
State ESSA Plans Should Include Multiple Career Pathways for Teachers

By Shawnta S. Barnes - May 31, 2017



Title II, Part A is a federal program focused on increasing student achievement through improving principal and teacher quality. Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states can elect to use Title II, Part A funds to create multiple career pathways and leadership opportunities for educators. Although President Trump doesn't seem to understand the value of Title II and has suggested eliminating it, I believe this is an opportunity for states to show educators they are invested in them throughout their careers.

Many times I have heard educators say, "I did not choose this career for the income, but I chose it for the outcome." The reality is many effective educators are

fleeing the profession and it's not because they don't care about the outcomes of students anymore. It's because they can barely afford to take care of themselves and their families. There are also limited opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge with others in the profession. The typical upward progression in education is teacher, instructional coach (if your district has this opportunity), assistant principal or dean, and then principal, but many educators do not aspire to become a principal. Effective educators should receive extra compensation and be lifted up and as leaders instead of schools and districts hiring outside consultants to lead professional development or fix problems.

There are capable educators who choose not to pursue principalship because of the huge responsibility and there some who have earned a principalship that could be more effective if they had some help. I am currently a literacy coach in Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) and my school district has opportunities for teachers to earn up to \$18,300 additional compensation for opportunity culture leadership roles and up to \$5,000 additional compensation as a curriculum and instruction leader, evaluation leader, recruitment leader, school-wide change agent or special education lead specialist.



Last school year, I was selected as a school-wide change agent and this school year, I mentored and coached change agents with colleague Bonnie Benson. Last school year, this opportunity allowed me to further develop my leadership skills and work on a problem at my school and this school year it allowed me to help develop other leaders and guide them in enacting change in their school.

Teacher leader opportunities allow teachers to shoulder some of their school's responsibilities which allow administrators to focus on other areas. Using Title II funds for career pathways allows educators to feel valued by sharing their knowledge and it allows them to be compensated for the additional work. I urge states to take advantage of this opportunity to help keep effective educators in the profession.