



## **Teachers: Career Paths, Compensation, and Collective Bargaining in the 21st Century**

*November 9 and 10, 2007  
Dover, Delaware*

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On November 9 and 10, 2007, the Delaware State Education Association (DSEA), Delaware Public Policy Institute (DPPI), and Vision 2015 co-sponsored *Teachers: Career Paths, Compensation and Collective Bargaining in the 21st Century*, a first-of-its-kind forum in Delaware that highlighted evolving practices in the teaching profession.

As the issues of teacher compensation, career ladders, and collective bargaining continue to be debated and developed across the country, this conference brought together leaders—from New York City, Colorado, Montana, Wisconsin, and Washington, D.C.—representing the very latest in both the practice and theory of innovation in teacher compensation. Delaware proved to be a leader in this field when it began offering incentives for board certification and skill/knowledge clusters in 2000. The 2007 conference provided thoughtful discussion of the most progressive approaches to transforming traditional compensation methods for teachers in Delaware and how such innovations could be applied in the state.

The exploration of these issues attracted an audience of more than 140 to Delaware's capital. Most of the participants were educators from around the state who represented a broad range of grade levels and subject areas. Representatives from key government offices, including the Office of Management and Budget, the Controller General's Office, and the Department of Education, also joined the conversation.

#### ***Keynote Address***

**Christopher D. Cerf**, Deputy Chancellor of New York City Schools, delivered the keynote address about New York City's pioneering work in public education transformation. He stressed that incremental improvements such as increased funding, stronger curriculum, and smaller class sizes are not enough to dramatically improve student achievement in meaningful ways. Instead, system-wide reform is necessary, but is no easy task. The challenges of reform include political obstacles, low expectations, and the history of classism and racism in our country.

Teachers play a critical role in the success of any system-wide plan for change, Cerf noted. At the heart of all transformation efforts is increased student achievement, and the single most important factor in realizing this goal is the quality of interaction between teachers and students.

Although reform efforts in New York City are still challenged at times by the “nature of things,” Cerf explained that success so far is attributable to several factors:

- **Accountability:** New York City has developed and makes available a completely transparent evaluation system that uses data to drive student achievement. Parents have total access to this information, and can make decisions based on a full understanding of school-level performance.
- **Empowerment:** Cerf noted that he “can’t think of a better path to madness” than to make someone accountable, and then not give him or her the tools to get there. To that end, New York City has implemented such practices as giving principals discretion over how school budgets are spent and implementing a “request for proposal” process for the provision of services in schools, matters that are traditionally handled at the district level.
- **People:** Through programs like the New York City Teaching Fellows, Teach for America, and The New Teacher Project, New York City has focused on effective recruitment, retention, and development of teachers since research shows that teachers are the single most significant in-school determinant of student achievement.
- **Governance:** Cerf acknowledged that New York City has been able to move forward progressively due to the leadership of Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who “had the courage” to challenge certain assumptions and perceptions, imagine what a public school system should look like, and hold himself accountable for the results.

Cerf encouraged Delaware to “be bold” in its approach to public education transformation: “Look at Vision 2015 through the eyes of a visionary... be willing to change... be bold... be committed to an unapologetic approach to change.”

### *Panels and Workshops\**

On the second day of the conference, **Allan R. Odden**, professor and co-director of the Consortium for Policy Research at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, delivered the opening address. Odden spoke to the importance of high quality instructional practice in achieving education goals, primarily increases in student achievement. He noted that Delaware was one of the first states to enhance its traditional teacher salary schedule. He also urged the audience to take the state to the “next level,” where individual instructional expertise would drive system transformation, student achievement, and teacher career and pay advancement.

Following the opening address, two expert panels delved deeper into the issues of teacher compensation and collective bargaining. The panel, consisting of educators, union representatives, and researchers, included:

- **Thomas Toch**—Co-founder and Co-director, Education Sector (Washington, DC)
- **John Stocks**—Deputy Executive Director, National Education Association (NEA) (Washington, DC)
- **Leo Casey**—United Federation of Teachers (UFT) (New York, NY)
- **James R. Carlson**—UniServ Director, Kettle Moraine UniServ Council (City? Wisconsin)
- **Kim Ursetta**—President, Denver Classroom Teachers Association (Denver, CO)
- **Clark Reinke**—Superintendent, Plymouth School District (City? Wisconsin)

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\* Full presentations and handouts are available at [www.vision2015delaware.org/teacherevent](http://www.vision2015delaware.org/teacherevent).

- **Timothy Daly**—President, The New Teacher Project (New York, NY)
- **Larry Nielsen**—President, Helena Education Association (Helena, MT)

The teacher compensation panel agreed that the traditional single-salary schedule is too restrictive and expressed concern over potential approaches to improving the system. For example, **Leo Casey** asserted that strict "pay for performance" models can underestimate the demands on teachers' time and discourage collaboration. **John Stocks** shared similar reservations, noting that current student testing systems are not designed to accurately measure student learning or teacher quality. **Tom Toch** made an important distinction about terminology, explaining the "merit pay" is often understood as teachers being paid according to student test scores; in reality, however, such systems can and should include many other components, like professional development and peer evaluations.

A member of the audience asked Dr. Casey and Mr. Stocks what elements related to teacher compensation the UFT and NEA could support. Dr. Casey referenced housing bonuses as a very important factor in New York City, incentives linked to National Board Certification, and financial and professional incentives for hard-to-staff schools. Mr. Stocks also suggested incentives around National Board Certification and school-based bonuses, and added that he would support a model in which professional practices are tied to an evaluation system.

Mr. Stocks added that the Delaware business community is "very enlightened" for investing resources to empower educators and others to explore the future of teacher compensation in the state. Mr. Stocks suggested that research be done, if it hasn't already, around what motivates teachers. Howard Weinberg, Executive Director of the Delaware State Education Association, noted that his organization has approached the state Department of Education about this issue and that the Department has committed to moving forward on it.

During the collective bargaining and negotiating change panel, the panelists shared lessons learned. **Tim Daly** shared research about the challenges involved with attracting individuals into the teaching profession and agreed that finding out what motivates teachers is the key to an effective system. **Kim Ursetta** concurred with this assertion. She also noted that any real change must happen at the district level and that the "glue" that holds everything together in her experience is the collective bargaining agreement. Building on this, **Clark Reinke** added that these agreements aren't just about salary and benefits; they should set standards for professionalism, culture, and relationships, among other things.

The lunch presentation by **Lawrence Mishel**, President of the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, DC, centered on teacher compensation and how teacher compensation in the U.S. compares with the wages of other professions. He explained that as job opportunities outside the teaching profession have increased, especially for women, over the last several decades, recruiting the best college graduates has become more difficult. Moreover, his research shows that teachers earn significantly less than comparable professionals, and that this disparity has increased over the last 10-15 years. Dr. Mishel pointed to the troubling nature of these findings, since recent research directly correlates teacher quality to student and school success. In order to improve student achievement, he said, the best and brightest must be attracted to the classrooms at a time when teacher pay and incentives are lower than in other fields.

Following the panels, the audience participated in workshops in which the leaders from Wisconsin, Montana, and Colorado shared more details about their achievements and challenges in transforming the teaching profession in their respective localities. **Clarke Reinke** and **James Carlson** shared their experience in creating a new collective bargaining agreement in the Manitowoc Public School District in Wisconsin. Implemented in 1999, this agreement expanded the traditional two-dimensional salary schedule into a more comprehensive system designed to attract and retain the highest quality teachers while also encouraging and rewarding professional development. This system contained several key provisions, including a restructured salary schedule, the creation of a Professional Development Certificate program, a district-wide professional development Academy, and incentives linked to National Board Certification and the attainment of doctoral degrees.

Since implementation, the Manitowoc collective bargaining agreement has led to significant impacts on teacher behavior and student achievement. Every semester, about 25% of staff enrolls in a district-run professional development academy, and every year additional teachers earn National Board Certification and other certifications and degrees. Teacher retention rates have also improved significantly. Manitowoc is undertaking additional research, but has already identified a strong correlation between the number of teachers acquiring new skills and knowledge and student performance on standardized tests.

**Larry Nielsen** described an initiative in Helena, Montana—the Professional Compensation Alternative Plan (PCAP)—implemented in 2004. PCAP involves a three-legged approach to teacher compensation, including career development and education, professional service, and evaluation. It encourages creativity and challenges educators to take risks in order to enhance student achievement. Nielsen credited the new system for a range of improvements throughout the school district, including a more positive general attitude and climate, successful teacher recruitment efforts, more effective and efficient management of costs and reallocation of resources since no new money was available, and increased professionalism among the staff.

**Kim Ursetta** spoke about ProComp, the similar teacher compensation system in Denver designed through a partnership between the Denver Classroom Teachers Association and Denver Public Schools—the largest reform effort ever attempted by an urban district and a union. This innovative partnership designed a comprehensive new way to link teacher compensation to the district’s mission of improving student achievement. Implemented in 2006 and funded through a \$25 million tax levy, ProComp draws on four components—knowledge and skills; professional evaluation; student growth; and market incentives. Although still a fairly new system, the number of teachers opting-in to ProComp has increased from 38% in March, 2006 to 49% in Fall, 2007.

### *Next Steps*

Encouraged by the high participation rate and overwhelmingly positive feedback, the conference sponsors are exploring potential next steps for teacher compensation reform in Delaware and are committed to continuing the dialogue around these issues.