

December 13, 2013



Iowa Department of Education

Commission on Educator Leadership and
Compensation: Annual Report

Iowa Department of Education
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Introduction

Division VII of House File 215 established the Commission on Educator Leadership and Compensation. The Legislature charged the Commission with three primary responsibilities:

- 1) Monitor the implementation of Iowa's Teacher Leadership and Compensation System.
- 2) Evaluate and make recommendations to the department on school districts' applications for approval of teacher leadership plans and on the expenditure of money appropriated for the development of Iowa's Teacher Leadership and Compensation System.
- 3) Review the use and effectiveness of the funds distributed to school districts for supplemental assistance to high-need schools.

In addition to these primary responsibilities, the Commission is also required to submit its findings and any recommendations for changes to Iowa's Teacher Leadership and Compensation System and the state supplemental assistance to high-need schools program in a report to the Director of the Iowa Department of Education, the State Board of Education, the Governor, and the General Assembly by December 15 annually. Because FY 2014 was designated as a planning year and the Teacher Leadership and Compensation System and supplemental assistance to high-need schools programs will not be implemented until FY 2015, the Commission will use this report as an opportunity to share some of the recommendations and findings it has shared with the Department during its three meetings as part of the initial planning and development of Iowa's Teacher Leadership and Compensation System.

Feedback, Findings and Recommendations

At their meeting on August 14, 2013, Commission members provided comments and feedback on the Department's proposed process for allocating and distributing planning grants. Following this input from the Commission, the Department launched a planning grant application process on iowagrants.gov that distributed the \$3.5 million appropriated by the Legislature. These planning grants were designed to enable districts to facilitate a local decision-making process to develop a teacher leadership and compensation plan. All public school districts in Iowa were eligible to apply for a planning grant between September 3 and October 31, 2013. All 346 school districts in Iowa applied for and received a planning grant (each district received \$5,000 plus \$3.71 per student in planning grant funds). Several Commission members tested the iowagrants.gov application system prior to its launch and provided feedback, which was incorporated into the final planning grant application process.

The September 24, 2013, Commission meeting focused on the development of the application that school districts will complete if they choose to submit a teacher leadership and compensation plan; and on the development of the rubric Commission members will use to evaluate school districts' plans. The Department then revised the application and scoring rubric using the feedback provided by Commission members.

The November 12, 2013, Commission meeting provided members the opportunity to share feedback that they had heard from local stakeholders on the planning grant process and on the development of Iowa's Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) System. Commission members shared the following themes:

- The planning grant application process was easier than had been expected.
- The Department and the Commission will need to have a solid selection and review process to ensure the effective implementation of the TLC system.
- Commission members need to be equipped to manage the push-back that will occur when the Commission makes judgments about which districts are selected in year one.

Commission members also shared many concerns, including:

- Some good applications may not be funded during the first year because of the phased-in approach of the system.
- Small districts may be disadvantaged during the process because they have fewer human resources available to develop and write their teacher leadership plans.
- Many of the details of the planning process and the selection criteria need further clarification.
- The implementation timeline is not long enough.
- There may not be enough qualified people available for both teacher leadership roles and for filling classroom positions when teacher leaders are out of the classroom.

In addition, Commission members also provided suggestions for both how Commission members would score school districts' TLC applications and how the Department should use these scores in the selection of school districts to participate in the first year of the program. The Department asked the Commission members to consider the following options:

- 1) Option 1 – Scoring teams would score holistically the entire application; applications would be divided up and assigned to a team.
- 2) Option 2 – Scoring pairs would score one specific aspect of each application.

Commission members considered the strengths and weaknesses of both options and shared their thoughts on both options and made suggestions to strengthen the process. All Commission members agreed that regardless of which option was used, a one-page abstract of each application should be added to the application. The Department will use the feedback in its final determination for the review and scoring by the Commission.

The Commission also considered whether the Department should consider district characteristics, such as size and geography, in the selection process. Members expressed a range of thoughts on this issue, which the Department is considering in the development of the district selection plan.

Finally, individual Commission members suggested several items to highlight in this annual report, including:

- All districts applied for the initial planning grant.
- The Commission anticipates a high number of districts submitting an application for the 2014-2015 school year.
- The timeline was a challenge for the Commission.
- The Department has done a great job of working within the timeline.
- The scoring rubric was of very high quality.
- The Commission looks for legislative support to frontload funding if there is a high number of quality applications in the first year.
- The Department has worked with the Area Education Agencies (AEAs) to support the planning process.
- There is a significant need for training teacher leaders and principals in districts that implement a teacher leadership and compensation plan.
- The Commission has struggled with the question of equity, diversity and fairness in granting TLC awards.
- Without an assessment that aligns with the Iowa Core, it will be difficult or impossible to know if the TLC structure is positively impacting student achievement.

Conclusion

Since beginning their work in August, Commission members have come together to guide a successful beginning to the development of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation system. The most immediate responsibility for the Commission will be the evaluation of school districts' teacher leadership and compensation plans. The Commission will then begin to shift its focus to the other areas of responsibility given to it by the General Assembly in Division VII of House File 215. In its brief existence, the Commission has come together to fulfill its obligations and to provide input from stakeholders on how this system can help strengthen teaching and learning throughout Iowa.

Appendix

Names and Affiliations of Commission Members:

Jeff Anderson	Boone	School Board Member
Mike Beranek	West Des Moines	Teacher
Molly Boyle	Waukee	Teacher
Mary Jane Cobb	Des Moines	Executive Director, ISEA
Tom Downs	Des Moines	IASB Executive Director
Kevin Ericson	Nevada	Teacher
Ray Feuss	Cedar Rapids	Teacher
Patti Fields	Iowa City	School Board Member
Brenda Garcia-Van Auken	Muscatine	Parent
Paul Gausman	Sioux City	Superintendent
Mary Jo Hainstock	Vinton-Shellsburg	Superintendent
Donna Huston	Twin Cedars	Teacher
Todd Louwagie	Algona	Teacher
Diane Pratt	Ft. Dodge	Teacher
Victoria Robinson	Cedar Falls	Professor, UNI
Dan Smith	Clive	Executive Director, SAI
Georgia Van Gundy	Des Moines	Principal Financial
Paula Vincent	Johnston	Chief Administrator, Heartland AEA
Denny Wulf	Norwalk	Superintendent
Ryan Wise (ex-officio member)	Des Moines	Iowa Department of Education
Peter Ansingh (facilitator)	Des Moines	Iowa Department of Education