

March 24, 2014

Honorable D. Craig Horn
NC House of Representatives
300 North Salisbury Street, Room 419A
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925
RE: Teacher Compensation



Karyn Dickerson
2421 Dellwood Dr.
Greensboro, NC 27408

Dear Representative Horn:

We are some of the award-winning teachers and educators in our state, and we represent diverse regions and education specialties in North Carolina, including elementary, middle, and high school education. Our content areas and backgrounds include teaching core content areas, visual arts, performing arts, foreign languages, ROTC, and exceptional children. We include teachers in traditional classrooms, inclusion classrooms, alternative schools, charter schools, and online schools.

In the past several months, there has been much dialogue concerning ways to improve the salaries of North Carolina's teachers to a more nationally competitive wage. We know firsthand the importance of recruiting and retaining quality teachers, and we worry that the quality of education for our students will decline if we do not change our current compensation model.

We also acknowledge the difficult decisions that you must make concerning finances in North Carolina on a daily basis, and we would like to submit the following guiding principles for teacher compensation for your consideration.

Thank you for all you do for North Carolina. We will answer any questions you may have and look forward to continuing the dialogue about what is best for education in our state.

Sincerely,

Karyn Collie Dickerson, M.Phil, NBCT

Grimsley High School Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Guilford County Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Piedmont Triad/Central Region 5 Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
North Carolina Teacher of the Year 2013-2014

Cindi Riggsbee, M.Ed., NBCT

Gravelly Hill Middle Teacher of the Year 2007-2008
Orange County Teacher of the Year 2007-2008
Piedmont Triad/Central Region 5 Teacher of the Year 2007-2008
North Carolina Teacher of the Year 2008-2009
National Teacher of the Year Finalist 2009

Allison Ormond, Ph.D, NBCT

Rockingham County Middle School Teacher of the Year 2002-2003
Rockingham County Teacher of the Year 2002-2003
Piedmont Triad/Central Region 5 Teacher of the Year 2002-2003
North Carolina Teacher of the Year 2003-2004

Pam Mills

First Flight Middle School Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Dare County Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Northeast Region 1 Teacher of the Year 2012-2013

Thomas B. McGeachy, M.S.

Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired)
Weldon High School Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Weldon City Schools Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
North Central Region 3 Teacher of the Year 2012-2013

Shannon Thomas Godfrey, M.A.T., NBCT

Harnett Central High School Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Harnett County Schools Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Sandhills/South Central Region 4 Teacher of the Year 2012-2013

Darcy Grimes, M.A.

Mabel Elementary Teacher of the Year 2011-2012
Watauga County Teacher of the Year 2011-2012
Northwest Region 7 Teacher of the Year 2011-2012
North Carolina Teacher of the Year 2012-2013

Diana Beasley, M.A.

Hickory High Teacher of the Year 2005-2006
Hickory Public Schools Teacher of the Year 2005-2006
Northwest Region 7 Teacher of the Year 2005-2006
North Carolina Teacher of the Year 2006-2007

Lauren Bilbro-Berry, Ed.D.

JC Tyloe Elementary Teacher of the Year 1999-2000
Beaufort County Schools Teacher of the Year 1999-2000
Northeast Region 1 Teacher of the Year 1999-2000
North Carolina Teacher of the Year 2000-2001

Carrie Morris, M.A.

Swansboro Elementary Teacher of the Year 2004-2005
Swansboro Elementary Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Onslow County Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Southeast Region 2 Teacher of the Year 2012-2013

Malinda Pennington, M.Ed., NBCT

Lead Teacher Wilson Autism Academy
Exceptional Teacher of Excellence 2011
Toisnot Middle School Teacher of the Year 2011-2012
Wilson County Teacher of the Year 2011-2012
North Central Region 3 Teacher of the Year 2011-2012

Karrie Detwiler-Matias

North Carolina Rookie Art Teacher of the Year 2010-2011
J. W. Turlington Alternative School Teacher of the Year 2011-2012
Hoke County Teacher of the Year 2011-2012
Sandhills/South Central Region 4 Teacher of the Year 2011-2012

Julian Wilson

York Chester Middle School Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Gaston County Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Southwest Region 6 Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Pinnacle Technology Leader

Jan Adams, NBCT

Founding A+ Fellow
Adjunct Faculty Member, UNCSCA
NC Charter School Teacher of the Year 2012-2013

Leslie Fetzer, M.A.

National Virtual Public School Teacher of the Year 2012

Jill Francis, M.A., NBCT

Chase High School Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Rutherford County Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Western Region 8 Teacher of the Year 2012-2013

Thomas Soth, M.Ed., NBCT

North Carolina Foreign Language Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
Southern Conference Foreign Language Teacher of the Year 2012-2013
American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages National Teacher of the Year
Finalist 2013

Guiding Principles for Teacher Compensation Models

1. **We believe that teachers need to have more consistency with what to expect in regards to their salary,** especially the knowledge that there are opportunities for salary growth. The past several years of stagnated salaries have made future planning and providing for families difficult for teachers.
2. **We believe that advanced degrees from accredited universities should be incentivized.**
3. **We believe that the base pay for teachers in North Carolina needs to be raised.** The average starting salary of \$30,800 is too low to be nationally competitive and to recruit the strongest teachers into our classrooms. **However, we also believe that increasing the steps for current teachers is equally, if not more important, at this time.** If we do not compensate those who have been teaching, then they will continue to leave the profession in North Carolina.
4. **We believe that if we are going to shift to performance pay, then performance pay should be based on achieving a combination of goals within a set of standards. This performance pay should be available to all teachers who meet the criteria. Performance pay should not be awarded to a percentage of teachers.** This would help avoid competition between teachers and promote leadership, collaboration, and community involvement.
5. **Performance pay incentives should be based on a *combination* of the following areas, which are teacher-selected and allow for career pathways and continuous improvement. Teachers would not need to meet all of these requirements, but a combination of a few of these requirements could lead to an individual performance pay incentive.** Some of the criteria for high performance include, but are not limited to the following: National Board Certified Teacher, Teacher Leader/Academic Dean, Department Chair, Mentor Teacher, Community Involvement Outreach (plans book fairs, parent dinners, science fairs, etc.), Presenter at Education Conferences, Serving on District Level Committees, etc.
6. **We believe that more significant step increases every three years (upon meeting evaluation requirements) would be preferable to a yearly increase.** However, we do not believe that teachers should have to forgo a cost of living increase within this step model. This model is helpful because it will incentivize teachers at the times when many leave the profession: Year 3, Year 6, Year 15, etc.
7. **We believe that the pay steps should be collapsed to allow for more significant increases during the first fifteen years, thus allowing teachers to reach a more competitive salary earlier in their careers. The pay steps should still occur every three years after Year 15, but the increases would not be as significant.** Our hope is that by reaching a competitive wage earlier in a career, more teachers will stay in the profession until retirement because it offers a career pathway (thus eliminating the need for many to look for other positions: Central Office jobs, administrative positions, etc.). This would help save money on teacher recruitment and new teacher training.
8. **We believe that positions for teacher leadership should be created, and teachers who volunteer for these positions and are selected should be compensated as part of the performance pay model.** These "teacher leaders" are similar to academic deans or master teachers. They would teach a reduced class load and conduct teacher evaluations for teachers within their content areas. Not only would their roles entail completing evaluations, but more importantly, would include coaching the teachers in their workload to help them improve as educators.
9. **We believe that student growth bonuses/incentives should be rewarded to the entire school and not individual teachers.** Studies show that individual teacher bonuses based on student growth do not significantly change the practices of that teacher in the classroom. However, when we look at a school-wide incentive, then elements of literacy, writing, whole-child development, academic coaching, etc. are encouraged throughout the entire school. This would help eliminate competition among teachers and encourage both departmental collaboration and cross-curricular collaboration. Additionally, if we are not tying teacher bonuses to individual teacher effectiveness, then we could potentially reduce the number of state-mandated tests and incentivize educators who teach in non-tested areas.