

Examining Teacher Evaluation Systems

Special seminars address hot topics surrounding educator effectiveness and compensation systems

With a high number of calls and inquiries coming into the WASB in recent months concerning teacher effectiveness systems, Barry Forbes and Bob Butler, co-directors of the WASB Legal Services, said the WASB knew a special seminar was needed to address the topic.

"We realize there is a great deal of interest in educator effectiveness and compensation systems and that's what this seminar was all about," Forbes said.

Glenn Schilling (pictured), superintendent of the Hartland/Lakeside School District, along with several of his colleagues, presented his district's teacher evaluation system. Dacia Hopfensperger, assistant superintendent of curriculum for the Hartland/Lakeside School District, said the key to establishing a successful system has been involving teachers.

"Nothing has been top-down," Hopfensperger said. "It's been teachers rolling up their sleeves trying to figure out what's best for students."

Schilling said the district has worked hard to create a system that holds teams of teachers accountable for student learning rather than individual teachers.

"A lot of performance models isolate people, this model gets people to work together," Schilling said.

Deb Gurke, WASB director of Governance and Leadership Development (GoLD), and Jon Bales, superintendent of the DeForest Area School District, addressed work on the state-level regarding educator effectiveness and evaluation systems. Both Gurke and Bales serve on the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness Work Group, which, along with the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness Design Team, is developing a model educator evaluation system that

could be adopted in Wisconsin public schools.

Gurke said there is much work to do, the group recently finished drafting the model teacher evaluation system, and the next step is to develop the implementation of it. Among other development steps, this will include establishing pilot programs, and developing evaluator training so teachers get evaluated similarly across the state.

Attendees raised questions as to whether their districts would be required to adopt the state-developed teacher evaluation system. Gurke said provisions would allow districts to create their own systems. Additionally, legislators have not passed a bill requiring districts to have a teacher evaluation system in place, but Gurke said the state's model is being developed preemptively.

"If we don't design a system, something will get handed down to us," she said. Politics aside, Gurke and Bales said the model teacher evaluation system is about creating the best learning opportunities for students.

"We really want it to drive student achievement, we want to create a system that helps drive the emotional and academic growth of our students," Gurke said. "This is not just about a federal mandate."

Forbes and Butler, presented a session on alternative compensation systems. With recent law changes giving more authority to school boards regarding teacher compensation systems, this session gave school



Glenn Schilling, superintendent of the Hartland-Lakeside School District, shared his district's process in implementing a teacher evaluation system.

board members a look at alternative compensation systems that school districts use in other states. Forbes and Butler discussed legal and practical issues surrounding implementation of those plans in Wisconsin. Any way you look at it, Butler said, a transition to a new pay system is hard work.

"Teachers and principals need significant training on new compensation systems, particularly in those districts basing pay increases on evaluations," Butler said. "Communication with teachers is vital to the success of any new compensation system." ■

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