

MIKE MILES

NOTES FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

As we continue our journey toward Destination 2020, the school leaders and I recognize that we must also continue to over-communicate to make sense of the initiatives. In an organization of this size, it is unfortunately too easy for messages to become mixed, or information to be misconstrued by the time it gets to the teacher or staff member who is actually trying to implement the changes.

“Notes from the Superintendent” are intended to assist with sense-making. My hope is that they provide answers to the most frequently asked or most topical questions that I hear from teachers or staff members at the campus level. These notes will be kept on THE HUB, the district’s online newsroom, and will provide brief answers to different questions every two weeks.

If you have a question related to something that affects a number of employees, you may submit that question [here](#). I hope this additional form of communication will help all of us stay on the same page and enhance our ability to serve our students.

Q&A

WHEN WILL TEACHERS WHO FALL UNDER THE TEI EVALUATION SYSTEM RECEIVE THEIR FIRST PAYCHECKS TIED TO TEI’S STRATEGIC COMPENSATION PLAN?

The September paychecks for returning teachers will be unchanged from the 2014–2015 salary. These teachers will receive their “effectiveness level” and their TEI evaluation scorecard by the end of September. Teachers will then receive their first salary informed by their effectiveness level in their October 15 paychecks. A separate “adjustment” check for September’s work will be paid at that time to teachers whose earned compensation exceeds their 2014–2015 salary.

WHEN WILL TEACHERS RECEIVE THE RESULTS OF THE STUDENT SURVEYS THAT WERE ADMINISTERED LAST MONTH?

Individual teacher results will be available this Thursday (May 28). Teachers can access the results of their student surveys by going to SchoolNet and clicking on Panorama Ed Reports under the TEI-Related Resources. The results will show the percentage of students responding positively for each question. During the summer, the points awarded for student survey results (out of a maximum of 15) will be determined based on the target distribution, and the outcome will be reported—along with all other TEI-related statistics, point values, and the effectiveness level—on the TEI scorecards, to be published in September.

WHEN WILL TEACHERS WHO WENT THROUGH THE DTR PROCESS RECEIVE THE RESULTS OF THEIR DTR OBSERVATIONS AND THE REVIEW OF THEIR DTR APPLICATIONS?

Teachers who went through the DTR process will receive their results on June 18. These results will include the DTR points the teacher will receive under the TEI evaluation system.

HOW CAN TEACHERS GET INVOLVED AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL TO CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVING DISTRICT-LEVEL INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS?

There are two main teacher groups that provide input and make decisions that affect district-level initiatives and actions. The TEI Expert Group meets monthly and provides input and makes decisions related to TEI and other areas. Elementary schools select two representatives for each school; middle and high schools are allowed two or three representatives. Teachers wishing to serve on this committee should contact their principal.

The Teacher Focus Group is another group that meets regularly to provide input and voice concerns. This group is assembled by the executive director of each feeder pattern. Meeting times and locations are determined by the executive director. Teachers hoping to serve on the focus groups should contact their principal or executive director.

DID YOU KNOW?

- For the first time since the District has been conducting the current climate survey, a **majority of the campus-based staff believe the District is headed in the right direction**. There were **52 percent who agreed or strongly agreed** when asked this question in the latest climate survey. This is **up from 44 percent** just a year ago.
 - Morale is also up. There were **56 percent of campus-based staff who believe morale has improved**. This compares to 52 percent one year ago.
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Excerpts

FROM THE TNTP BLOG, *EMPOWERING PRINCIPALS—IN THE RIGHT WAYS*, BY MIRIAM SONDEIMER, 12 MAY 2015

Common sense suggests that those closest to students during the school day—teachers and principals—should make the big decisions about what will best help students succeed. But the prevailing approach in many school districts has been to use top-down, one-size-fits-all management, with most decisions controlled by the central district office. This structure relieves school leaders of both the flexibility to innovate and the responsibility to deliver results for their students.

Districts' reluctance to relinquish control is understandable. After all, the research on school autonomy is inconclusive: It suggests that autonomy for schools has a positive effect on student achievement in some circumstances, but not in others.

But done right, empowering teachers and principals through more autonomy may be our best hope for attracting and retaining top talent in our schools. Teachers routinely suggest that a lack of autonomy in their classrooms is a big source of frustration. And as one Boston principal, who led a high school through the turnaround process and dramatically improved student achievement, noted, "Autonomy allows you to cultivate a school environment that meets the needs of the community and the individuals there."

Decentralized decision-making for schools is not a new concept.

Today, districts are reimagining school autonomy under new circumstances including: higher academic standards, new accountability structures, and improved data systems. New York City has been experimenting with more school-level autonomy—and greater responsibility on school leaders' shoulders—since 2009. This approach led to positive results: These schools have increased graduation rates for low-income students of color, and they've produced innovative practices in school design, like Generation Schools, where students have 30 percent more hours in the school year.

Without cutting schools loose all together, district leaders nationwide are using proven strategies like mutual consent hiring and pupil-based funding to shift responsibility and autonomy to principals. Principals can make key decisions about how they want to run their schools, but they're also tasked with setting—and meeting—goals for their teachers and students. This accountability is a way to leverage innovative practices, not to threaten or punish leaders. A leader held accountable for having a coherent instructional vision, tailored to meet the needs of her students, will hire a team aligned to that vision, and use her authority over budget, personnel, and curriculum to sustain consistent advancement toward that vision. If a school fails to meet a measurable, consistent definition for quality, it should receive less latitude and appropriate support.

The early lessons of school-based management suggest that empowerment without the right framework—and the right accountability conditions—won't dramatically change student outcomes. Each district must determine for itself how to deliver on the spirit of autonomy and accountability. But school by school, we're beginning to see that an effective principal, armed with the flexibility to put their students' needs first—can deliver strong results.