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## Incentive Pay For Teachers

*Union plan is good start but should be expanded*

The leaders of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) and the state chapter of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) recently announced support for extra pay for teachers who work in “high-poverty” schools. This is the first public indication of support from the teachers unions for some form of differential pay for teachers. This proposal is encouraging and a good starting point but it should be incorporated into a more comprehensive plan to accelerate the pace of reform and improve student performance in the public schools. The same principle of differential pay should be applied to certain under-performing schools under the federal No Child Left Behind law.

The urgency for bold steps to improve student performance is exemplified by the fact that 89 schools in the Boston Public School System (BPS) have been formally identified as being in need of improvement. Thirteen of these schools have not met adequate yearly progress for five consecutive years which should lead to them being restructured.

Recognizing the importance of reforming Boston’s under-performing schools to improve student performance, the Research Bureau joined with four other public policy organizations to recommend a four-step reform plan. With contract negotiations underway, these steps are tied to three provisions in Boston Teachers Union’s (BTU) contract and one provision in the Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors’ (BASAS) contract.

### Reforms proposed for the BTU contract:

- Allow the Superintendent to annually designate 10 low-performing schools as Turnaround Schools, in which he would have more flexibility to determine staffing, scheduling, school structure and budgeting free from contract restrictions.
- Adjust teacher pay based on level of responsibility and provide differential pay for teachers who work in under-performing schools or teach high-demand subjects such as mathematics or science. The latter is opposed by the MTA and AFT, as is merit pay. Differential pay will make it easier to recruit excellent teachers in the places they are most needed.
- Allow pilot schools to be approved by a two-thirds vote of the school faculty and the vote of the School Committee. This change would eliminate the need for a second layer of approval from the BPS Administration and BTU.

### Reform proposed for the BASAS contract:

- Eliminate the requirement that assistant headmasters, assistant principals and program managers be unionized positions. These individuals are key members of the management team and should negotiate their contracts directly with the Superintendent or his designee.

These contract changes would provide important new tools to assist incoming Superintendent Manuel Rivera as he develops his plan to improve student performance and reduce the achievement gap.