

Testimony

Good Morning. I am Margaret Bourdeaux Arbuckle, Executive Director of Guilford Education Alliance. Guilford Education Alliance is a countywide non-profit organization whose mission is to make quality education the top priority for our community in order for every person to achieve his educational potential. We conduct research, publish reports, convene education summits and community forums on specific education issues, advocate for funding for our public schools, connect resources into classrooms, and show case schools and students through community engagement activities. We are an affiliate of the national Public Education Network and are part of a network of North Carolina community based independent non-profit educational advocacy organizations. We work closely *with* the Guilford County Public School District but we *do not work for* the district. We support many of the District's efforts but also provide appropriate feedback to the Board of Education and the Administration when change is needed.

Guilford County Schools has a history of innovation having been among the first to provide early and middle colleges offering students alternative routes to graduation, launching the state's first in-house licensure program for alternatively certified teachers and in providing North Carolina's first comprehensive pay for performance model, Mission Possible. Additionally the school district partners with Head Start and our state Smart Start/More at Four programs to provide pre-K programs to over 70% of identified at risk young children.

For background, the Guilford County School District hosts 120 schools with over 72,000 students in 67 elementary, 22 middle, and 26 high schools, 14 traditional high schools and 8 middle/early colleges, and 7 alternative schools. There are 17 magnet schools and four International Baccalaureate high schools. Guilford County had three schools with 100% graduation and three with 95% graduation last school year. Guilford County Schools is the largest employer in the region with close to 10,000 employees.

But also, Guilford County Schools hosts 10 of the 75 low performing schools in our state, representative of all levels. This year the percentage of students on Free/Reduced Lunch has grown to over 53% and there are over 150 languages/dialects spoken in our students' homes representative of over 142 different cultural/ethnic groups.

To address these many challenges, particularly those within our low performing/high need schools, the district initiated a focused pay-for-performance model several years ago. This morning I will discuss Mission Possible, the pay for performance model with you.

During the 2005-2006 school year, principals recruiting teachers complained loudly that when attending teacher recruitment fairs, the schools in our district with high-needs student populations found themselves competing unsuccessfully for teachers as new teachers preferred entering our more affluent schools. In particular teacher applications to teach mathematics was at a very low number and the teacher turnover at our high-needs schools was very great. It was challenging to place an experienced principal at these schools and thus many had young inexperienced leaders.

Led by the Superintendent teacher focus groups were formed and teachers were asked, "What would it take to attract you and other teachers to our high-needs schools?" Following much discussion, several specific things were identified: (1) strong experienced principals, (2) financial incentives, particularly to teach the End of Grade tested subjects, English and math, (3) performance compensation for academic results, (4) relevant professional development with instructional coaches who were experienced master teachers, and (5) smaller class sizes.

Historically North Carolina teachers have been paid on the basis of academic degrees earned and longevity/experience in the position; this was true for all Guilford County teachers. Also, the staff development program was expansive but was workshop oriented with everyone's participation expected. Class sizes varied upon grade level but generally the high need schools did not have surrogate Gifted/Talented teachers that provided for an overall lower teacher/student ratio.

Having the ideas from the teacher focus groups, the Superintendent put the idea of differentiated pay "on the table" for discussion in the community. Immediately there was press attention to it and great interest in the idea. Following rather heated discussion with the teachers' organization which resulted in the question being posed, "what would you propose to recruit and retain teachers in our high poverty schools?" which resulted in silence as the response, conversations with the business community, leadership of Guilford Education Alliance and others, the Superintendent proposed to the Board of Education in the spring of 2006 the funding of the Mission Possible program for 20 selected schools.

Using criteria of teacher turnover rates, socioeconomic levels, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and ABC growth models, schools were selected. Initially the funding for the program was found by redirecting funds through raising the class size in the fifth grade by .5 student/class and not filling 30 vacant teaching positions resulting in \$2,073,624 in local dollars to fund the four components of the program: Compensation Incentives,

Performance Accountability, Professional Development and Capacity Building, and Structural Support.

In today's discussion about School Reform initiatives, differentiated compensation has gained momentum but in 2006 this was seen as a very innovative, all but radical, proposal, particularly in North Carolina where teacher pay had such a long history of its being based on experience. Teachers joined the workforce making approximately \$32,000/year and after ten years of experience made about \$8000 more, including local pay supplements. Therefore to consider teachers being offered incentive pay to teach in specific schools and provided compensation for student performance created much attention.

After the initial implementation, the UNC Administration and the local foundation community offered to expand the program with specific focus on teaching mathematics in high schools. Through the private funding, high school math teachers were provided a laptop, classroom technology, math coaching, summer institutes and an additional \$4000 stipend for attending the training programs. Following this implementation, Guilford County Schools became the first district to receive a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant of \$8million to differentiate teacher salaries. These additional dollars resulted in 30 Mission Possible Schools identified for the 2007-2008 School Year and continuing henceforth.

Agreed upon pay incentives are based on value added scores for student academic performance. Teachers who produce gains of 1.0-1.49 above the district value-added mean receive a bonus of \$2,500 and those who produce gains of 1.5 or more above the mean receive \$4,000.

Recruitment/Retention Incentives

Position	Incentive
K-5	\$2,500
6-8 Language Arts or Reading	\$2,500
6-12 Math without a math degree or 24 content hours (C or above)	\$2,500
6-12 Math with a math degree or 24 content hours (C or above)	\$9,000
Algebra I	\$10,000
English I	\$2,500
Elementary Principal	\$5,000

Middle School Principal	\$7,500
High School Principal	\$10,000

Performance Incentives

Position	Level I (>1.0 SE)	Level II (>1.5 SE)
K-2	Not Eligible	Not Eligible
3-5 Composite EOG	\$2,500	\$4,000
6-8 LA/Reading	\$2,500	\$4,000
6-12 Math	\$2,500	\$4,000
Algebra I	\$2,500	\$4,000
English I	\$2,500	\$4,000
Position	Level I (>50%)	Level II (>75%)
IB and AP Math	\$2,500	\$4,000

Position	School Makes AYP
Principal	\$5,000
Curriculum Facilitator	\$2,500

The Outcomes for Mission Possible have been published on the Guilford County Schools website, www.gcsnc.com/depts.mission_possible. In summary they are:

- For all three years of implementation, 100% of Mission Possible Positions were staffed on the first day of school.
- The quality of the applicants for the teaching positions are more experienced and more qualified, licensed in English or Math.
- Professional Development participation has been 100% Year One, 99% year Two, and 95% Year Three with evaluations of over 4.5 on a 1-5 point Likert Scale.
- The Professional Development has been differentiated per teacher need.
- From 2006-2007 to 2008-2009 school years, a total of \$1,017,710 has been awarded for Value Added Performance Awards representing from 13% to 75% of teachers for each course measured, depending upon the course/level.
- There is a shift in the population of teachers who are receiving Level I value added bonuses to increasing numbers receiving Level II value added bonuses.
- All but two of the schools received Performance Awards
- The Faculty Attrition Data was 11.7% as compared to 12.8% for the District average.

The impact of Mission Possible has been great in terms of maintaining faculty within high needs schools, providing appropriate differentiated professional development and

improvement in School Climate as measured by a School Climate Indicator developed specifically for Mission Possible Schools.

However, there remains concern in whether there will be Increased Student Achievement, a Long Term (5-6 year) Outcome. Using the ABC Growth Model our students' achievement is improving but many are not achieving grade level proficiency. There are several explanations for why this is so at this time:

1. Changing the faculty takes time in order to result in having the total number of highly qualified, course-certified teachers in all positions. For example, there can be 85 faculty members in a middle school and 4-5 of these positions change in a given year. It takes multiple years to replace all of the faculty.
2. Based on the 1966 Sanders & Rivers research on impact of effective teachers on students increased academic performance, we know that on average 5th grade students with highly effective teachers three years in a row will score 50 percentile points higher on state level exams than their peers. But in reverse, students who have historically had ineffective teachers, it takes years to overcome this deficit.
3. Students enrolled in these high need schools have multiple issues that present high challenges to their academic success: family poverty, family illiteracy, home mobility, health and mental health issues. These must be addressed as well as providing the students with effective teachers.

There are many lessons learned through the process of developing and implementing Guilford County's Mission Possible Initiative. The attraction of subject-matter qualified teachers for our highly impacted, low performing schools has been quite successful. However, it is important to remind public policy makers that educational change takes time, investment of resources both financial and personnel, and that flexibility is important. For too long, we have had "cookie cutter" approaches to education, requiring all teachers to attend the same workshops no matter the relevance, paying teachers the same amount no matter their students' outcomes, and recognizing that students have very differentiated needs. We must provide the support and guidance to our teachers to meet each child's educational needs.

Respectfully Submitted,
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Information in this transcript is from the Guilford County Schools website and from research on the impact of differentiated pay for teachers. Conversations were held with the Mission Possible evaluator at UNCG-SERVE and with the Mission Possible Program Director in Guilford County Schools. See www.gcsnc.com for further information and www.guilfordeducationalliance.org.