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NATIONAL NEWS

Common-Standards Implementation Slow Going, Study Finds

Education Week

By: Catherine Gewertz

September 14, 2011 [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/09/14/04cep.h31.html?](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/09/14/04cep.h31.html?tkn=YVZF2BnynaBt71GbStSB%2B8rvAyMrLvjK4ykj&cmp=clp-edweek)

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Barely half the school districts in states that have adopted the common standards are taking essential steps to implement them, and most cite inadequate state guidance as a major problem in moving forward, a new study finds.

Districts are also deeply divided about how rigorous the new standards are and how much they demand new curricula and instructional strategies, according to the [survey](#) released today by the [Center on Education Policy](#).

The portrait that emerges from the study suggests that too many districts are woefully unprepared for the challenge of the new standards, some experts say.

"What it says to me is that there is a large percentage that don't seem to understand the train that is about to hit them," said William H. Schmidt, a Michigan State University education professor who is conducting his own research on districts' readiness for the new standards. "That, to me, is somewhat scary."

In a survey of 315 districts, the CEP asked superintendents to report on activities their districts were working on in 2010-11, or planned to undertake in 2011-12, to put the standards in mathematics and English/language arts into practice.

About half the districts reported that they would craft or buy new curriculum materials, and just under half said they planned to provide professional development for teachers or devise local tests to gauge student mastery of the standards. Fewer than one-third reported plans to revise teacher-evaluation systems or change teacher-induction practices to reflect the new expectations. The area that reflected the greatest progress was developing an implementation plan and timeline; two-thirds of the districts reported that such work is under way or planned.

Still, "a sizeable share" of districts have no plans to move ahead in any of the areas the center probed, the study's co-authors write. That share ranged from one-third to three-quarters, depending on the activity the CEP asked about.

Budget Constraints

The district feedback is part of the Washington-based research and advocacy center's work to track progress of the common standards, which have now been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia. Its [study of states](#), released in January, found that they planned professional development for teachers in 2011-12, but changes in other areas, such as curriculum, were a year or two away. ("[Full Standards-Based System Several Years Off.](#)" Jan. 12, 2011.)

Many districts are diving into work on the standards, including groups collaborating through the [Council of the Great City Schools](#) and the [Aspen Institute](#). New York City, for instance, has [piloted](#) several aspects of the new standards for more than a year, and it immersed all its teachers in the standards during a professional-development day that kicked off the school year last week. But the study suggests that most districts are not heavily engaged in such work.

Large proportions of districts in the CEP survey might have reported no plans in key areas because of the timing of the study, which was conducted from February through April, less than a year after most states had adopted the standards, the study's co-authors note. Budget cuts and lack of state guidance could have been factors as well, they write.

Indeed, three-quarters of the districts cited funding as a "major problem" in implementing the common standards locally, and two-thirds reported that inadequate guidance from their states was a big problem.

Half said their states had distributed a comprehensive plan to implement the standards, but fewer than four in 10 reported getting state help with new curricular materials for the standards or creating local tests to track students' progress on the standards.

Only three in 10 said their states had offered help with teacher evaluation or induction systems that reflect the standards.

District staff members are attending meetings about the common standards, though. Six in 10 districts reported sending staff to state or regional meetings to plan ways to implement the standards. But more often than not, central-office and administrative personnel, rather than teachers, were the ones participating in the state-sponsored meetings, the study says.

The survey reveals a mix of judgments about what the standards will require of students and teachers. Fewer than 60 percent of the districts said they view the new standards as more rigorous than their states' previous guidelines. Fewer still—55 percent in math, and 58 percent in English/language arts—said they believed the standards would improve students' skills.

Two-thirds of the districts anticipate the need for new curriculum materials in math, and 56 percent anticipate a similar need for the literacy standards. About half the respondents said they thought the new standards would demand "fundamental changes" in instruction.

Since the CEP study drew responses from superintendents, it is likely that their assessment overstates districts' readiness for the common standards, Michigan State's Mr. Schmidt said. In his work surveying 700 districts, he said, he has found that teachers know less about the standards than do staff members at district headquarters.

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With Bipartisan Support, Law on Expansion of Charter Schools Passes the House

New York Times

By: Sam Dillon

September 13, 2011

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/14/education/14educ.html?_r=1&ref=education

In a rare display of bipartisanship, the House approved a bill on Tuesday supporting the expansion of [charter schools](#), the first part of a legislative package planned by Republicans to carry out a piecemeal rewrite of the main federal law on public education, [No Child Left Behind](#).

The [bill](#), passed Tuesday by [a vote of 365 to 54](#), tweaks an existing federal grant program that provides start-up money for new charter schools — currently about \$250 million— and adds some quality control provisions.

It had the support of charter operators as well as civil rights and school improvement groups. If passed by the Senate, it would replace the charter school provisions of No Child Left Behind, the sprawling school accountability law that President George W. Bush signed in 2002.

"This is an important first step in our efforts to improve current elementary and secondary education law," Representative John Kline, the Minnesota Republican who heads the House education committee, said in a statement after the vote.

Earlier, Republicans and Democrats joined to beat back an amendment proposed by Representative Steve King, Republican of Iowa, that would have exempted charter schools, which are publicly financed but independently operated, from the law's requirement that schools break out scores in reading and math for minority and disabled students and show progress in each group.

Congress has tried unsuccessfully several times in recent years to update No Child Left Behind, and the Obama administration has urged Congress repeatedly to act this year, threatening that it will give states waivers from the law's most onerous requirements if it is not rewritten. But no bill representing a full rewrite has been introduced yet in either the Senate or the House. Many experts believe that with Congress deeply divided along partisan lines, reaching consensus on a thorough overhaul is out of the question.

Mr. Kline has instead promised to move several bills by year's end, each updating provisions of the law about which he thinks that bipartisan agreement may be possible. The charter bill was the first he has managed to bring to a House vote.

This year, Mr. Kline moved two other bills out of his committee. One strips several dozen federal educational programs from No Child Left Behind, and another would allow school districts new flexibility in how they spend the federal dollars the law provides. Those await House debate.

In addition, Mr. Kline has described a bill outlining new federal requirements on teacher effectiveness, and another that would rewrite the law's current school accountability provisions, and said he might introduce them this fall too. Those, however, would deal with the most hotly debated provisions in the law, and experts said passing them would be a long shot.

"This was the bipartisan one," said Michael J. Petrilli, a vice president at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a Washington

research group. “The others aren’t going to be bipartisan.”

In the Senate, the Democratic leadership is working to rewrite the law with a single comprehensive bill, but has yet to release legislative language. Most people involved in the process say profound partisan disagreements will make it difficult for the two chambers to coalesce around a single rewrite, perhaps until after the 2012 elections.

Meanwhile, state and local educators are increasingly frustrated with provisions in the law that have labeled as failing tens of thousands of schools that have fallen short of yearly testing targets, with a 2014 deadline for 100 percent proficiency looming. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has promised to waive those sections of the law for states that can demonstrate they are moving forward with the administration’s school improvement agenda, which includes efforts to overhaul failing schools and to make teacher evaluations more rigorous.

Mr. Duncan’s plans have angered Republicans, and Speaker John A. Boehner took a swipe at them [in a statement](#) congratulating Mr. Kline for moving his rewrite bills forward. “It’s my hope that the administration will work with Congress on these measures, rather than acting unilaterally and undermining reform efforts,” Mr. Boehner said.

The charter bill includes some quality control provisions. In the past, some charters that got started with federal money have collapsed or closed after a pileup of educational or financial irregularities. The new legislation requires states to withhold 10 percent of federal financing for improvements in the procedures by which they authorize new charters.

“What’s different is this would allow us to replicate and expand the high-quality charters, those with a good track record,” said Alice Johnson Cain, a vice president at the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

Representative George Miller, the ranking Democrat on the House Education committee, applauded the charter bill’s passage but criticized the Republican strategy of a piecemeal rewrite of No Child Left Behind.

“It’s good, but it’s not enough,” Mr. Miller said. “Our next step should be a comprehensive reauthorization.”

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FLORIDA NEWS

Merit-pay law: Teachers union to discuss “legal actions” tomorrow

Orlando Sentinel

By: Leslie Postal

September, 13 2011

[http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_education_edblog/2011/09/merit-pay-law-teachers-union-to-discuss-legal-actions-tomorrow.html?](http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_education_edblog/2011/09/merit-pay-law-teachers-union-to-discuss-legal-actions-tomorrow.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+SentinelSchoolZone+%28Sentinel+School+Zone%29)

[utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+SentinelSchoolZone+%28Sentinel+School+Zone%29](http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_education_edblog/2011/09/merit-pay-law-teachers-union-to-discuss-legal-actions-tomorrow.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+SentinelSchoolZone+%28Sentinel+School+Zone%29)

The Florida Education Association plans a press conference tomorrow to announce “legal actions” related to the teacher merit-pay law the Florida Legislature passed in the spring.

The sweeping, and controversial, law overhauls how teachers are evaluated and paid — planning to rely heavily on student test score data — and does away with tenure-like job protections for new instructors.

The statewide teachers union had previously said it would likely sue over S.B. 736, arguing the new law tramples on teachers’ rights to collectively bargain on salaries and work conditions, among other issues.

The Tallahassee press conference is scheduled for 10 a.m.

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Florida teachers union sues over merit pay law

Associated Press

By: Staff

September 14, 2011

<http://www2.tbo.com/news/education-news/2011/sep/14/6/florida-teachers-union-to-sue-over-merit-pay-law-ar-257629/>

Florida’s teacher union has filed a lawsuit against a new law that requires merit pay for teachers and ends tenure for new hires.

The Florida Education Association and the Sarasota Classified/Teachers Association filed the lawsuit Wednesday in Circuit Court in Tallahassee. The union claims the law is unconstitutional because it substantially changed performance evaluations and wages while denying teachers the right to effective collective bargaining on wages and employment conditions.

Gov. Rick Scott signed the merit pay legislation in March.

Former Gov. Charlie Crist vetoed a similar but more rigid bill last year after widespread protests by teachers.

Republicans say a test-based merit pay plan will help attract and keep top teachers while eliminating tenure, which will enable

school officials to get rid of the bad ones more quickly.

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Hillsborough teachers receive grades under new scoring system

St. Petersburg Times

By: Marlene Sokol

September 13, 2011

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/hillsborough-teachers-receive-grades-under-new-scoring-system/1191266>

Teachers are rated for the first time as a way to develop a national assessment model.

TAMPA - Thousands of Hillsborough County schoolteachers were notified Tuesday morning that, much like their students, they are not all above average.

For the first time, teachers received scores evaluating on how well they helped students boost test scores - a groundbreaking shift to determine which teachers are truly masters of their craft.

It is also a major milestone in the district's unprecedented partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to develop a national model to judge teacher quality.

"Our teachers now have more information available to them than ever before to help their students achieve at a high level," said Hillsborough superintendent MaryEllen Elia. "This is the result of a lot of hard work with some of the nation's top experts and with our own experts - our teachers."

The scores, combined with feedback and observations from principals and peers, make up the new evaluation that will eventually determine how teachers will be paid.

The data released Tuesday shows the new reality on how teachers stack up against each other: Fewer at the top and more in the middle.

Under the 100 point rating system, about 5.5 percent of the district's 11,753 teachers scored in the top quarter of the scale, a 75 or above. Half of the district's teachers scored at least a 61.5. And about one percent were below 36. Only one teacher scored higher than a 94.

Nearly 90 percent of all teachers scored in the top half of the scale with 50 points or more.

Under the old model, nearly all teachers were deemed satisfactory or better, and some 30 percent received the top score.

Stephanie Baxter-Jenkins, a lawyer for the Hillsborough Classroom Teachers Association, said it's not entirely clear what will become of teachers who receive the lowest scores.

"We're talking with the district about that right now," she said. Roughly 100 teachers fell into that category when the principal and peer evaluations were released, she said. At first blush, she said, it appears a comparable number will remain in that category.

District officials have emphasized that this year's scores represent almost a practice run. They plan to refine the system and gather three full years of data before they use scores to determine pay.

Teachers have six days to ask questions and contest the scores if they feel there is a mistake. Once the review period passes, the district will use the scores to determine who gets a \$2,241 bonus under the state's Merit Award Program, said district spokesman Stephen Hegarty.

"Teachers are asking good questions," said David Steele, Gates project director for the district.

The *St. Petersburg Times* contacted more than two dozen teachers and none would comment.

Hillsborough, the eighth largest district in the nation, won a \$100-million grant in 2009 from the Gates foundation to spend seven years improving teacher quality through more effective evaluations and training.

Since then, the state Legislature has called on all school districts to move toward performance-based rewards and away from seniority systems, placing Hillsborough at the forefront of the state's teacher accountability movement.

Inside schools, teachers have spent time preparing for the results of Gates.

Westchase Elementary School teachers met in groups to discuss a book by Charlotte Danielson, the Princeton-based educational consultant who designed the evaluation rubric.

They also observed and evaluated each other, said assistant principal Nancy Mooy. "The best teachers are the hardest on

themselves," she said.

She said because of the preparation, "this will not be scary, but something that will make us better teachers."

At DeSoto Elementary School in east Tampa, principal Gilda Garcia said the release of scores seemed to go smoothly.

"Only one teacher came to see me, and she was very positive about it," she said. "I think we've gotten a lot of information, and that certainly has helped."

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South Florida business, education leaders form call to action

Miami Herald

By: Laura Isensee

September 13, 2011

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/09/13/2405601/south-florida-business-education.html#ixzz1XvKbRutu>

As education in South Florida goes, so goes the future economy.

That consensus brought together more than 200 business executives and education leaders at a summit on Tuesday, where they grappled with looming problems like increasing poverty and shrinking education funding.

"Our education system is in a moment of crisis, and it truly does threaten our country's economic prosperity. That link is clearer and clearer every day," said U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education Anthony Miller, who spoke at the event, held by the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. Miller, who previously worked at global private equity firm Silver Lake, cited statistics that put Florida's reading scores on par with those of Poland and Estonia.

Money emerged as a theme of the summit, which featured local, state and national leaders like Florida Commissioner of Education Gerard Robinson; a senior officer with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which is working to improve education in poor minority communities; and presidents of public and private colleges and universities.

Investment in early education programs. How the state divvies up dollars to school districts. The future of Florida's Bright Futures scholarship program. How businesses can help as advocates, as well as with cash, unpaid internships, mentoring and other resources.

The impetus for the event came from the feeble economy — slower to rebound in South Florida than other parts of the country — and from the state's cuts to education last year, said Marilu Rios Kernan, who leads the chamber's education committee and is chief marketing officer at College Admissions Assistance, a company that provides college planning to families.

"The sense of urgency is very real," Kernan said. "At the end of the day, we need the state Legislature to rise to the occasion and provide more funding, but we also need to rise to the occasion as business leaders."

The event followed town hall meetings with about 50 business leaders, high-tech executives and entrepreneurs. Those discussions produced six common themes:

- Children are not taught to deal with failure and setback.
- There is a sense of entitlement and expectation of coddling in today's culture.

People need to speak one language well and write it perfectly.

- There is a need to harness and find new ways to use new technology.
- Teamwork is essential.

There is no substitute for caring parents.

During the summit, panelists hashed out complex issues, like the growing poverty in Miami-Dade County. Robinson called early childhood development as "early economic development" and asked business leaders to invest money in sending teachers to learn from the best practices in other states and countries.

Besides money, education leaders called on business partners to advocate for education policy, serve as mentors and act as goodwill ambassadors, sharing success stories.

Miami-Dade Superintendent Alberto Carvalho rolled out an action plan for education and business leaders to partner on. One initiative was developing a "stable and sustainable" funding formula for public school districts that addresses need and economic differences, rewards performance and focuses on students.

State Rep. Erik Fresen, a Miami Republican who helped lead two House educational committees last session, agreed that

businesses can't prosper without skilled employees. He said his priority in Tallahassee is how to reinvent the education system, and that funding should not be the sole focus.

"The idea is how do we properly cross both of those points of the amount of funding that is necessary for the high level of attainment of education — and go outside of the conventional, you know, three R's in education," Fresen said.

Other ideas in the action plan:

- Having business leaders partner with schools and education groups, such as joining advisory councils and mentoring students.
- Helping bring more money from national foundations and research groups to South Florida.

The action plan will be refined. The next steps will be for a coalition meeting to lay out goals and put together a legislative agenda.

"What's at stake is nothing more, nothing less than the breaking of the cycle of poverty," Carvalho said.

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STATE NEWS

Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett touts successes of school reform but wants to go even further

Indianapolis Star

By: Scott Elliott

September 14, 2011

<http://www.indystar.com/article/20110914/NEWS04/109140337/Bennett-touts-successes-school-reform-wants-go-further?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|IndyStar.com>

Bennett touts reforms in State of Education address, pushes for more

Indiana has vaulted to the lead nationally in the push to make schoolchildren learn in new, more effective ways, but it should go even further, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett said Tuesday.

Bennett was triumphant about the state's once-lagging education reform accomplishments in an emotional second annual State of Education address at the Indiana Historical Center before an invitation-only crowd of about 200 educators, lawmakers and others.

"Indiana -- yes, Indiana, ladies and gentlemen -- has positioned itself as the nation's leader in education reform," said Bennett, who took the stage with tears in his eyes after the Manual High School choir performed.

Bennett said the sight of choir teacher Spencer Lloyd and his celebrated Manual troupe made him think of his daughter, who is embarking on a teaching career in Indiana, and her future students.

"I want her to have an impact on her students' lives the way Spencer Lloyd does," he said. "That reminds me every day why I get up and do my job."

Bennett said legislative changes passed in April -- limiting union power, revamping teacher evaluations, expanding charter schools and launching a new statewide private school voucher program -- will better meet the needs of students.

He also hailed the state Board of Education's push for more accountability for public schools, noting that six perpetually low-scoring Indianapolis Public Schools and one in Gary were paired with outside organizations in an effort to turn them around. Five of the schools were taken over by the state.

"This is new ground for our state," Bennett said. "We have never before tackled the challenges of our underperforming schools."

He said the new laws remove the fear for great teachers such as Lloyd of losing their jobs just because they have low seniority.

But in an interview after his address -- with Lloyd standing next to him -- Bennett acknowledged concern that the state takeover he pushed for at Manual could force Lloyd to choose between keeping his job with IPS, which could mean giving up the program he built, and staying at Manual, despite the uncertainty of a new [employer](#) in Florida-based Charter Schools USA, which will run the school next year.

IPS Superintendent Eugene White said Monday that he plans to remove district [employees](#) and extracurricular programs from the takeover schools. Bennett said he hoped that wouldn't happen.

"I don't believe it will," Bennett said. "The needs of our children are going to be the ultimate trump card in these discussions."

Lloyd declined to comment.

In his address, Bennett asked lawmakers for even more tools. He called for new laws to grade school districts on an A to F scale, speed up the timeline for state intervention regarding failing schools, require every student to take at least one online class, match teacher performance to the colleges they attended and allow for more enrollment counts during the year, so that funds can be shifted as students transfer.

"Looking ahead, we have a lot of ground to cover if we hope to truly give our students the education they deserve. But we have put in place a system that supports excellence and continued growth," he said.

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Utah Democrats announce plan to improve education

Salt Lake Tribune

By: Lisa Schencker

September 13 2011

<http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/52575725-78/education-utah-plan-proposal.html.csp>

A coalition of Utah Democratic lawmakers announced Tuesday that they are working on up to a dozen pieces of legislation aimed at improving Utah schools.

"It's long overdue," said Sen. Karen Morgan, D-Cottonwood Heights, of the lawmakers' Best Schools Initiative, announced at Foxboro Elementary in North Salt Lake. "Our state is focusing on being No. 1 in so many different areas. Why not focus on being No. 1 in education?"

The 13 lawmakers were short on details Monday about the content of the bills, saying they plan to release more information in coming weeks. But they said they hope to focus on better funding for education, attracting and retaining quality teachers, smaller class sizes and strong curriculum.

They said changes are needed, citing an Education Week report released in January that ranked Utah 30th in the nation for K-12 achievement. Utah also has the lowest base per pupil funding in the nation.

The lawmakers also said they hope to combat some of the rhetoric and proposed legislation that they believe could damage public education, such as a bill that's been proposed by Sen. Howard Stephenson, R-Draper, that would create tuition tax credits to help students attend private schools.

"Public education is under assault in Utah," said Rep. Carol Spackman Moss, D-Holladay. "When we see vouchers coming back again, when we see attempts in all kinds of ways to privatize public education ... it's time for us to stand up and say, 'That's enough.' Utahns love their neighborhood schools."

Stephenson said Tuesday, after the Democrats' announcement, his tuition tax credit proposal is not the same thing as vouchers and could be a way to specifically address the needs of students who score lowest on state tests.

However, he said he's eager to see and consider the Democrats' plan.

"Even though we haven't seen the proposal and its elements, I believe the Legislature should take seriously any proposals to improve education, and as chair of the [education] interim committee I want to make sure that we consider all solid improvements to education, even the proposal for \$50 million of funding increases," Stephenson said, referring to a proposal discussed by Sen. Ben McAdams, D-Salt Lake City, at the Democrats' press conference Monday.

McAdams said he is working on a bill that would put about an additional \$50 million a year in new revenue into education. He said his proposal does not include a tax increase but declined to give further details about it, saying he'll wait until after the redistricting process ends to release more.

Rep. Brian King, D-Salt Lake City, spoke about doing a better job of attracting and keeping good teachers by improving compensation, giving them more resources, eliminating poorly performing teachers and providing incentives, which Morgan said could include merit or performance pay bonuses. And Rep. Marie Poulson, D-Salt Lake City, talked about the importance of smaller class sizes, additional teacher aides and support for teachers.

The initiative is the latest in a series of plans, many of which somewhat overlap, proposed by a number of groups in hopes of improving education. The state school board has been working from a vision/mission statement they created for Utah public schools called Promises to Keep. Utah business leaders worked with leaders and groups across the state to launch an initiative called Prosperity 2020 earlier this year. And the Governor's Education Excellence Commission, which consists of education and political leaders, began releasing recommendations last year.

Morgan, however, said Tuesday the Democrats' plan is separate from the others.

"We've decided that it's important for us since we are on Capitol Hill, we're in a position to vote on policy and determine funding, we felt like it was our responsibility to put together a coalition to do this," Morgan said. "We think that it's key that there be a plan on Capitol Hill."

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Heads of Chicago Public Schools, teachers union debate

Chicago Tribune

By: Joel Hood

September 14, 2011

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/education/ct-met-chicago-forward2-0914-20110914.0.71176.story>

The two sides waging a public tug of war over the future of Chicago Public Schools playfully sparred Tuesday night in a live debate over contentious issues including a longer school day and teacher pay and evaluations.

But CPS chief Jean-Claude Brizard and Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis also found common ground on what it takes to improve the city's sagging neighborhood schools and expand education options for all students in the city.

Speaking in front of an audience of about 700 people, many of whom were teachers and union supporters, at the University of Illinois at Chicago Forum, Brizard deflected criticism that his administration was trying to bypass the union in its effort to lengthen the CPS school day by 90 minutes.

"The votes have been led by the union delegates, not by the principals," Brizard said, drawing groans from the audience. "Our job was to make sure principals are following the (teachers') contract, and to make sure the union delegate is following the contract as well so the process becomes seamless."

Brizard has promised to lengthen the school day by 90 minutes across CPS beginning next school year.

But in a controversial move, the district has created financial incentives for elementary schools whose teachers sign waiver forms to lengthen the day this school year by essentially voiding rights carved out in the current teachers' contract.

Seven elementary schools have signed such waivers despite opposition from the teachers union. In exchange, teachers receive about a 2 percent salary bonus this year, and their schools are awarded up to \$150,000 in money to use how they see fit.

"There wasn't a proposal, there was rhetoric," Lewis said Tuesday. "As teachers, we like to plan ahead. Look, this is political, this is rhetoric. It has nothing to do with quality; we want quality education for our students."

The union last week filed a formal complaint with the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board, alleging that CPS' waiver policy was improper and that it's being used illegally to circumvent the collective bargaining process.

Brizard countered: "In this world, there is no magic bullet. There is no panacea. What a longer school day will do is actually give (teachers) the tools to get stuff done."

One area of agreement came when a CPS teacher asked both why more couldn't be done at schools to help parents in poor communities to better prepare their child for school.

Whatever CPS looks like in the future, Brizard and Lewis said, parents have to take a more active role in the education process.

"In some neighborhoods in some schools, we've become everything to some children," Brizard said. "Parental engagement is critical. I don't think we've done enough, honestly, to open the doors."

The discussion was organized by the Tribune as part of its Chicago Forward series of events.

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