

11-29-10

Dear Palermo Staff Members,

Thanks very much to the individuals who developed the four questions below and placed them in the question boxes in school staff rooms. I answered the questions in a first draft and sent them to the GDI committee for feedback. The questions are in bold type and answers and thoughts are in italics.

Our answers reflect our current learning and will serve to inform future decisions made by the bargaining teams. As a committee we are charged with learning and with developing a report, not with making decisions about compensation or evaluation in the district.

Don't be shy about asking questions of committee members or using the question box again.

Yours,

Bill Rich

**Question: How would merit pay be implemented in our district? Could you give us an example?**

*The Guided Democratic Inquiry committee is not the group that will decide how redesign of compensation or evaluation will be implemented in Palermo. After our report goes to the negotiating teams, they will address the task of developing any kind of re-design that would be implemented in the future.*

*The GDI committee has been working steadily to learn about current research and public opinion about teacher compensation and evaluation. At this point we have read many articles and engaged with experts in conversation. For example, we have read that the term, "merit pay" means different things to different people and is an emotional hot button for many. Ideas that are popular in the political sphere such as paying bonuses for student achievement to individual teachers have been debunked by the research, especially in a recent study at Vanderbilt University. At the same time, there is concern that the single salary schedule does not represent an investment in the kinds of teacher learning that can continuously improve student learning.*

*To see some examples of compensation redesign, please take a look at the articles in the staff room binder or the committee summaries of the articles posted on the Palermo website under Guided Democratic Inquiry.*

Soon, we will begin developing questions for our local inquiry to help us find out what teachers and the Palermo community think about the concepts. We'll start that stage of information gathering in January, 2011.

**Question: How is this going to be funded if agreed upon? What category will the money be taken from?**

*We have learned from both reading and from conversations with experts that districts should not rely on additional grants to fund any design changes in compensation. Otherwise, the improvements go away when the money goes away. Funding for redesign would need to come from the district's ongoing budget.*

**How will this affect the single salary schedule? And does it take money from this schedule?**

*The models we have studied include concepts that could be adapted to the single salary schedule or that represent a departure from the single salary schedule. A career-based system relies on expertise and performance and not as much on experience. Successful redesign takes into account the unique attributes of each district and is tailored specifically for each district.*

*Re-designing the compensation system would not take away any money from the amount of the budget that is historically allocated to teacher compensation. Transition to a new kind of schedule would need to be negotiated so that any changes are acceptable to the district and the PTA. The literature shows that teachers' buy in and teacher co-development of re-design is a basic requirement for success.*

**I've noticed that the committee is discussing only teacher evaluations. What about administrator's evaluations?**

*Although this committee is charged with studying and reporting on teacher compensation and evaluation, it is clear that one can't re-design a significant part of the system without adapting other parts of the system as well. If teacher compensation and evaluation is redesigned, then administrator roles will change. This would naturally require change in evaluation for administrators.*