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WEAC UNVEILS "MOVING EDUCATION FORWARD: BOLD REFORMS" PLATFORM

Statewide Educator Evaluation, Performance Pay Systems and MPS Reconfiguration Proposed

MADISON (Feb. 8, 2011) – State officers of the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) today unveiled three dramatic proposals as part of their quality-improvement platform called "Moving Education Forward: Bold Reforms." The proposals include the creation of a statewide system to evaluate educators; instituting performance pay to recognize teaching excellence; and breaking up the Milwaukee Public School District into a series of manageable-sized districts within the city.

"In our work with WEAC leaders and members we have debated and discussed many ideas related to modernizing pay systems, better evaluation models, and ways to help turn around struggling schools in Milwaukee," said WEAC President Mary Bell. "We believe bold actions are needed in these three areas to move education forward. The time for change is now. This is a pivotal time in public education and we're in an era of tight resources. We must have systems in place to ensure high standards for accountability – that means those working in the system must be held accountable to high standards of excellence."

TEACHER EVALUATION: In WEAC's proposed teacher evaluation system, new teachers would be reviewed annually for their first three years by a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) panel made up of both teachers and administrators. The PAR panels judge performance in four areas:

- Planning and preparing for student learning
- Creating a quality learning environment
- Effective teaching
- Professional responsibility

Mary Bell, President
Dan Burkhalter, Executive Director



The proposed system would utilize the expertise of the UW Value-Added Research Center and would include the review of various student data to inform evaluation decisions and to develop corrective strategies for struggling teachers. Teachers who do not demonstrate effectiveness to the PAR panels are exited out of the profession and offered career transition programs and services through locally negotiated agreements.

Veteran teachers would be evaluated every three years, using a combination of video and written analysis and administrator observation. Underperforming veteran teachers would be required to go through this process a second year. If they were still deemed unsatisfactory, they would be re-entered into the PAR program and could ultimately face removal.

"The union is accepting our responsibility for improving the quality of the profession, not just for protecting the due process rights of our members," said Bell. "Our goal is to have the highest-quality teachers at the front of every classroom across the state. And we see a role for classroom teachers to contribute as peer reviewers, much like a process often used in many private sector performance evaluation models."

PERFORMANCE PAY: The proposed performance pay system would replace the current step-based salary schedule with career ladders which provide highly effective teachers with opportunities to obtain additional compensation and be given additional responsibilities. The new system would be broadly outlined by the state but implemented locally through collective bargaining agreements.

The plan acknowledges three different levels of proficiency in the profession: initial educator status, professional and master educator. It would include pay incentives for hard-to-serve schools and hard-to-fill positions like bilingual teachers; for teachers taking on leadership activities (like peer coaching, mentoring, curriculum development and research coordination); and for teachers attaining National Board Certification status.

"The system acknowledges that experience and education matter – but that we should also establish specific market incentives to encourage veteran educators to fill hard-to-serve schools and hard-to-fill positions," said Bell. "We also need to recognize and reward innovation, leadership, national certification and other qualifications that have been shown to improve teaching. The goal is to attract and retain high-quality educators, and performance pay can be used to reward excellence."

RECONFIGURATION OF MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: WEAC'S third proposed reform involves breaking up the Milwaukee Public Schools district into smaller, more manageable components. This bold action is designed to drive greater accountability within the system. It will also make the system easier to manage; give students more opportunities and choices; and help ensure students don't "slip through the cracks." Additionally, the proposed MPS reconfiguration will deepen the engagement of parents and the community with their schools, since it will be easier for them to navigate through a smaller district.

"The people within the system – the parents, educators and community – are doing their best to meet student needs," said Bell. "Many good-faith Milwaukee reform ideas and proposals have been acted on over the last few years, including ideas our union championed, but none have led to the kind of drastic change that is needed to support Milwaukee's students. It's time to escalate our actions. And in its current configuration, we do not believe MPS can be fixed. It is simply too big."

WEAC leaders are calling for legislators to convene a bipartisan group of legislators, education leaders and unions, parents and community groups to develop a detailed legislative proposal in 2011, with implementation to begin in 2015.

"If you want to drive change in Milwaukee's public schools, connect the educators and the community together into smaller districts within the city, and without a doubt it can happen," said Bell. "We must put the needs of Milwaukee's students and families ahead of what's best for the adults in the system," said Bell. "That includes our union – we must act differently – we must lead."

SUMMARY: All of the ideas presented in the "Moving Education Forward: Bold Reforms" platform will require further processing to fully implement. WEAC is hoping to expedite discussions and demonstrate the state union's strong commitment and willingness to be active partners in education reform. For more detailed information on these proposals, visit www.weac.org.

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