the old salary structure, will mid-career people entering the teaching profession still receive compensation for their degrees and experience as they would under traditional compensation structures?

A5.a-Alice Seagren

Yes, Minnesota believes that districts will maintain some piece of the traditional compensation structure.

A5.b-Jeff Buck

Denver Pro-Comp is a complete replacement of the traditional pay structure for teachers.

Q6

Regarding the political sustainability of these systems, what if there is no constituency for them? Teachers that receive additional compensation under these merit based compensation systems deny that they deserve it, while teachers that don't receive the rewards believe the system to be unfair. If there is no buy in, how do you keep these programs from disappearing in ten years?

A6.a- Anthony Milanowski

Be persistent. Make the new pay structure a part of teacher's lives. Get people use to the new way of base pay. For legislature issues, try some way to integrate the pay structure as a permanent piece of the pay structure.

A6.b-Jeff Buck

Denver Pro-Comp was drafted as a contractual addendum to the teacher pay scale/pay rate system.

A final comment from an audience member:

Grandfather in all existing teachers and their correlated existing pay structures; use the current and impending increase in turnover of teachers to implement a new way of compensating teachers.

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