

Human Resources Perspective  
Employee Recruitment and Retention  
Retirement Study Commission Meeting  
April 19, 2010

Thank you for the invitation to come and speak on behalf of Human Resource leaders from our North Carolina Public Schools. We appreciate this opportunity to share our thoughts and experiences on attracting and retaining the right workforce in our public schools. The viewpoints I share with you today represent collective thoughts from the mountains to the piedmont to coastal North Carolina. We hope that they will be beneficial in the work of the Commission.

Questions:

1. Do the schools particularly wish to attract employees at certain points in their careers?

**Response:** *Ideally, schools would like to attract employees with 3-6 years of experience. Schools are looking for quality teachers who will add value to the classroom and student instruction. Balanced quality is necessary so that districts have some probationary teachers (with 0-3 years of experience) as well as career teachers (with 3+ years of experience). Research studies show that teachers with experience ranging from 3 to 22 years are the most effective in the classroom. However, there are exceptions to this research in every school system.*

2. Do the schools particularly wish to retain employees at certain points in their careers?

**Response:** *Based on value-added research, teachers with 3-25 years of experience are some of the highest sought-after employees, if they are effective. Employees who have been trained and are using Professional Learning Communities, Instruction driven from data, and Response to Intervention Programs create the kind of workforce you want to retain.*

3. Do the schools particularly wish to attract/retain certain job types (e.g. math teachers in rural counties)?

**Response:** *School systems top three priorities are to attract math, science and exceptional children's teachers. But more importantly, school systems want to attract and retain those who add value to the classroom. On a national perspective, teacher effectiveness is at the forefront of educational change.*

4. Do the schools wish to encourage employees to voluntarily leave employment at a certain point in their careers in order to create opportunities for other employees?

**Response:** *Only if you are trying to get rid of a weak or ineffective employee. We work to help employees who are not performing to improve or to consider other options. This has to be on a case-by-case basis.*

5. Do you have any feedback on how employees view the value of the pension, health care (active and retiree), and pay?

**Response:** *In general employees are appreciative of their benefits package. However, there is a concern regarding the changes in health care benefits including a rise in deductibles and co-payments. Many feel there has been an overall decrease in coverage. The graying workforce prefers a defined benefit plan that rewards your career or experienced employees. There is a need for school systems and the retirement system to find more ways to educate and counsel employees about their benefits package. It should not be a "one shot deal" at the time of initial hire. The majority of employees lack a solid understanding of their benefits. It is imperative that counseling occur at various stages of an employees' career so that we increase personal fiscal responsibility. Face-to-face communication is best. Webinars and other forms of technology along with Question and Answer documents should be readily available to all employees.*

6. Over the past decade, i.e. in both good and bad labor markets, have schools had trouble attracting quality workers?

**Response:** In good markets, everyone will have some difficulty attracting quality workers. The geographical location of a school system also affects the district's ability to attract quality workers. It is difficult to attract minorities and workers to rural areas with high poverty. Institutions of higher education do not always attract the "smartest and brightest" future teachers. Some of their students seeking a career in education were not very successful academically before entering college. Typically, only special programs like N.C. Teaching Fellows and the National Teach for America Program can be selective in whom they choose for their programs. This presents a challenge for schools in finding employees who add value in the classroom. Teacher effectiveness is important in good or bad labor markets and is a predictor of student academic growth. The recently released research study from the University of North Carolina on the impact of NC teacher preparation programs and student achievement will provide opportunities for our state to look at and replicate some best practices from the successful Teach for America Programs.

7. Are there any other incentives that you would like to create through the pension plan?

**Response:** Provide incentives for minorities and employees in high poverty areas such as a partnership with colleges/universities that provides funding for master's degree assistance and administration licensure. Based on the research of Bill Sanders and June Rivers, look at value added data for teachers and administrators and determine if it is feasible to offer full benefits at 25 years based on employee effectiveness. This would need to be on a case by case basis.

Another incentive would be to allow an individual to contribute more to their personal Retirement Account than the six percent that is currently in place.

A strong pension plan provides better opportunities in life for all state employees and is instrumental in attracting the brightest and best workforce. It is vital to maintain a defined pension plan that rewards effective career employees. Thank you again for allowing input from Human Resource leaders as you continue your work on the state's pension plan.

Respectfully,  
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President of North Carolina Association of School Administrators  
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