

10-11-10

Dear GDI Committee Members,

Joey and Sam gave me permission to share our email conversation with you. Thanks to Joey for posing these questions. Sam and I responded to Joey's questions independently. Hopefully, the discussion we had will answer some questions and stimulate even more. See you Wednesday.

Bill

From: "A. Joey McCoy" <amccoy@palermoschools.org>

Date: Tue, 28 Sep 2010 08:55:35 -0700

To: Bill Rich <WRich@csuchico.edu>, Sam Chimento <schiment@palermoschools.org>

Subject: GDI Goal

Sam and Bill,

Through this inquiry process, several questions have come up in conversations that may or may not have answers to. If you could help me find the answers, that would better give me and our staff better direction as we go through the GDI process.

I believe that telling our students their goal in the education process gives better direction to their learning. I'm feeling that as we go through this inquiry process I'm not sure (as a learner/student) what our goal is. There are several options that are possible goals: Is our goal to primarily change teacher pay in order improve student learning? Is our goal to primarily reward effective teachers (and some think the opposite side of the coin is to starve out the ineffective ones). Or is our goal to look in to a different way of paying teachers because step and column may not be the most effective way? And maybe none of these are our goal...maybe it's something different.

At the end of GDI, I want our staff and all who participated to feel successful in our efforts because we met our goal whatever it may be. Being a young teacher at the bottom of the pay scale, I feel like I have a lot to gain from with new ways of rewarding effective teachers. However, the more important thing for me to go through this process knowing what our goal is, knowing what we're working for so that at the end of the road I, and hopefully our staff and those involved, will have a feeling of success regardless of the outcome.

I know that you may not have the answer to these questions. But in a spirit of openness for the GDI process I felt it necessary to ask and have the conversation.

Thank you for your time and thoughts on the matter at hand.

Joey McCoy

Joey,

Thanks again for your question. I'm sure others have the same question but just haven't asked yet. And with your permission, I'd like to share our correspondence with the whole committee.

Our goal is to learn as much as we can about teacher compensation and evaluation as it is explained in the research literature and as it operates right here in Palermo so that we can find out if we can improve our current system. I really don't know what our inquiry process will reveal, but it will be an open and honest process with all information available to everyone.

Sam invited me to lead an inquiry process on this topic because he is interested in "working on the system." As the saying goes, a manager works in the system and a leader works on the system. I like the analogy of trying to get more out of a VW 1200 engine, or designing a different kind of engine like a rotary, or hybrid engine.

After we develop a common knowledge base by reading in the literature and visiting with experts, we'll ask questions about the way the Palermo system works for teacher compensation and evaluation, and collect data to answer our questions. This activity will be the local inquiry.

Based on the literature and on the findings of our local inquiry, I'll write up a report and present it to the committee for revisions and consensus. The report will go to both the district bargaining team and the Palermo Teacher's Association. Any changes in the current way of doing things would need to be bargained by both groups.

As you have already seen, there are some good ideas and some not so good ones out there. The inquiry process usually helps people develop an informed view about any topic. There seems to be a good deal of political fog in the press around the topics that we are addressing, so I would trust only Palermo people to do the work of learning and making recommendations for any improvements to the Palermo system.

Hope this helps. Please continue to ask any questions that come to mind.

Yours,

Bill

Joey,

Thanks for asking these questions. I also received Bill's response.

The short answer is found in the negotiated agreement. The agreement asks the committee to use the GDI Inquiry process to study evaluation models and compensation models, and to produce a report that includes recommendations that can be used by the negotiations teams to reach an agreement that improves our compensation model and evaluation process.

The longer answer is found in the GDI process itself which asks the committee to achieve several goals.

The first goal of GDI is to have the committee grow a common knowledge base about compensation models and evaluation models - "what we all know."

For example, to date through our reading assignments, we are discovering there are a variety of compensation models out there. The most commonly used model, the one we use in Palermo, is the single salary model. There are merit pay models that are intended to pay teachers based on student achievement results. There are career growth models intended to reward teachers ongoing acquisition of skills and knowledge. There are market driven models intended to attract teachers to take on difficult to fill positions. There are models that pay teachers for taking on leadership roles; etc. And of course there are models that combine a combination of reasons. My guess is when negotiations began and, maybe even to this day, many folks are assuming we are talking about merit pay and wanting to link teacher pay to student test results. Through this process, hopefully, we'll get past this first impression and learn about various options to determine if there is a better option for Palermo than the one we now use.

We haven't looked into evaluation models yet, but as with compensation, we'll learn there are a variety including models designed to measure teacher effect on student achievement, models to document teacher performance against defined standards, and models designed to guide teacher professional development.

Again, hopefully through this process we'll use our learning to improve teacher evaluation in Palermo.

A second goal of the committee to use our acquired common knowledge base to design and conduct a local inquiry to discover what Palermo needs and wants from its teacher compensation model and teacher evaluation model.

The third goal of GDI asks the committee to take what it has learned from its study and inquiry to make findings, draw conclusions and make recommendations.

GDI is a process we use in the district to study and learn about significant issues.

Often these issues are difficult to deal with. Certainly teacher compensation and evaluation bring out pretty strong beliefs, opinions and concerns. Through

study and inquiry GDI helps us work through these strong beliefs, opinions and concerns and use our learning to make informed decisions about difficult topics - e.g. compensation and evaluation

I hope this answers the questions you are asking. If not, please let me know. Your questions are very important and I want to ensure they are addressed.

Sam