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To:

CC:

Date: Thu, 6/2/2011 1:16:34 PM

Subject: Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 6/2/11

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NATIONAL NEWS

8 'Chiefs For Change' Endorse Education School Review

Education Week

By: Stephen Sawchuk

June 1, 2011

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2011/06/chiefs_for_change_endorse_ed_s.html

Eight state education chiefs belonging to the "[Chiefs for Change](#)" coalition today endorsed a controversial [review](#) of university-based teacher education programs now being conducted by the National Council on Teacher Quality and *U.S. News and World Report*.

"Great teachers make great students. Preparing teachers with the knowledge and skills to be effective educators is paramount to improving student achievement. Ultimately, colleges of education should be reviewed the same way we propose evaluating teachers—based on student learning," the chiefs said in a statement. "Until that data becomes available in every state, Chiefs for Change supports the efforts of the National Council on Teacher Quality to gather research-based data and information about the nation's colleges of education."

Chiefs for Change is a coalition of state education chiefs that supports such reforms as teacher-evaluation reform, school choice, and school accountability. The group currently counts nine members (a tenth, former Louisiana Superintendent Paul Pastorak, resigned recently).

Eight of the nine members endorsed the review, with Virginia Secretary of Education Gerard Robinson apparently the lone holdout.

The NCTQ/*U.S. News* effort to grade every college of education in the country against more than a dozen standards is now well under way. It is based primarily on reviews of course requirements and syllabuses.

The groups' standards and review process have been [criticized by several heavy-hitters](#) in the teacher education community, and [some public institutions are not participating voluntarily in the review](#).

The chiefs endorsing the review are Janet Barresi, Oklahoma state superintendent of public information; Tony Bennett, Indiana superintendent of public instruction; Steve Bowen, Maine commissioner of education; Chris Cerf, New Jersey commissioner of education; Deborah A. Gist, Rhode Island commissioner of elementary and secondary education; Kevin Huffman, Tennessee commissioner of education; Eric Smith, Florida commissioner of education; and Hanna Skandera, New Mexico public education department secretary-designate.

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Rhode Island schools chief: Cooperation key to school reform

Associated Press

By: Staff

June 1, 2011

http://www.boston.com/news/local/rhode_island/articles/2011/06/01/ri_schools_chief_to_address_lawmakers/

PROVIDENCE, R.I.—The state's top education official told lawmakers Wednesday that it will take more than money and standardized tests to improve Rhode Island's public schools.

In an address to a joint session of the state House and Senate, Education Commissioner Deborah Gist said parents, teachers and elected leaders must work together to increase student performance and turn out graduates ready for jobs or college.

"To transform our schools, we must also transform the culture," she told lawmakers. "We need to speak out in support of public education and the things we believe in, but we should not question the good intentions of those with whom we disagree. We must never let our dialogue and discourse become toxic."

Gist became the state's education commissioner in 2009. It's been a tough time for schools, marked by budget woes, teacher layoffs and low-income and minority students performing worse than other students. One bit of good news, too: Last year, Rhode Island won \$75 million in federal "Race to the Top" funds.

Gist cited math and science education, dropout rates and the achievement gap facing low-income and minority students as a key challenge. She called on lawmakers to support Gov. Lincoln Chafee's call to increase school funding by \$13 million in the fiscal year that begins July 1. But she said money won't help if Rhode Islanders don't work together to support public education.

"The vast majority of Rhode Islanders respect our teachers and the work they do every day," Gist said. "Unfortunately, too often the cries of discontent have drowned out the voices of support, and this has become disheartening to many dedicated educators."

State law requires the education commissioner to report to lawmakers annually on the state of education.

House Speaker Gordon Fox, D-Providence, said Gist's call for a respectful tone in public debate applies not just to school reform.

"It's a valuable lesson for schools and for legislative debate," he said.

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Duncan Argues for Fast-Tracking ESEA; Kline Says No Way

Education Week

By: Michele McNeil

June 1, 2011

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2011/06/arne_duncan_may_wish_that.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+CampaignK-12+%28Education+Week+Blog%3A+Politics+K-12%29

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan may wish that Congress moved on "real people's time," rather than "Washington time," when it comes to reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. But not all wishes come true—not even for a cabinet secretary.

At a campaign stop Tuesday in Minnesota, Duncan once again implored Congress to act swiftly to rewrite the No Child Left Behind Act.

"We desperately want to see this done before schools go back in the fall," he said during a discussion with local educators, according to [this](#) Associated Press story. "This can't be done on Washington time. It needs to happen on real people's time."

But Rep. John Kline, the Minnesota Republican who is the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, is not persuaded. Last month, he declared there was ["no chance"](#) of meeting Duncan's back-to-school deadline. Yesterday, he said in a [statement](#) that rather than focusing on "timelines and rhetoric" in advance of an "arbitrary" deadline, his committee is focused on "thoughtful reform initiatives."

"Our education system is in critical need of improvement, but we have all seen what can result when Congress hastily crafts sweeping legislation to meet an arbitrary deadline," he said.

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FLORIDA NEWS

Fla. School Chief Search a Rocky, Relentless Road

St. Petersburg Times

By: Ron Matus and Jeffrey Solochek

June 1, 2011

<http://www.theledger.com/article/20110601/NEWS/110609935/1005/news02?Title=Fla-School-Chief-Search-a-Rocky-Relentless-Road-&tc=ar>

Florida, the Big Man on Campus in some education reform circles, was supposed to swagger up and get the pick of the litter for a new education commissioner. It had the rep. It had the results.

But now it's looking more and more like the prom king with spinach in his teeth. The good-looking candidates don't want to dance.

The first list of 19, unveiled last week, turned out to be less a who's who of rising stars than a list of ... who? No buzz. No heft. So uninspiring that state education leaders extended the search.

A major problem, observers say: Republican Gov. Rick Scott, who some say ran off Florida's highly regarded commissioner, Eric J. Smith.

"Reformers might surmise that if the governor wasn't happy with a rock star like Eric Smith, he must be crazy," said Mike Petrilli, executive vice president of the Fordham Institute, a right-of-center think tank.

Even if a top-tier candidate emerges by the new June 6 deadline — and some are still being aggressively courted — it won't fully erase recent chatter that a state that has been a brash trailblazer suddenly looks dysfunctional and almost desperate.

"Nobody begrudges a governor's prerogative to have their own people," said Andy Rotherham, a former education adviser to President Bill Clinton who runs the influential Eduwonk blog. "But Eric's departure was handled in a very immaturish way that just sent a bad signal."

Scott's stiff-arm might not be the only red flag for candidates. The governor has embraced a vouchers-for-everybody system that even many voucher supporters say goes too far. His photo-op school visits with former Washington, D.C., chancellor Michelle Rhee — at the same time he was reportedly refusing to meet with Smith — struck some as inappropriate. And his stand on education spending has yo-yoed in a way that even fellow Republicans find baffling.

On the campaign trail, he promised to keep school budgets the same, but once in office, he proposed a 10 percent cut. Then, last week, he vetoed \$615 million from the budget and called on lawmakers to funnel it back into education.

Brian Burgess, Scott's communications director, rejected the premise that high quality candidates are not applying because of the governor. He said it's not so dramatic as that but added he is not fully connected with the process, which is being run by the Florida Board of Education.

"The person that the board eventually appoints is going to be someone who is going to be able to get the job done, a top quality applicant, and someone who agrees with the direction the governor wants to take," Burgess said.

This wasn't supposed to happen.

Since Jeb Bush was elected governor in 1998, Florida has earned a national reputation for relentlessly rolling out big, controversial reforms. School grades. Vouchers. Third-grade retention. Over that same period, by coincidence or not, the performance of Florida students has improved as much as any state in the country. Education Week magazine ranked Florida No. 5 this year, in part because of big gains on national tests and graduation rates.

"If you're a leader in the field, and you like to be challenged, this is the place to be," said board member Roberto Martinez of Miami.

Which makes the next education commissioner that much more important.

Florida continues to spin off huge policy changes, including a massive overhaul this spring of how teachers are hired, fired and paid. The road ahead is littered with mind-numbing technical challenges — and political sensitivities — that will become potholes if not deftly handled. The creation of hundreds of new standardized tests. The crafting of new teacher evaluation systems. Statistical models that must somehow tease out a teacher's contribution to a student's test score.

Smith, even-keeled and methodical, has been shepherding all of those changes. Hired by the Board of Education in late 2007, he has been building the system that lawmakers have outlined in broad strokes and, at the same time, helping to shape it. His relations with lawmakers were so good that the Senate passed a resolution last session honoring him.

"He's as good as they come," said Sen. Steve Wise, R-Jacksonville, who sponsored SB 736, the polarizing bill that changed the teaching profession. And his successor needs to be just as good, he said.

SB 736 has "got to be put in," said Wise, who chairs the Senate Education PreK-12 Committee. "Somebody better know something about how to do those things."

His take on the current list of applicants to replace Smith: "Let me put it this way: It didn't knock my socks off."

high hopes

Here are some of the more high-profile names that education observers have thrown out as potentially good fits to be Florida's next education commissioner:

Deborah Gist: Rhode Island education commissioner. Sent message through spokesperson to say she's not leaving Rhode Island.

Gerard Robinson: Virginia secretary of education. Told the St. Petersburg Times he's not leaving Virginia.

Tony Bennett: Indiana superintendent of public instruction; chair of Chiefs for Change, a group of state education commissioners backed by Jeb Bush's Foundation for Excellence in Education. Did not respond for comment.

Paul Pastorek: Louisiana state superintendent of education. Did not respond to e-mail for comment.

Paul Vallas: headed state-run Recovery School District in New Orleans. Left last month to work on schools in Haiti and Chile.

Michelle Rhee: Founder and CEO, StudentsFirst, an education advocacy group; former chancellor of Washington, D.C., school system. Said through spokesman she's sticking with work on a national agenda.

MaryEllen Elia: Hillsborough County superintendent. Has said several times she's staying in Hillsborough.

Alberto Carvalho: superintendent, Miami-Dade schools. Carvalho has not applied but indirectly there has been interest in him from people in leadership positions, said district spokesman John Schuster.

Tim Daly: president, the New Teacher Project. Happy in his current job, he said through a spokesman.

Are these the sleepers?

Here are some of the current applicants for education commissioner who have resumes that might be strong enough:

Loretta Costin: Florida chancellor for career and technical education.

Williamson Evers: former U.S. assistant secretary of education under George W. Bush and Hoover Institution research fellow.

Thomas Goodman, former superintendent of San Diego City Schools and superintendent of Education Management Systems charter schools.

Thomas Jandris, dean of the College of Graduate Programs at Concordia University Chicago, and former director of gubernatorial and state services at the Education Commission of the States.

Tom Gallagher, former Florida education commissioner and state chief financial officer.

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Florida Legislature Chips Away at Class-Size Budget Buster

Florida State News

By: Kenric Ward

June 2, 2011

<http://www.sunshinestateneews.com/story/florida-legislature-chips-away-class-size-budget-buster>

State led the nation in teacher hiring, even though enrollment rose only 1.2 percent

Bloated by class-size reduction edicts, Florida's teaching force grew by a larger percentage than any other state's between 2003 and 2009 -- even though student enrollment inched up just 1.2 percent during that period.

To contain future personnel and related costs, which Florida TaxWatch estimated at a whopping \$40 billion over the next 10 years, the 2011 Legislature scaled back the class-size mandates.

Lawmakers expect their modest move will shave expenses some \$70 million a year by giving schools a bit more flexibility in meeting rigid class-size reduction formulas.

The Legislature acted five months after Florida voters narrowly failed to pass a constitutional amendment that would have frozen the original class-size reduction law passed in 2002. Though the 2010 measure won 54.5 percent of the vote -- 2 percentage points *more* than the 2002 amendment received -- a subsequent change in amendment law had raised the passage requirement to 60 percent.

Florida TaxWatch estimates that the state has spent \$19 billion to implement class-size reduction programs. The lion's share of the cost was for teacher hiring.

From 2003-2009 (the latest year for which data were available), Florida's teaching ranks swelled to 186,359, a 28.6 percent increase that was the biggest in the nation.

Only two other states boosted hires by more than 20 percent: Georgia, (+22.3 percent) and Arkansas (+20.4 percent).

At the same time, Florida's student enrollment went up only 1.2 percent.

The amount per-pupil the state spent just on compensation climbed 27.9 percent to \$6,912, according to a state-by-state breakdown provided by the Education Intelligence Agency, a Sacramento, Calif.-based research center.

With the next phase of Florida's class-size reduction rules set to extend from campus averages to individual classrooms, necessitating the hiring of still more teachers, budget-conscious legislators said they had to act.

Sen. David Simmons, R-Altamonte Springs, called for a "rational" class-size law that provided more flexibility to campuses while exempting noncore subjects.

Amid conflicting educational data on the scholastic value of class-size reduction programs, the House and Senate passed the relief measure by wide margins.

The Florida Education Association -- which collects union dues from teachers and other school staff -- argued that the action reneged on the voters' will. But lawmakers said the 2002 constitutional amendment gave the Legislature latitude in determining how to implement the law.

Because they could not simply freeze the class-size program -- as the failed Amendment 8 would have done last year -- lawmakers had to tinker around the margins.

Downsizing the list of "core curriculum" classes covered by the class-size umbrella from 849 to 288, lawmakers also approved revised rules allowing districts to exceed class-size limits by up to four students in K-3 and five students in grades 4-12.

If Amendment 8 had passed last year, and class-size rules had been halted in their tracks, Florida TaxWatch estimated that the state would have saved \$1 billion over the next decade.

The Legislature aimed to further soften the fiscal blow by passing laws expanding the establishment of charter schools. These publicly funded but locally operated campuses help serve as a relief valve for families seeking alternatives to conventional public schools.

Teachers at charters are compensated through independently negotiated contracts and are not generally part of any government collective-bargaining agreement.

Earlier, Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, warned that unless changes were made to "right-size" class-size rules, the state and its local districts would be forced to spend millions more on new teacher hires.

"If we don't create flexibility, we will have rezoning. We will have busing all over the state of Florida," he added.

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Duval School Board clears the air, defines goals during retreat

Florida Times-Union

By: Topher Sanders

June 1, 2011

<http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/2011-06-01/story/duval-school-board-clears-air-defines-goals-during-retreat#ixzz1O7FkUQI2>

But 1 board member stayed away, citing tough decisions on cutbacks.

Duval County School Board members committed Wednesday to tackling a series of important issues in the next year and talked candidly about the recent and contentious vote on their intervene schools.

The discussion took place during the board's annual retreat. The board met for a day and a half at One Ocean Resort in Atlantic Beach. Private donations and School Board members paid for the retreat.

Board member Tommy Hazouri did not attend because he said it was an inopportune time to go on a retreat with the board, considering cuts to sports, magnet school transportation and furloughs.

"I just felt uncomfortable going anywhere on a retreat," he said. "It didn't feel right to me."

A facilitator from the Florida School Boards Association walked the board through exercises to identify where it is on a team

development continuum, goals, and its strength and weaknesses.

In the next 12 months the board's committed to reviewing the district's policy on community engagement, which has been criticized for the perception that the district seeks public input after decisions have been made or simply ignore the public's wishes.

The board also said it will now hold retreat-type meetings quarterly and conduct workshops to address key issues, including a magnet system review, the protocol around board member visits to schools, the policy for developing the district budget and its collaborative relationship with agencies like the Jacksonville Public Education Fund.

Some board members expressed concern over the "critical friend" posture the Jacksonville Public Education Fund assumes with the district, but nearly all expressed fear the group's upcoming One in Three campaign will paint the district negatively.

The campaign will be a yearlong effort to bring together the community around the issue of improving public education and lowering Duval's dropout rate.

"We see the campaign as a way to unite the community around improving education," said Trey Csar, president of the Jacksonville Public Education Fund. "It's not about casting blame on any one institution."

Board members said the retreat was a great opportunity for the board to clear the air with past issues and planning in a pressure-free environment with the help of a trained facilitator.

"I think that it helped us to define our goals for the year," board member Betty Burney said. "We needed this."

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STATE NEWS

California: Activist South Bay students secure computers for schools, save teachers

Associated Press

By: Sharon Noquchi

May 31, 2011

http://www.mercurynews.com/education/ci_18176768?nclick_check=1

It's one of the ironies of public education: Students get steeped in lessons about democracy, but when it comes to running schools, they have no role, little voice and seldom are their opinions solicited.

Sometimes, students see the stakes as too high to remain quiet.

At various South Bay schools, they've launched their own campaigns to get better technology, to change school calendars and to save favorite teachers from layoff lists.

They've rejected the notion that students should be seen and not heard. And they insist that as the people most affected, they need to raise their voices.

"We are not whining, not moping, just trying to get what we deserve and need," Emily Spacek, 14, blogged in the fall when she and fellow eighth-graders at Renaissance Academy began to look at the inequity of technology resources, and how that hinders their education.

The students launched a project to lobby, research and secure money to better equip their East San Jose school -- even though, if they're successful, those resources will arrive after they graduate.

At Gunn High School in Palo Alto, one student's opinion survey influenced a school board vote to change the school-year calendar.

And at College Connection Academy in San Jose, students campaigned, albeit with mixed success, to save pink-slipped teachers' jobs.

Technology inequality

The Renaissance project took off when students were reading about how black students in the segregated South of the 1930s made do with white students' castoff books. The Renaissance eighth-graders realized some parallels as they thought about doing a multimedia project but lacked the tools.

"What you're supposed to do when you don't like something is change it," said student Jasmine Marquez, paraphrasing author Maya Angelou.

They divided into teams and set out to change things.

One team researched what devices and software they needed, testing gadgets at an Apple store. Student Kathy Lam created a video on her home computer detailing the needs. Another team surveyed other South Bay schools about their technology. Karina Vazquez sent out newsletters, booked speakers and wrote administrators and elected officials. The student finance team approached potential donors, getting a grant toward cameras and an iPad from the Alum Rock Education Foundation, and created an online giving site. Another group created a newsletter.

Students found that only 12 of 41 Renaissance laptops were usable. And while they found other schools with outdated, broken and slow computers, there is one difference: At Renaissance, student Christopher Dang, 13, said, "A lot of students do have computers at home, but they're not like the ones kids in Palo Alto have."

All along, Emily's blog chronicled the progress. "The first time we told (school) board members about our project and saw how excited they were, I thought, 'Wow! This is a big step.' "

English teacher Saneer Ibrahim guided the students, but also stepped back. "It required a lot of giving up control," she said. "Everything has been student done."

If the iPads and iPods they seek materialize, Jasmine said, "we help future students have a better education."

Influencing opinion

When the Palo Alto Unified School District considered changing its school-year calendar, it surveyed teachers and parents, but not students.

Palo Alto High School senior Nadav Gavrielov decided to conduct a survey, sent out during history classes and published in the student newspaper. "I was worried students' opinion wasn't getting communicated to the school board," he said.

Gunn junior Jesse Zwerling was upset when he heard about parents railing against change at a school board meeting. Some claimed the proposed change would ruin families' summer vacations and complicate fall semester.

Feeling students weren't being heard, Jesse also devised a comprehensive student survey, administered through classes. It showed 65 percent favored an earlier start for school and finals before winter break, to get a homework-free vacation and more time to prepare for advanced-placement tests in May.

He presented the results on the evening of the school board vote. Trustee Barbara Klausner cited the Gunn survey as among the factors influencing her to join a 3-2 majority favoring a student-preferred calendar.

"I'm just glad that students' voices were heard," Jesse said.

Rescinding layoffs

At College Connection Academy, Marco Cabrera, 13, made sure student opinion was heard. When he found out two months ago that three of his teachers had received preliminary layoff notices, he took a logical step for a kid: He created a Facebook page to save their jobs.

Then he took an un-kidlike step. He emailed John Porter, superintendent of the Franklin-McKinley School District. "A superintendent has a lot of power," Marco said. He emailed him again.

"We took them very seriously. We really listened to them," Porter said. Marco and classmates Celeste Pineda, Andrew Arellano and Janet Cardenas explained how teachers are like family at the small middle school.

This month, as retirements opened up positions, Franklin-McKinley rescinded some of its roughly 50 layoff notices, including two of the three College Connection teachers.

Marco, Porter said, is "a very determined young man. He's polite, respectful and he lets you know what his position is." He added, "I don't know what office he's going to hold someday, but we should all take notice of him now so we can say that we know him."

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Chicago Superintendent Brizard, parents begin work on parent contract

Chicago Tribune

By: Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah

June 1, 2011

http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/education/ct-met-brizard-parents-20110601_0.5322320.story

As he tries to deliver on Mayor Rahm Emanuel's campaign promise of a parent contract, the new CEO of Chicago Public Schools is meeting with parents to figure out what such an agreement should contain.

As he tries to deliver on Mayor Rahm Emanuel's campaign promise of a parent contract, the new CEO of Chicago Public

Schools is meeting with parents to figure out what such an agreement should contain.

Schools chief Jean-Claude Brizard acknowledged in a press conference following the meeting Wednesday that the contracts would not be doling out fines or penalties to parents who broke the agreements.

"I don't think it's realistic," he said. "We're not looking for a gotcha. We don't want to punish people for not being involved."

He said, instead, the district needed to figure out what the agreement should look like and how to define parental involvement. Brizard recalled that though his parents were involved in his education, they never stepped inside his school.

CPS is hoping to have parent-teacher agreements in place by the beginning of the next school year. In his transition plan, Emanuel, who is a supporter of charter schools, many of which have such contracts, called for the agreement to lay out clear expectations for how families should provide "extended educational opportunities at home." CPS is looking at an agreement similar to one signed by parents of the United Neighborhood Organization charter school network.

The UNO contract makes parents promise to read to young children daily and ensure older children read at minimum 30 minutes a night. It also requires parents to attend a school activity once a month, and that failure not to follow through on the agreement jeopardizes their child's re-enrollment the following year.

On Wednesday, the group of parents who sat in a circle with Brizard at Malcolm X College were handed a copy of UNO's parent agreement as a starting point. Parent Toylee Green-Harris, one of the parents invited to the meeting, said the agreement should be called a "partnership" rather than a "contract," to invite parents into schools.

"I don't think monetary fines are the answer," Green-Harris said. "With a partnership, parents come in as partners and it's not as threatening a document."

But for Julie Woestehoff, executive director of Parents United for Responsible Education, a parent group critical of CPS policies under former Mayor Richard Daley, says most parent contracts for public school systems tend to be recommendations for parents. She added that former schools CEO Paul Vallas' efforts at a parent report card resulted in many principals ditching the program altogether.

"It was joke," said Woestehoff who has not yet had a meeting with Brizard. "You can't hold a parent to it because this is a public school system. If a parent violates the contract, what would you do?"

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Opinion: Merit pay should stay in budget

Chicago Tribune

By: Terry Ryan

June 2, 2011

<http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/editorials/stories/2011/06/02/merit-pay-should-stay-in-budget.html?sid=101>

For as long as anyone can remember, in Ohio as in the rest of America, a public-school teacher's effectiveness and performance in the classroom have had little to no impact on decisions about whether she is retained by her district or laid off, how she is compensated or assigned to a district's schools or how her professional development is crafted.

Instead, these critical decisions are made on the basis of quality-blind state policies, like the notorious "last-in, first-out" mandate governing layoffs, and tenure rules that allow teachers to have job protection for life and "bump" less-senior teachers when jockeying for positions. Effective teachers are forced to go, simply because they have not taught as long as others, regardless of how successful other teachers might be. Students are left with whichever instructors have been in the system the longest, and teachers receive professional development that is not tied at all to their individual improvement needs.

To their credit, Gov. John Kasich and the Ohio House have been trying to transform the system by which the state handles these crucial teacher human-resources decisions. The biennial budget bill passed by the House makes classroom effectiveness key in determining how teachers are assigned to schools, whether their contracts are renewed, and- when budgets make it unavoidable - how they are laid off. It would put in place a teacher-evaluation system that incorporates student academic growth and several other key job-related performance factors and would rate teachers according to four tiers. Basic personnel decisions around tenure, placement, dismissal and professional development would be tied directly to the evaluation results.

The evaluation model in this bill resembles those developed in bipartisan fashion in other states. Recently, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Arizona and Oklahoma all have passed laws that prohibit teacher layoffs based solely on seniority. These states now require teacher performance ratings and/or evaluations to be considered in making such decisions. What's more, rigorous performance evaluations in these states are not just in place to help determine which teachers to let go. They also will help identify and reward highly effective teachers and tailor professional development in ways that help improve instruction. Ohio should do the same, and the teacher-evaluation language presented to the Senate achieved just that.

Unfortunately, the Senate has dropped these provisions from its version of the budget, preferring instead to maintain Ohio's status as a laggard state with archaic laws that force districts to consider only seniority when making layoff decisions.

Some claim the budget doesn't need to address teacher-quality issues because Senate Bill 5 - the much-debated collective-bargaining measure signed by Kasich in March - deals with these matters, too. (It is, of course, expected to be on the November ballot for voter consideration.) But they're wrong. The House budget bill's provisions are very different - and much better.

While Senate Bill 5 does indeed remove the sanctity of seniority, it largely defines teacher effectiveness through antiquated input-based measures such as degrees earned and other paper credentials. Indeed, the teacher human-resources provisions of Senate Bill 5 are essentially unworkable, even if that law survives Election Day. They will be far harder on districts to implement than the budget language and will not get Ohio where it needs to go in boosting student achievement.

The House version of the budget would. It connects measures of pupil academic growth to teachers and further connects teachers' effectiveness to key personnel decisions. This is the direction other states are moving because they know teacher effectiveness is key to improving schools.

The House budget version also will help Ohio to fulfill the promises it made in its successful \$400 million Race to the Top application. The state's Education Department and participating districts already are at work creating teacher-evaluation systems that incorporate student data. This is in keeping with Ohio's pledge to the feds to create a "comprehensive evaluation system that will provide constructive and timely feedback to teachers and principals, serve as a guide to professional development and influence decisions regarding advanced licensure, continuing contracts and removal of ineffective teachers and principals."

Further, Ohio agreed to place "effective teachers and principals in their high-poverty and high-minority school through removing seniority barriers."

Moving toward a fairer and more modern system of gauging teacher effectiveness and using that information to inform personnel decisions will give districts the flexibility their leaders crave - and need even more when budgets are shrinking. It will help them retain their very best instructors while providing all teachers with the support and professional development they need to get better.

Terry Ryan is vice president for Ohio programs and policy at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

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