

2-4-11

Dear Palermo Staff Members,

Two more sets of questions about the current study of teacher evaluation and compensation were placed in the staff room question boxes. I developed draft answers for the GDI committee and am sending them to you now, after the approval of the committee. The questions are in normal print and answers are in italics. Thanks very much for your continuing interest in our work. We are making progress and will have a survey for teachers in the coming weeks.

Yours,

Bill Rich

Fourth Set of Questions:

1. The most important question might be "How will the success (and eventual pay) of a teacher be measured?"

We have learned in our study that multiple models exist. Knowledge and skill based models compensate teachers for gaining competency in specific areas such as using technology or applying data to re-target instruction. The tier-based model requires communities of teachers and administrators to work together to develop the criteria and the methods to measure the criteria so that a teacher can move up to the next tier. A market driven model pays teachers more money for hard-to-fill credentials or for serving in hard-to-staff schools. What happens in Palermo will be a product of negotiations after our GDI study is complete.

2. Will a member who teaches in Palermo be paid relative to test scores?

The GDI committee has very little interest in this model based on the research we have read. A recent study from Vanderbilt University debunked the pay for test scores idea through a rigorous three-year study. The value added method is gaining much attention in the press, but there are serious validity questions that remain unanswered in accounting for key variables. For instance, student assignment to classes is not randomized and student development over the period of the school year can't easily be controlled for experimental purposes. Again, the model adopted by Palermo will be determined through negotiations.

3. If so, how will teachers who teach special ed or ESL be ranked?

See above

4. What about that "rogue" class that sometimes moves through a school system?

The evaluation system needs to take into account the way teachers respond to any group of students. Children who are advanced or children who face challenges require a response from teachers that is tailored to their specific needs.

5. Will evaluations be accomplished in a different manner? I've heard that "teacher input" is sometimes used. Will the person that I don't like or doesn't like me have a say in my rankings?

A successful evaluation system must be a fair system. If a teacher believes that recommendations for change are nothing more than criticism from a person who dislikes them, then the evaluation system would be a failure. At the same time, if a teacher believes that a positive evaluation is a result of friendship with the evaluator, then the evaluation system would also be a failure. Anyone involved in evaluation must bring an objective and professional perspective. Training in the roles and tasks needed to fulfill the responsibilities of giving feedback to teachers would be required.

6. Is there really a section that relates to parent and student input in evaluations?

Parent and student feedback and input are being discussed as possible data sources in an evaluation system. Weighting the feedback would be a need area, but the research indicates using multiple measures is a helpful method in order to afford teachers the most accurate and useful feedback. Once again, the evaluation system must be constructed in negotiations.

7. Tell me where this is working and how long has it been in place?

These issues are being studied in numerous locations. Some have been engaged in this work for longer than others. But the current interest in teaching quality has focused nationwide attention on teacher evaluation. Through local efforts or legislation, it is likely that teacher evaluation will change. Denver has experimented with a plan and the state of Florida is currently considering legislation.

8. Will the district be willing to take on the fact that the law calls for a uniform salary schedule?

Any changes in compensation will comply with the law.

Fifth Set of Questions:

1. I understand that the evaluation system is only for teachers at this time. Shouldn't the evaluation system include all levels in the district?

This study is about teachers because it was initiated through an agreement between the Palermo Teachers Association and the district. Negotiations will begin following the completion of this study. Every group of employees has a valuable part to play in the education of children. It is logical that all other employee groups examine the evaluation system that applies to them and seek ways to make improvements as well.

2. If the GDI committee takes 4-6 months going through this process and then decides this is not for our district. Is this not a waste of time and money? I see this is costing the district \$13,000 to \$14,000 for the GDI. I see this money being used differently, on students, sports, transportation for field trips, and many other things.

The Palermo Teachers Association bargaining team and the district agreed to apply the GDI process to study the issues of teacher evaluation and compensation. It will be useful for everyone to learn about innovations in these areas.

3. I would like to see the school boards individual responses to all the questions sent in to the GDI committee. The staff needs to see where they stand on these issues.

In approving the TA that established this GDI study, the board indicated its desire to learn about current innovations and ideas in teacher compensation and evaluation, as well as the thoughts and ideas of teachers and the school community about these topics. By taking this action the board has demonstrated that it desires all of us in Palermo to learn and to see if there is a better way to evaluate and compensate teachers. Over the coming months, the bargaining teams will receive the report of the GDI committee and bargaining on these issues will begin. It is fair to say that no positions have been taken at this point.