

Attracting, Training & Retaining Educators:

Lessons Learned from Countries Around the World

A Presentation Prepared for the Joint Legislative
Education Oversight Committee

By John Dornan, President/Executive Director
Public School Forum

February 17, 2010

Lesson One:

In Most Countries, Teaching is a Year-Round Job



Three Immediate Advantages...

1. Salaries are more competitive.
2. Countries can easily expand the number of Instructional days.
3. There is time for staff development/training/planning.

Less Tangible Advantages...

1. Teaching is not viewed as “part time employment”.
2. Moonlighting during summer months is not necessary.

Lesson Two:

New Teachers Rarely Assigned Full Teaching Load in Beginning Years of Teaching

- More like internship for first and/or second year of teaching.
- Time for teachers to observe experienced teachers.
- Time for teachers to continue coursework/study.
- Additional time for teachers to prepare for courses.

Lesson Three:

Typically, Fewer Contact Hours of Teaching During School Day

- Scandinavian countries mandate one hour of prep time for one hour of student contact time.
- Korean elementary teachers have 20 minutes of preparation for each class unit; middle and high school teachers have one planning hour per day for each class taught.
- Common feedback from Visiting International Faculty (VIF) in U.S. is the “assembly-line” nature of teaching in American schools.
- Major contributing factor to common lament that U.S. teachers have too little time for planning/working with colleagues/focusing on individual students.

Lesson Four:

In Other Countries Teachers Have Their Own Office Space

- It is not uncommon for schools in Asian countries to have shared office space where teachers have their own desk, file space, computers, etc. In contrast to most U.S. schools which have teacher lounges.
- This might seem insignificant, but teachers in other countries are given the trappings of professional work.

Lesson Five:

Other Countries have Devised Ways for Teachers to Have Varied Career Pathways

- In China there are six distinct levels of teaching, each with differing status and pay.
- In Singapore roles like Department Chair or Grade Team Leader are invested with status, higher pay and additional training.

Lesson Six:

Many Countries Invest Heavily in Continuous Development of Teachers

- In Japan there is time at the end of a school day for teachers to come together either with their departmental or grade-level colleagues and debrief the day's teaching.
- In Asian counties, it is common for teachers to make teaching presentations to colleagues and discuss ways to strengthen their teaching approaches.
- In China, as teachers move up their career ladder, the number of hours they are required to spend on staff development and/or educational research increases from 240 hours for a beginning teach to 520 for the most senior teachers.
- In Singapore, the state provides lengthy training for teachers assuming Department head or team leader responsibilities.

Lesson Seven:

Many High Performing Countries Have Well-Defined Approaches to Teaching That Are Commonly Used by All Teachers

- Singapore math is an example of the value of having a distinct philosophy of teaching mathematics that is taught to all those preparing to teach and reinforced once on the job.
- The same is true in Netherlands.
- In Japan, as an example, all 4th grade teachers in a building would typically be teaching multiplication tables at the same time enabling them to compare notes daily on effective approaches, teaching materials and challenges they face.

Lesson Eight:

Countries That Have Succeeded in Making Teaching a Respected Profession are Attracting the Best and Brightest College Students

- Both Ireland and Singapore's teaching candidates are typically among the top 25% of college students. That is in sharp contrast to the United States.



Lesson Nine:

In Some Countries Rotating Teacher (and Administrator) Job Assignments is Common

- S. Korea, Japan and Singapore routinely rotate teacher and administrator job assignments in the belief that dealing with changing job environments helps one grow on the job. Further, it enables these countries to guarantee a steady inflow of well-qualified teachers into hard-to-staff schools.

Of All the Nations Visited, Singapore Appears to Have the Most Comprehensive (and Successful) Approach to Teacher Recruitment, Training and Retention

- Acceptance into college teacher training programs is highly competitive.
- Teacher majors typically are among the top 25% of entering college students.
- While in college majoring in education, teacher candidates not only attend college tuition free, they are paid 60% of a beginning teacher salary.
- Once on the job, new teachers carry a reduced teaching load enabling them to continue receiving staff development and observing experienced teachers.
- The pay for beginning teachers is comparable to that of engineers.
- Teachers can receive annual bonus awards based on performance.
- Successful teachers can move into what are called “middle management” positions within the system.

Concluding Thoughts...It Isn't Rocket Science

- Countries that give teaching the trappings of a real professional job (ie. Competitive pay, year-round employment, office space, adequate time to prepare, sound preparation and professional development opportunities) ultimately attract high-quality candidates.
- With that, countries that have a clear philosophy around teaching strategies and approaches that instill them in teacher preparation programs and reinforce them with continuous staff development tend to register higher student performance gains.

