



A Systemic Approach to Human Capital Management to Strengthen Educator Quality in the District of Columbia

Human Resources and Human Capital Initiatives Within the District of Columbia Public Schools City Council Oversight Hearing

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Hello and thank you, Chairman Gray and honored council members for the opportunity to participate in this session on a topic that is close to my heart.

Learning Point Associates is a nonprofit, education research and consulting organization that works with the federal government, state agencies, local school districts, foundations, and businesses across a range of education issues. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, we operate the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (or TQ Center),¹ where I serve as the director.

Great people make great schools. All the research and all my experience confirm this. However, great people do not make great schools in a system that lacks the right mix of incentives, knowledge, and support as well as the structure to weave these elements together. This fact is also confirmed by research and most likely by the experiences of most of us in this room. Lessons from the corporate sector and an emerging research base suggest that to recruit, support, and keep great people, there needs to be a purposeful, integrated, and holistic human capital management system in place.² It must take into account every phase of the teacher's career, from preparation through selection, induction, evaluation, working conditions, compensation, and career advancement opportunities, as well as establish connections between them.

Part II of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) Five-Year Strategic Plan, which focuses on "Great People," is a bold, systemic, and thoughtful approach to improving educator quality. I would, therefore, like to begin my remarks by applauding DCPS for embracing this approach as it engages in the challenging work to improve your city's school system.

However, given the magnitude of the work that lies ahead, it is important to set priorities and have a realistic timeframe. Based on my reading of the plan, I would caution DCPS not to overreach and to devote more attention to prioritizing its efforts. The City Council can help DCPS set priorities and promote partnerships.

First, for example, it may make sense to spend at least one more school year building the infrastructure and support from the teaching community, which is necessary to establish a robust, sustainable, and effective pay-for-performance program. I point to Denver Public Schools as an example of the importance of such deliberation. Denver Public Schools piloted its Professional

Compensation Program (or ProComp)³ for four years before taking it systemwide. It also spent a significant amount of time and attention implementing good communication practices, establishing transparency, and building the technical capacity to reliably capture student achievement data and link it to teachers. Denver now has one of the longest running and most successful pay-for-performance programs in the country, though it continues to refine its internal data analysis processes.⁴

That said, I do understand DCPS's urgency in taking this approach to human capital development. The National Center on Performance Incentives, for example, just published a study indicating that in Texas, performance awards of \$3,000 or more were associated with dramatically greater teacher retention for both veteran and new teachers.⁵ Moreover, early findings from a study that Learning Point Associates is conducting in partnership with Public Agenda and The Joyce Foundation suggest that Gen Y teachers (teachers under 30 years) are intrigued by pay-for-performance initiatives and perceive them as being potentially very powerful in attracting their friends to the profession. Nevertheless, they do have real concerns about the specifics of how performance would be measured. I have not seen the specifics of DCPS's qualitative and quantitative measures of educators' performance, but developing valid and reliable measures of teacher performance and effectiveness takes time, as does training evaluators to use these measures and ensuring that student and teacher data systems are accurate and interoperable and have appropriate levels of granularity for every teacher and principal whose salary and track record depend on it.⁶

Fortunately, the District of Columbia can take heed of the lessons learned by other school systems who have tried this before. A comprehensive and user-friendly repository of these lessons is the website for the national Center for Educator Compensation Reform,⁷ which Learning Point Associates has developed with Westat, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison. This free resource contains case summaries of pay reform across the country, documenting the successes and failures of those who have gone down this road before as well as a set of detailed implementation guides based on the best research and thinking in this area.

Second, I urge the City Council to encourage DCPS to work with Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and the Washington Teachers Union to develop and communicate a vision of excellent teaching (and what a “performance mindset” looks like in practice) and ensure that everyone in the system knows what that vision is. Such a vision can help drive teacher evaluation and target professional development. By communicating such a “vision,” I do not mean simply distributing a list of teaching standards and associated rubrics and a test score target for which they should have their students' aim, but to literally make this vision appear in front of teachers' and school leaders' eyes—through, for example, streaming video. DCPS could consider making available Web-based videos of teachers in the district who are in the midst of delivering powerful instruction. Coaches and mentors could use these videos with their mentees to have in-depth discussions about what those teachers were doing well and what could still be improved. If some teachers are still unsure about whether it is possible to “teach all kids,” then such evidence would help them reevaluate their beliefs and give them tools to be successful. I fully support DCPS's plans to provide more oversight for the delivery and evaluation of professional development, but developing educator talent is much like evaluating

performance: multiple options are necessary to address the many unique challenges teachers face instructionally at different stages of their careers.

Third, I suggest that the City Council support DCPS in investing some of its new Central Office human capital in developing relationships with the abundance of organizations and individuals who are ready, willing, and able to assist DCPS throughout this city. For example, there are several high-caliber institutions of higher education with teacher and school leader education programs that could do more to provide high-quality professional development to teachers if the partnership forged is directed toward district goals. Efforts such as DCPS's current partnership with The George Washington University and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future to create the D.C. Urban Teaching Residency Academy should be observed and perhaps replicated with other DCPS schools and universities.⁸ Moreover, the District of Columbia has one of the most highly educated and experienced workforces in this country as well as a high concentration of organizations committed to the improvement of public education services. Stronger partnerships with these organizations as well as the local teachers' union could have a significant impact on the system's ability to achieve its aggressive and admirable goals.

Finally, the TQ Center has been providing ongoing support to OSSE to ensure highly effective teachers for all schools in the District of Columbia, and it strikes me that DCPS and OSSE can leverage their shared passion for improving human capital by investing in shared systems of data, recruitment, and support for educators as well as by strategizing together so that their respective human capital efforts are not duplicative or working at cross-purposes. Supporting and keeping great people to provide a great education to all students will take a truly systemic effort.

Thank you.

¹ See www.tqsource.org.

² Lieberman, J., & Meyer, C. (2008, Summer). Improving teacher quality through human resource management. *Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center News for the Region*, 7–12. Retrieved January 15, 2009, from <http://www.learningpt.org/greatlakeseast/newsletters/Summer2008.pdf> Sclafani, S. (with Lim, E.). (2008).

Rethinking human capital in education: Singapore as a model for teacher development. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute. Retrieved January 15, 2009, from <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/atf/cf/%7BDEB6F227-659B-4EC8-8F84-8DF23CA704F5%7D/SingaporeEDU.pdf>

³ For more information on the Denver ProComp program, see its informative website: <http://denverprocomp.dpsk12.org/about/>

⁴ See DeGrow, B. (2007). *Denver's ProComp and teacher compensation reform in Colorado*. Denver, CO: Independence Institute. Retrieved January 15, 2009, from http://www.i2i.org/articles/IP_5_2007.pdf

⁵ See the National Center on Performance Incentives website: www.performanceincentives.org. The Texas Educator Excellence Grant (TEEG) Year 2 Evaluation Report can be found at www.performanceincentives.org/data/files/news/BooksNews/FINAL_TEEG_YR_2_REPORT.pdf

⁶ Watson, J. G. (2008). *Data quality essentials*. Washington, DC: Center for Educator Compensation Reform, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved January 15, 2009, from <http://www.cecr.ed.gov/guides/dataQuality.pdf>

⁷ See the Center for Educator Compensation Reform website: www.cecr.ed.gov

⁸ See www.gsehd.gwu.edu/article.php?id=740 for more information.

Resources Referenced

The **National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center)** is a federally funded national resource to which the regional comprehensive centers, states, and other education stakeholders turn for strengthening the quality of teaching—especially in high-poverty, low-performing, and hard-to-staff schools—and for finding guidance in addressing specific needs, thereby ensuring highly qualified teachers are serving students with special needs. For additional information, see www.tqsource.org.

The **Center for Educator Compensation Reform (CECR)** is an organization that works to raise national awareness of alternative and effective strategies for educator compensation reform. The CECR website serves as the primary online repository for information, tools, and resources to support Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grantees, policymakers, state officials, and district professionals with the design and implementation of educator compensation reform programs and policies. CECR is funded by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education. For additional information, see www.cecr.ed.gov.

The **National Center on Performance Incentives (NCPI)** is a national research and development center for state and local policy at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College. The purpose of NCPI is to address one of the most contested questions in public education: Do financial incentives for teachers, administrators, and schools affect the quality of teaching and learning? NCPI's work involves a series of rigorous research initiatives, including randomized field trials and evaluations of existing pay-for-performance programs. For additional information, see www.performanceincentives.org.

Resources on Human Capital Management

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