



Teacher Compensation Advisory Committee Feb. 24 Meeting Summary

The following is a summary of what was discussed and considered at the fifth Teacher Compensation Advisory Committee meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 24.

Background

Superintendent Don Johnson updated the committee on the state's biennial budget. He said very little has changed since Governor Walker proposed his budget a few weeks ago, although there appear to be some Republicans who want to take a closer look at K-12 education funding.

The committee approved the minutes for Feb. 10.

Teacher salary

There was a lengthy discussion about what elements might be part of the salary structure. Johnson reiterated that everything is on the table, including the current model. But he said the District wants to find the best model for its employees that also sustainable and that staff members can count on. Dan Drangstveit said many staff members are concerned the new model will lead to lots more work for them. Tabatha Gundrum said that doesn't have to be the case. She shared how staff might be able to use professional development to move up and not just university credits.

"It doesn't necessarily mean there will be more money but it may allow for more flexibility and options staff have to reach levels," WASB attorney Bob Butler said.

The committee broke into four smaller groups spent 30-35 minutes talking about what might be included in a salary model. Laura Love said her group believed credits or professional development plans (PDP) should be recognized every 3-5 years depending on how much the District can afford. They also felt like PLC and SLOs should be recognized along with internal professional development credits. Drangstveit said his group talked about same things. Gundrum said her group wondered about smaller incremental increases with bigger jumps when certain levels are reached. They also wondered if it should be point-based vs. credit-based depending on what is included.

Kari Weiss said her group wasn't sure how professional development would be evaluated. Sonja Hungness was a part of that group and said there is currently only one way to move from professional to master evaluator and should there be other pathways. Bob Schell wondered if cost of living should be the minimum given each year and then other factors would determine additional increases.

Stipends discussion

Director of Student Services Jerry Nicholson presented on stipends that special education staff currently receive. He said he tries to make caseloads as balanced as possible and that is done by student services coordinator at each school. He also said he doesn't feel strongly about keeping stipends but wants to make sure the District pays student services staff well enough that it can continue to retain and recruit quality educators.

Hungness wondered if the District has considered paying stipends to para-educators who have difficult workloads.

Stephanie Spence, who handles speech and language at Sauk Trail, joined the District 17 years ago. She felt the stipends were established because of regular duties beyond the regular work day. Nicholson pointed out many regular teachers need to take work home at night and they don't receive extra compensation. But he also thinks market factors make it more difficult to hire special education teachers.

"I'm not saying special education teachers work harder than regular education teachers, but they work differently," he said. "It's also about supply and demand."

Possible salary components

The smaller groups spent 15 minutes discussing possible salary components and how they might be incorporated.

Drangstveit wondered if other districts have come up with a formula for converting PDP hours to other hours. Butler said Sun Prairie converted PDP hours to a certain amount of professional development time. Everyone supported the idea of credits being a part of a compensation model.

Groups felt the master's accreditation is important but wondered if there should be different levels depending on the number of credits needed or the type of certification you get. One of the groups wondered what is the value of a master's degree and is it worth being a part of the model.

There was also a discussion about should staff get raises just for years of experience. Butler said in Sun Prairie need both years but also certain number of hours of professional development to move up levels. However, he also said there are lot of hours and opportunities available there.

The groups appeared to favor a Sun Prairie-type model. Vicki Shaffer wondered if you can tap out with that model and will salaries change because of cost of living changes. Butler said the grid isn't static from year-to-year. He also said when funding is available people at the end of salary structure can still get a bonus but just not put into the grid. Johnson said most districts

have placed current staff into the model and they go from there, so that way no one gets a \$3,000 pay raise or pay cut.

Butler pointed out depending on the year Sun Prairie's schedule may not go up as much because they may have a lot of movement due to credits and PD. But in years where there isn't as much movement they then allocate that money for the schedule. Drew White said he liked the idea of leftover money being used for salaries and not put back into operational expenses.

The groups then discussed national board certification. Hungness said she is certified but believes she is only one of four teachers in the District with it.

"It's something I'm fighting for including," she said. "It's the best thing I've ever done."

Johnson said could he could see setting up a model where staff get partial credit for doing the work and get the rest if you pass the national board test. He also suggested a ratio for the number of hours spent on it. Steve Plank said his group wasn't opposed to it being a part of the model but not sure how much support there is for it. Shaffer said she is concerned that the more money taken out of the pot for these things the less money there is for teachers as a whole.

There were questions about if there was any other way to get master educator certification. Hungness said if it is offered by the National Board that is the only way to get it. Wisconsin offers it in those areas where National Board does not. White pointed out the state does provide compensation for this. Butler said most districts did not have national boards in their models because of all the time and rigor involved in getting certification. Plank wondered if it can be another option to reach a level rather than isolated by itself.

There was a long discussion of what role Professional Development Plans (PDP) should play in a compensation model. Johnson believes while there is disagreement over the language that it sounds like everyone thinks PDP should be a part of any compensation model.

The committee also discussed staff initiated organized class, professional advancement hours and group action research. All of the groups thought recognizing these things encourages collaboration in the District.

Gundrum said her group also liked the idea of the money currently being used when someone teaches a professional development session be a part of the salary schedule. Johnson said his group liked all of those items but wants to keep it simple at first, possibly by focusing on professional development and adding layers and complexity over time. Love's group wants to provide options to meet the needs of a variety of people. They suggested offering staff points or money, and points can be accumulated through internal or external credits.

The remaining 20 minutes was spent looking at additional duties and assignments and how reimbursement should occur. The groups agreed additional class, moving a classroom, special education caseload, homework help programs and travel should be kept out of the salary structure. The groups thought group action research, staff in-service presentations and curriculum writing should be part of professional development or points toward advancement on a salary schedule. There wasn't consensus on teacher leaders and where it should be placed.