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CHANGING PAY FOR TEACHERS

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/nation/13048542.htm>

Innovations in determining teacher pay are gaining support in other states, including Colorado where Denver voters recently approved a new pay structure linking salaries to student achievement, according to a report in the Miami Herald.

Tricia Coulter, director of the Teaching Quality and Leadership Institute at the Education Commission of the States, said more and more attention is being paid to how teachers are paid.

Although teachers' unions have historically been opposed to "merit pay" or "pay for performance" policies, the Denver plan was put together with union involvement.

But some are still unhappy with the plan.

According to high school English teacher Marsha Burger, "It's a violation of union ethics that we've all believed in, which is that workers all deserve to be treated equally and fairly."

But should all teachers be paid equally?

One researcher says no.

In "Better Pay for Better Teaching," Bryan Hassel writes, "The laws of supply and demand do not stop at the schoolhouse door...we must pay [teachers] differently from the way we do now. We should reward teachers not just for experience, but for the skills, knowledge, and, ultimately, the performance they bring into their classrooms. This goal requires that we rethink teacher pay systems to harness them to drive student achievement."

In the Denver plan, according to the Herald, raises would be built into four categories: knowledge and skills, evaluation, market incentives and student growth.

The approach of using market incentives is to attract teachers to positions of lesser demand with higher pay. Paying more to meet these demands will result in an adequate supply of teachers.

Texas Governor Rick Perry recently instituted such an approach using \$10 million in discretionary federal fund to reward teachers who succeed in economically disadvantaged schools. The money will be distributed to campuses that show marked improvement in student performance, according to a report in the Houston Chronicle.

According to Coulter, such plans offers examples to other states in both developing and implementing a new teacher pay program.

“The timing is perfect. Everyone is looking at these. It’s definitely being watched very closely.”

To read “Better Pay for Better Teaching,” visit

http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?knlgAreaID=110&subsecID=135&contentID=250543

To read more about the Texas program, visit

<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/metropolitan/education/3435047>

STUDENT LOANS: DO YOU HAVE TO PAY THEM BACK?

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/nation/13033074.htm>

According to a report in the Miami Herald, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear the case of a 67-year-old man who may have to give up part of his Social Security payments in order to pay back his delinquent student loans.

James Lockhart sued the government when he was told his Social Security checks would be cut by 15 percent to pay more than \$80,000 in decades-old student loans.

According to the Herald, the case hinges on two laws: the Debt Collection Act and the Higher Education Act (HEA).

The question is whether the later-enacted HEA eliminates the provision in the Debt Collection Act that bars the government from offsetting Social Security payments to repay student loans that are more than 10 years old.

The answer to that question may have wide impact as delinquent student loan debt approaches \$7 billion with half of that amount more than 10 years old.

To read briefs for “Lockhart v. United States, No. 04-0881” visit

<http://www.usdoj.gov/osg/briefs/2005/3mer/2mer/2004-0881.mer.aa.html>

FLORIDA’S NEW HIGH SCHOOL REFORM TASK FORCE

http://www.tallahassee.com/mld/tallahassee/living/education/k_12/13077235.htm

After emphasis on elementary and middle school reforms in recent years, Florida’s Department of Education is staffing a new task force to look at the state’s high schools to recommend changes for improvement.

According to a report in the Tallahassee Democrat, the 26-member group includes superintendents, secondary and post-secondary educators, principals and education administrators.

“This task force will continue the efforts to prepare students for post-secondary success, whether that is a college education or beginning their career,” said Florida’s Education Commissioner John Winn.

To read more about the task force, visit
http://www.fldoe.org/news/2005/2005_11_03-3.asp

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