

The Facts on Florida's Plan to Reward Teachers

Senate Bill 6, which modernizes the way we evaluate and pay teachers, has been the target of a ferocious campaign of misinformation. The bill reforms the teaching profession in four key areas: evaluation, compensation, contracts, and certification and preparation. If SB 6 becomes law, these important reforms will pay exceptional teachers more and ensure that the focus is placed on the students – not the adults in the system. The key components of Senate Bill 6 are:

Evaluations

- Requires at least half of the annual evaluation to be based on individual student progress, also called student learning gains, (essentially how much a student learns during the school year as measured by standardized tests), starting in 2014 – 2015 school year. Currently, there is wide variation in how districts use student performance data in teacher and principal evaluations.
- Allows districts to use three consecutive years of data to measure learning gains.
- Requires classroom teachers to be evaluated based on progress of students in their class.
- Requires administrators and non-classroom teachers to be evaluated on average student learning gain of students school-wide.
- Requires two evaluations in the first year for new teachers, teachers from other states, and teachers who have not taught within five years.
- Requires evaluations to have four levels of performance – highly effective, effective, needs improvement and unsatisfactory– which will be defined by the Department of Education in collaboration with teachers and compensation experts.

Compensation:

- Requires school districts to adopt a salary schedule based upon the new 4-level evaluation system.
- Requires higher salaries for teachers and administrators who:
 - are assigned to a low-income or low-performing school (i.e., high need schools),
 - teach in subject that has a shortage of teachers such as math or science (i.e., high need subject areas), or
 - are assigned additional academic responsibility.
- Prohibits the use of degrees and years of service in setting the salary schedule; however, a district can provide raises based upon the years of student progress when determining pay.
- Establishes a dedicated pool of funding, equal to 5% of the total state, local, and federal public school funding (approximately \$900 million) to:
 - Provide salary increases for teachers in high need schools or high need subject areas
 - Provide salary increases for teachers whose students are making progress (teachers who are rated highly effective or effective on the new evaluation system)

- Develop end-of-course assessments to measure individual student progress,

Contracts:

- Makes no changes to tenure contracts for current teachers.
- Ends tenure for teachers hired on or after July 1, 2010. These newly hired teachers will be on an annual contract system:
 - These teachers will start with one probationary contract followed by up to four annual contracts.
 - Allows annual contracts after first five years for teachers who are designated effective or highly effective for two of the last three years.
- Adds poor performance, as demonstrated by a lack of student learning gains, as a “just cause” grounds for dismissing a teacher during the term of an annual contract.
- Requires a district school board, when making staff reductions, to base decisions on the employees’ performance as determined on annual evaluations.

Certification and Preparation:

- Requires out-of-state certified teachers to demonstrate subject area mastery.
- Requires temporary certificate-holders to demonstrate subject area mastery within one year of employment.
- Requires teachers to be evaluated as effective or highly effective on four of five annual evaluations to earn recertification.
- Requires approval of teacher preparation programs to be based upon demonstration that program graduates produce student learning gains.