

AVERAGE JOE THINK TANK'S BLUEPRINT FOR TEACHER UNION REFORM

Current problems:

- Tenure allows mediocre teachers to remain in classrooms
- Young talented teachers move to other professions due inability to receive pay commensurate with their productivity (as they could in other fields)
- Colleges of education having hard time attracting quality students
- Teacher salaries and benefits account for growing percentage of school budgets
- Rising textbook, technology, and utility costs also putting strain on district budgets
- Teachers not accountable for student performance
- Academic growth not keeping pace with increased education spending
- [No correlation between education funding and academic performance](#)

How do we fix these problems so that teachers, students, and taxpayers all benefit?

Back to the Future!

A look back to the past provides a system that could be modified to today's needs – The Guild System. Teachers begin as apprentices, then after completing their apprenticeship their performance determines their level of proficiency and pay. Proficiency is measured from three years worth of data for students: previous year, academic year, and subsequent year (subsequent year data used to inhibit cheating). Teacher's proficiency will be measured based on ranking for specific fields {i.e. general classroom, special education (SPED), English language learners (ELL), gifted and talented (GT), art, music, physical education (PE), literacy coordinator, Title 1 classroom teachers (Title 1 schools receive Federal money for high poverty percentage), etc.}. Staff development training is always available (and required for new curriculum, etc.) but teachers need to ascertain which training will most effectively improve their careers.

- I. Beginning teachers start out as Apprentices. They would serve a three-year term and receive pay similar to current new teachers. High performing teachers (see below) mentor them and district administration provides extensive staff development. There is no pay difference for a graduate degree though a district may help pay for an advanced degree during Apprenticeship.
- II. In a teacher's fourth year they begin to progress through the Journey Levels. There should be four levels of Journey teachers with level one being the lowest and progressing up to four as the highest. Level placement is based strictly on student performance as compared to other teachers in the same field (see above for examples). There is no pay

difference for a graduate degree though the district may help pay for earning an advanced degree during Journey levels. If the degree improves their performance they will receive greater pay through the system, if not, taxpayer money isn't wasted on degrees without commensurate performance improvement. Ranking must be maintained to continue at previous year's pay scale.

- i. Journey One level would be the lowest 20% of non-apprentice teacher proficiency (1 – 20% of overall teacher rankings in field) or a comparable performance standard. Extensive staff development is offered to these teachers but not mandatory – they have to take control of their own career at this point. Any teacher in this category for more than two consecutive years or three out of five should be terminated or assisted into another educational field (for instance, a poor performing classroom teacher may make a great literacy specialist).
 - ii. Journey Two would be the next 20% level of non-apprentice teacher proficiency (21 – 40% of overall teacher rankings in field) or a comparable performance standard. Any teacher in this category for more than five years total should be terminated or assisted into another educational field.
 - iii. Journey Three would be the next 20% level of non-apprentice teacher proficiency (41 – 60% of overall teacher rankings in field) or a comparable performance standard. If progression to this level occurs relatively quickly these teachers can be considered for mentoring duties to Apprentice teachers. Those teachers who attain this level rapidly will also be eligible for bonus pay for working with low performing populations (ELL, SPED, Title I, etc.). General classroom teachers in this category have to be able to effectively teach a class by themselves with minor assistance from Para-professionals and other teachers.
 - iv. Journey Four would be the next 20% level of non-apprentice teacher proficiency (61 – 80% of overall teacher rankings in field) or a comparable performance standard. Teachers at this level will be expected to mentor Apprentice teachers. Teachers who attain this level will receive bonus pay for working with low performing populations (ELL, SPED, Title I, etc.). General classroom teachers in this category have to be able to effectively teach a class by themselves with little or no assistance from Para-professionals and other teachers.
- III. Teachers progress from Journey levels to Master levels. These are the top teachers in a district and largely responsible for mentoring, leadership, curriculum evaluation, etc. Not accepting or effectively performing these responsibilities will result in salary reduction to Journey Four level. Administrators shall mentor Master teachers for leadership functions. A teacher must spend at least two years as a Journey teacher prior to becoming a Master teacher. This short transition time will attract high

achievers into Colleges of Education (then into schools) and also high potential non-traditional teachers from other disciplines into the education field. General classroom teachers in this category have to be able to effectively teach a class by themselves. General classroom Master teachers should work two out of every six years with low performing populations. Master teachers will receive bonus pay for working with low performing populations (ELL, SPED, Title I, etc.). Ranking must be maintained to continue at previous year's pay scale.

- i. Master One would be the next 10% level of non-apprentice teacher proficiency (81 – 90% of overall teacher rankings in field) or a comparable performance standard.
- ii. Master Two would be the top 10% level of non-apprentice teacher proficiency (91 – 100% of overall teacher rankings in field) or a comparable performance standard.

Guild system benefits:

- Effectively attract the highest quality teachers
- Long-term mediocre teachers will remove themselves from the system or they can be terminated
- Reward for high performance will motivate teachers to continually improve and maintain proficiency
- Students will receive consistently improved education
- Fewer teachers per classroom frees up money for other under funded budget needs
- Taxpayers will see their tax dollars spent more effectively
- The poorest performing population in a district will have better performing teachers on a regular basis
- Teachers maintain collective bargaining
- District maintains cost controls
- Taxpayers get accountability
- Education funding does not need to increase to improve academic performance

Control options:

- Lock in teacher salary and benefits as a consistent percentage of a budget
- Teacher pay and benefits to increase or decrease as the district budget fluctuates
- District budget increases (through state, private, or mill levy override funds) over a certain amount should use the extra money to pay for capital improvements so that district taxpayers are not burdened with paying bond interest and/or inflation on maintenance items that are delayed to cover teacher salary/benefit increases
- Eliminate tenure (see Journey One and Two for teacher termination options)