

Strategic Compensation Redesign

Potential Models for Georgia School Systems



Georgia Association of School Personnel Administrators

Technical Advisory Committee

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Background: During the recent Summer GAEL meeting in July 2015, several members of GASPA met with the Recruitment, Retention and Compensation Sub-committee Chair of the Governor's Education Reform Commission. The meeting was scheduled in order to share our thoughts with the sub-committee. Chairperson Pam Williams invited Dr. Susan Andrews, Dr. Martha Ann Todd, and Ms. Teresa MacCartney to attend.

Request: Dr. Andrews asked GASPA to develop some models for compensation redesign and asked to review them before GASPA publicly shared them, to see how our thoughts might align with what is being considered by the Education Review Commission. Select resources on the topic of strategic compensation redesign, including this document and conference presentations, will be placed on the GASPA web site.

Overview: Great teachers and leaders make great schools. As we struggle for effective ways to recruit, retain, recognize and reward our most effective educators to prepare students for success, and ensure that these educators fill hard-to-staff school and subject areas, strategic compensation is a strategy that must be considered. Currently, Georgia has a single state salary schedule with increases for experience and advanced education. Districts provide supplements to this scale, as well as additional duty and responsibility payments. This traditional structure provides recognition to experience and advanced education and a method of funding that is predictable and understood. Concern is that we have been overinvesting in degrees and longevity instead of contribution and results and that compensation should increase over time based on performance and labor market dynamics.

Several states and systems have attempted to better align compensation with educator performance and contribution. Strategic goals considered in designing these strategic compensation plans include: attracting a high-potential teaching workforce of more capable individuals to the profession; encouraging more of the best teachers and leaders to work in the hard to staff schools; encouraging all professionals to improve their craft; retaining high performers to stay longer; encouraging low performers to leave; aligning a high performing workforce to support system strategies and performance goals; compensating the high performing workforce in a financially sustainable way; and promoting collaboration, teamwork and innovation among staff.

Attributes of these strategic compensation systems have included for consideration: higher entry level salaries, performance pay (school-wide, group and individual value-added), hard-to-staff school pay, advanced or differentiated school roles pay (more students, challenging students, mentoring/coaching teachers, new leadership roles for teachers), skill and knowledge pay (critical areas, curriculum and instructional knowledge, curriculum development, professional development, parent outreach, data analysis for instructional improvement), limited advanced degree pay/tuition reimbursement, loan forgiveness, professional development completion pay, and retention pay.

While strategic compensation reform has not been universally embraced or proven to meet its strategic goals, there is support for investigating different models. Thoughtful initial planning that is aligned with a district's

mission and goals, with state support, communication, simplicity, and constituent developed programs have been the most successful. Plans have to be administered in a manageable way through finance and human resources. They must be legally defensible. Funding will require a reallocation of dollars by shifting resources. Measuring performance fairly and accurately is critical. Process issues have proven more important than technical issues. Plans need to be affordable, flexible, predictable, understandable and justifiable.

Models of strategic compensation plans should address strategic objectives related to a school system's strategic plan, key constituent involvement and engagement (teachers, principals, board members, curriculum, human resources and finance, business and community), communication, professional development, data systems, feasibility and sustainability. The models drafted highlight aspects of potential plans related to funding, eligible personnel, level of accountability, awards criteria and strengths. Consideration might include any or all attributes listed above and if the plan covers all certified staff or select classifications only. The assumption is that current staff can opt to stay on existing scale; however, it is not assumed that they will get advanced for future certification levels or experience under the current paradigm.

Current salary structure: Basic current understandings of salary and compensation structure in Georgia school systems include the following components:

1. Steps – Under Georgia law, since 2000, certified employees have not been advanced a step after earning a year of experience on the state salary schedule if they received an “Unsatisfactory” rating on their annual evaluation. In addition, staff earning two consecutive years of “Needs Development” ratings, beginning 2014-15, for those evaluated using TKES or LKES, will not be advanced a step. State salary schedule steps have a 3% increment between steps.
2. Levels – Certified employees are advanced when earning various levels of certification on their Georgia Educator certificate. State salary schedule levels have an 11 to 15% increment between levels.
3. Base salary raises – The State Salary Schedule has remained the same since the 2008-09 school year. The last state salary base raise to the State Salary Schedule was 2.5% for FY 2009. Local school boards may grant base pay raises. Generally, these have been applied across salary schedules and to all personnel regardless of annual evaluation ratings.
4. System supplements and days of work – Local school systems, if able, provide assigned supplements to local salary schedules, as a component of base pay, for certified positions. In addition, a range of days of work are assigned for all positions, e.g. 190 days for teachers, 200 days for Instructional Technology Specialists.

5. Additional local supplements – Additional local supplements are assigned for a variety of reasons including supplemental duties and responsibilities, e.g. department chair, debate team coach; recruitment and relocation bonuses; achieving certain levels of distinction, e.g. Teacher of the Year, NBPTS or Master Teacher certification; and critical field supplements, e.g. Physics, Speech Language Pathology. Note: The state currently funds supplements for recruitment of secondary (6-12) math and science teachers and for additional math and science training of elementary (K-5) teachers. The state no longer funds supplements for NBPTS certification.

Potential Models: Models for Strategic Compensation can include consideration of: changing the current salary schedule, altering components of the schedule, altering the manner of progression on the salary schedule, changing days of positions, redefining application of base salary raises, awarding supplements based on individual and school performance, tuition reimbursement or stipends for completion of targeted professional development, and developing new supplemental roles for staff allowing for career pathways for teachers other than school and system administration.

1. Changing salary schedule – create a new salary schedule at the state or local level that meets strategic goals. For example, if the goal is to attract top college graduates into teaching, pay them competitively, and retain them through early career, adopt a pay schedule with a higher beginning salary, fewer steps to reach maximum salary sooner, and smaller increments paid for earned degrees.
2. Keep the current state salary schedule but shift the local system supplement to meet system goals. For example, put greater local supplement amounts at the beginning of the scale, move individuals up with substantive local supplements through the first few years. The dollars could be reallocated by shifting supplement amounts from levels 6 and 7 and years 11 through 21.
3. Advance only satisfactory, proficient and exemplary performers on the pay scale. Perhaps unsatisfactory, needs development and ineffective performers should not be advanced.
4. If a local board adopts a 3% “across the board” pay raise, either differentiate the raise based on standards or provide bonuses to exemplary performers and deductions for ineffective performers. Examples: could be 0% for unsatisfactory, 1% for needs development, 3% for proficient, 4% for proficient plus, and 5% for exemplary. Or put the 3% raise in the schedule and provide an additional 3% supplement to exemplary performers and a salary deduction of 3% for ineffective performers.
5. Develop both individual and school wide performance recognition supplements for school staff meeting goals such as: CCRPI improvement, graduation rate increases, improvement on EOG measures, math and reading score increases, AP participation and pass rates. These could be developed by the school or system and directed toward targeted school improvement needs.

6. Develop additional local supplements and incentives (loan forgiveness) for attracting and retaining critical fields educators (based on local need), hard-to-teach schools or classes (limited English or high poverty schools, autism or behavior disordered classrooms), retention bonuses (pay “stay bonus” at the end of five years in the school system if proficient or above).
7. Develop new career pathways for teachers such as mentor teacher, master teacher, lead teacher. Pay these individuals with some release from teaching load, extra days, and substantive supplements, to carry out their duties primarily in the areas of collaborating with their peers and leaders to develop and deliver professional development, coaching, mentoring, curriculum development, data analysis toward school improvement and student success in their schools. For example, a mentor teacher could have a 70% teaching load, a 30% mentoring load, ten additional days and a \$5,000 supplement. Systems could consider utilizing the new state structure of certification tiers as a entry qualifications to some roles.
8. Develop plan to financially support ongoing strategic professional development and for tuition reimbursement and stipends for completion of targeted degrees, adding certification fields, targeted skill enhancement (e.g. Orton Gillingham, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate training), and time for planning and collaboration.

Summary: Leadership effectiveness, talent management and workforce performance will make the difference between success and failure of new plans. Sparse evidence exists to support alternative compensation plans improving student performance. The administration of these compensation programs cannot be expensive, complex, time consuming or impractical. Positive elements of programs that hold promise include pay for professional growth improving knowledge and skills of teachers, embedded and relevant professional development, and career pathways for teachers. Plans need to be examined to determine: what works and positively impacts teacher quality and compensation; the validity, limitations and reliability of methods of determining teacher effectiveness; and the short and long term impact on student achievement, teacher pay, administrative costs, recruitment and retention. A well-designed compensation system must include what an organization values and cannot be state-driven or mandated. While a state system can be developed and adopted by individual districts, it is imperative that districts have the flexibility and autonomy to develop their own system and/or adapt the state system. A one-size fits all approach cannot succeed in our state given the extraordinarily different markets and competition for talent with the for profit sector.

As policymakers and school systems embark on the quest to more closely link compensation and career advancement with the ability to raise student performance, and to have years of experience and earned degrees play a dramatically reduced role, it is important to note that the process that the system embraces with input and ties to strategic improvement is critical. Lessons learned are: include the right people from the beginning and define clear goals; make sure people understand what you are doing and why; align and design the plan and connect it to other system initiatives; use the right, statistically reliable data, ensuring accurate student-teacher

attribution; and remember the end goal – to offer students the best opportunities for success in college and the workplace – this is what drives teachers to teach and leaders to lead.

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