

Rewarding Professional Development and Growth

New alternative teacher compensation system developed with a focus on teacher collaboration

SESSION *Collaborative Approach to Alternative Teacher Compensation*

Presenters Wausau School District: Kathleen Williams, superintendent; Michael Schwei, director of curriculum and instruction; Jeffrey Gress, director of human resources and employee relations; Bob Tess, finance and business services officer



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For the Wausau School District, it's been a long process to establish its new teacher compensation system. But Superintendent Kathleen Williams said during the process, the district connected with and built relationships with its teachers, which, in turn, has helped the new system be more successful.

"When moving toward major change, it's not the final decision that's most important, rather it's the process and the journey that gets you there that matters," Williams said.

Over the course of three years, the district has implemented its new alternative teacher compensation system. In the early stages, district leaders met with teacher leaders for day-long sessions.

"That was important because it showed the district's dedication to the process," said Jeff Gress, director of human resources and employee relations. "We had to pull some of our teachers out of class but it was worth it."

The team did its research, read

books and looked at teacher compensation models from other districts. The model they eventually developed is a tiered system with steps in each tier. The model focuses more on professional development than years served. If a teacher earns enough professional development points in a given year, they are eligible to move up one step within their tier.

To move from one tier to the next, teachers have to "credential," which requires additional requirements. For example to move from tier 1 into tier 2, teachers must have a minimum of three years teaching experience and receive a recommendation from an administrator in addition to meeting their professional development credits. The requirements get more rigorous as teachers move to the upper tiers. To keep costs in line, teachers can only move up one spot per year.

In an effort to retain quality educators, the model was set up to reward motivated educators who stay in the



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district. At the same time, it doesn't inhibit experienced, quality educators from moving into the district.

Professional development credits are earned at the district office at a teacher academy run by the district. Classes are offered in a variety of subjects outside of class time, in the evenings and during the summer. The district tries to offer a number of academies on different subjects in an effort to meet the interests of its teachers.

"We ask ourselves, 'What are the interests of the individual teachers?'" said Mike Schwei, PK-12 director of curriculum and instruction. "We use that to set our professional development curriculum."

The Wausau teacher compensation system is in its third year of operation. There hasn't been a lot of movement on the scale, but that is about to change as more teachers are utilizing professional development opportunities. ■

