

Update of Compensation Reform in Marietta City Schools and Fulton County Schools

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Marietta City Schools

The Marietta City Schools Workforce Excellence, EXCEL, program of compensation design included:

- Redesigning teacher compensation to emphasize effectiveness;
- Designing additional enhanced teacher roles;
- Completing the design of performance management tools and processes for non-TKES and non-LKES personnel;
- Creating systemic processes that align work at the district, school, department, and individual employee level to maximize student achievement.

After piloting several innovations, Marietta City identified the strategies that would and would not be successful in Marietta City Schools. The district maintained several of the piloted enhanced roles and responsibilities, specifically those that allow teacher leaders to earn more money earlier in their careers. The district also modified tuition reimbursement opportunities and discontinued paying for doctoral level certification at the teacher level, unless the district agrees that it will apply to the teaching assignment, while grandfathering in current employees holding doctorate degrees. New job descriptions were developed for all employees and evaluations for all employees are now grounded in effectiveness.

The next steps for Marietta City Schools will include:

- refinement of the implementation and use of TKES/LKES;
- development of a teacher pay scale tied to effectiveness;
- development of teacher career pathways aligning with other work in the state; and
- Identification of lower cost incentives and rewards that are valuable to teachers.

Fulton County Schools

The Fulton County Schools strategic compensation model included:

- Strategic staffing for high needs schools;
- Tuition reimbursement instead of salary increases for advanced degrees;
- Salary increases based on effectiveness; and
- Development of a career ladder with additional roles for high performing teachers to earn more money.

The newly developed career ladder is being piloted in the current school year for a limited number of teachers. One hundred fifty teachers expressed interested in participating in the pilot; however, due to funding and the need for close examination of the program and its results, 12 teachers were selected for the pilot.

Kenneth Zeff, Interim Superintendent of Fulton County, stated that Fulton County is working to increase the inter-rater reliability of its TKES/LKES evaluation data, the reliable implementation of the SLO concept, and understanding of the increased expectations following the introduction of Milestones as the source of a student growth measure. Mr. Zeff also stated that the reality of having an interim superintendent in the district is causing a temporary decrease in the momentum of the work.

The leadership in Fulton County has been in discussions with colleagues in neighboring districts, specifically Marietta City and Gwinnett County Schools about compensation redesign. Each of these districts has a shared and keen interest in developing strong compensation models tied to effectiveness.

Mr. Zeff pointed to the successful implementation of Charter System status in Fulton County as a model for implementation of new reforms. In that process, the district had three years to plan and implement charter system status with the state supporting the innovation through planning grants and implementation grants. System transformation takes time and incentives to ensure positive results, and he is confident that compensation reform will be successful if given the time and funding for thorough planning and thoughtful implementation.

Summary

The leaders of both Marietta City Schools and Fulton County Schools expressed their sincere desire to continue the progress made in designing compensation models that reward effectiveness. Dr. Emily Lembeck, Superintendent of Marietta City Schools, stated that she believes Marietta can tie effectiveness to compensation in a simpler way that may involve annual steps based on performance. Mr. Zeff stated that “we are trying to build a cathedral; it takes time.” The work of both of these districts will provide models that may be replicated or adapted by other districts.