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MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Utah State Board of Education

FROM: Diana Suddreth, Director
Teaching & Learning

DATE: November 3-4, 2016

INFORMATION/

ACTION: Teacher Leaders Report

Background:

During the 2016 General Session, the Legislature enacted 53A-6-115, Teacher Leaders. Specifically, 53A-6-115(5)(a) directs the Board to "solicit recommendations from school districts and educators" regarding appropriate resources and compensation for a teacher leader." Teaching and Learning staff have begun gathering feedback as required in statute.

Board Strategic Plan:

This item supports the following imperative(s) and strategies in the Board's Strategic Plan:

- Imperatives: Quality Learning
- Strategies: Leadership Development and Funding

Anticipated Action:

The Law and Licensing Committee will be provided with current feedback and an outline for next steps.

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Utah State Board of Education

**REPORT TO LEGISLATIVE
EDUCATION INTERIM COMMITTEE**

Teacher Leaders

53A-6-115

November, 2016

Please contact Jeannie Rowland at 801-538-7923 for further information.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

U.C.A. Section 53A-6-115 creates the role of Teacher Leader and requires the State Board of Education to submit an annual report to the Legislative Education Interim Committee on or before the committee's November 2016 interim meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Teacher leaders maintain classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also assuming leadership responsibilities outside the classroom. Teacher leaders fundamentally commit to support school and student success through working to maintain current teachers, keeping valuable resources in the classroom.

As called for in 53A-6-115(5)(i-ii), The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) solicited the required recommendations for appropriate resources and ways to compensate a teacher leader. Districts specified money, time and funding to attend professional conferences, payment for courses to increase skills or obtain a higher university degree, additional time to do their added workload.

Educators indicated that a stipend is appropriate to compensate a teacher leader for work required by the assignment. A few recommended relicensure credit, offering paid time off, and university or other professional learning at no cost to them.

BACKGROUND

Utah has an urgent need to increase the retention of our teachers and this directly impact's the success of our students. High teacher attrition forces schools to spend greater amounts of school limited resources on recruiting, hiring and inducting new teachers. The role of teacher leader allows our exemplary educators to remain in the classroom, while providing school leadership outside the classroom. Current practice is for excellent teachers to seek administrative positions for a career move, as well as financial increase.

FINDINGS

The USBE staff has gathered feedback from the field and found that the first response to recommended resources and compensation was overwhelmingly: money. This is not surprising in light of the current public discussion being held in our state focusing on our position in per pupil spending, teacher pay, class sizes, and acknowledging the commitment and competencies in the teaching profession.

Staff has simultaneously gathered solicitations and poured over the teacher leadership research over the last few months. The teacher leader role is an exciting and much-needed addition to a teacher's advancement options. Two findings have risen to the top of the heap. The establishment of a teacher leader adds to the professionalism of the job and creates a career pathway for teachers to progress and be promoted without leaving the classroom. Additionally, teachers, both in Utah and other states, are expressing their desire to be more involved in school decisions and affecting policy.

Career Pathway

Giving teachers the opportunity to expand their knowledge about teaching and learning, develop their skills of working with adults, and increase their leadership capacity increase a teacher's positive feelings and professional growth. Teacher leaders' peers look for support through a colleague that has similar, relevant experience. So many teachers enter the field as a beginning teacher with a classroom of students for which they are responsible teaching and accountable to ensure learning and achievement. At the end of a 30 year career, a teacher leaves with a classroom of students for which they are responsible teaching and accountable to ensure learning and achievement. Too often, the only avenue for a promotion in position and pay is to move into administration. This takes our best, most effective teachers out of the classroom. Teachers will be attracted to and continue in the teaching profession if they are rewarded for professional growth and effective teaching through pathways for career opportunities that come with increased leadership responsibilities and increased monetary compensation.

Teacher Voice

In areas such as Shanghai and Singapore, teachers are treated as colleagues in reform. When teachers' opinions and voice are requested and honored, individuals are elevated. Their perspectives are part of distributed leadership, collaboration, and critical changes in the profession. Teachers are ready to work with administrators and policy leaders to create learning and support systems that work for teachers so that they can support their students and increase achievement. When requesting input about how to best compensate a teacher, Allison Riddle, 2014 Utah Teacher of the Year, provided great ideas about teacher leaders. Specifically, one of her profound statements was, "If we acknowledge the expertise of our teacher leaders, we will retain them and we will also attract and prepare stronger candidates. It's that simple."

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The current role of "teacher leader" is loosely defined as anyone that undertakes a responsibility outside the classroom. This can include a grade level or content-specific chair, participation in the Community Council, offering professional learning for school and/or district, modeling instruction for peers, being a content-area specialist, mentoring beginning teachers, sharing administrative duties with building principal, representing the school on district- or state-level committees, and others. Though many of these roles put a teacher in a position to lead, many are not strategically clear in expectations, daily work, or their role within the scope of overall school goals and objectives. Honoring their experience and expertise with the ability to move up a career ladder and receive compensation for their time and administrative support creates a sense of self efficacy and empowerment that increases the likelihood of retention of our best and brightest.

USBE staff recommends that the process of defining this role be slowed down and centered on input and work from teachers in classrooms. When edicts come down from the Legislature and Board, it is viewed as "one more thing" that districts, schools, and teachers have to do to be in compliance. Too many times, we rush to create change with the intent to better our schools, teachers, and student achievement, only to crush the growth by dictating from the top down. We feel strongly that if teachers are the majority of voices in the room, the support of the teacher leader role will feel more grass roots, promoting buy in and excitement from the field. Acknowledging that both the Legislature and the

Board are implementing research-based best practices, staff feels that this is a perfect opportunity to let teachers be heard, acknowledged, honored and elevated such that they feel that they are perceived as professional and have a voice at the table.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by Jeannie Rowland, Coordinator, Educator Effectiveness, under the direction of Diana Suddreth, Teaching and Learning. Other contributing State Board of Education staff who contributed to the report is Katie Nitka, Educator Specialist, Teaching and Learning.

APPENDIX

Utah has an urgent need to increase the retention of our teachers and this directly impact's the success of our students. High teacher attrition forces schools to spend greater amounts of school limited resources on recruiting, hiring and inducting new teachers. Currently 15% of teachers leave the Utah education workforce after their first year, on average, while approximately a third of new Utah educators (33-35%) leave the state education workforce within their first three years of teaching and 43 to 49 percent depart within 5 years. High teacher attrition can cause problems with educational quality, equity and efficiency. Schools with high-minority, high-poverty, and low-performing students have higher teacher attrition rates.

One of the essential expectations of the Utah State Board of Education's Strategic Plan is to promote career pathways that incentivize effective teachers to engage in alternative teacher leadership roles while they remain active in the classroom. Teacher leaders are our exemplary educators with proven skills, desires, and dispositions to provide support and guidance to their colleagues. They are equipped to work with our beginning teachers to build their craft and hone their teaching. By promoting our teacher leaders to positions of growth along a career pathway, we honor our best teachers and their talents. One of the greatest benefits of teacher leaders is to increase the retention of our current teaching force and improve the skills of our new recruits.

Superintendents and district-level leaders representing 24 districts provided face-to-face input and recommendations during a previously scheduled leadership meeting. Initial findings from 81 responses (some districts had more than one

participate) are that the teacher leader role has multiple and distinctly unique definitions across districts. Addressing specifically the three roles indicated in 53A-6-115(2), 10 responses asserted utilizing the teacher leader for student teachers and their supervising teacher, including assisting with the training of recently hired teachers and mentoring. Respondents indicated 11 instances assigning their teacher leaders to support school-based professional learning.

Though not specifically mentioned in statute, "Instructional Coach" received 33 assertions of teacher leader responsibilities and the role "Professional Learning" facilitator was mentioned 13 times.

Teachers' input was solicited primarily through email. We received responses from current teacher leaders, teachers recognized in the field as exemplars, instructional coaches, higher education preparatory programs, mentors and other nationally award-winning teachers. Their primary response was compensation through pay, whether in the form of stipends or a separate pay scale. However, it was not anticipated that these teachers would directly explain the work of a teacher leader and why their pay should be increased. They specifically discussed the additional time to plan, meet with teachers outside their classroom teaching schedule, off-contract time during the summer to work with school administrators to plan school-wide professional learning, and being a resource through staying abreast of the most recent and relevant research. Teachers spoke directly to the desire for increased compensation through augmented opportunities for professional learning (paid for by the school or district), specific professional learning for leadership and adult learners, and time to work with student teachers.