

## **E-Comp Resolution**

**Whereas**, on February 21, 2006, the Florida Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the **E-Comp Effectiveness Compensation Plan**, which gives a small percentage of teachers bonuses based solely on their students' learning gains on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) and similar standardized tests; and

**Whereas**, Florida has a teacher-shortage crisis and must hire more than 30,000 teachers before the start of the new school year in August; and

**Whereas**, on the average, Florida teachers are paid \$6,200 less than their counterparts nationwide; and

**Whereas**, a nominal performance pay "incentive" is no substitute for competitive pay; and

**Whereas**, the Clay County Education Association recognizes the severe shortage of teachers, and supports the goal of recruiting and retaining highly qualified public school teachers to ensure that every child learns and succeeds in school; and

**Whereas**, the **E-Comp** "bonus" is not an adequate incentive to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and does not advance the goal of ensuring all Florida teachers earn competitive salaries; and

**Whereas**, education stakeholders – including teachers, principals, school board members and researchers – agree that **E-Comp** is deeply flawed; and

**Whereas**, the FCAT was designed as a diagnostic tool, and is not, by itself, a valid and reliable method of measuring a student's achievement, "learning gains" or a teacher's worth; and

**Whereas**, **E-Comp** results in an over-reliance on standardized student achievement testing to the exclusion of other recognized indicators of student achievement and teacher excellence; and

**Whereas**, the Florida Department of Education (DOE) says that only 31 percent of all public school teachers teach students who take FCAT, so the state may be forced to a whole new generation of FCAT-like tests for non-FCAT subjects, including art and physical education; and

**Whereas**, **E-Comp** was developed without educator input and was adopted in an "administrative fiat"; and

**Whereas**, even those who support merit and performance pay plans have attacked **E-Comp**'s poor design and the method it uses to determine teacher performance, calling it "arbitrary" and "unfair"; and

**Whereas**, **E-Comp** is currently a \$55 million unfunded mandate, which DOE has asked the legislature to fund. If the legislature refuses to comply, dollars could be drained from local school district budgets; and

**Whereas**, **E-Comp** diverts attention, energy and resources away from proven education reforms and recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers; now, therefore, be it

**Resolved:** that the Clay County Education Association urges lawmakers to reject the **E-Comp Effectiveness Compensation Plan** and adopt sound public education policies that will strengthen all Florida public schools.

April 19, 2006

Dear Dr. Proctor,

I am writing today on behalf of the Northeast Florida Coalition of School Boards, which includes Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Putnam, and St. Johns County School Boards. Collectively, we want to express our concerns over the State Board of Education rule commonly referred to as e-comp.

This new rule, which was adopted after only ten minutes of discussion by an appointed State Board of Education, accountable to no one, is fraught with difficulty on many fronts. I must tell you that I have spoken to many teachers about this rule, and not one of them has been in favor of its adoption. They are fearful that the cooperative spirit that is the hallmark of education in Florida's schools will be replaced by a competitive energy that will negatively impact students. They are afraid that contract negotiations will go to impasse because of the constraints of the bonuses and the impact they make on available funds for raises. They have trepidation over the ranking of teachers: "What if I don't make the 10%? How is anyone to know that I am at 11% and not 99%?" They fear parents demanding that their children only be placed in the classes of the teachers who are ranked in the top 10%. They have consternation over the fact that their entire academic year will be judged by one standardized test and the fact that many of them do not even fall into the cohort that can be measured by FCAT. It is very interesting that the very people who are supposed to benefit from the new rule are the ones who have the most negative attitudes concerning it.

From a school board member's perspective, still other areas of concern present themselves. The rule is yet another erosion into local control. We were required to develop pay for performance plans three years ago, and all of the 67 plans have been approved. Now the State Board is coming back to dictate how we will compensate our teachers, in conflict with the Constitution of Florida, which places that process in collective bargaining.

In addition, there is no guarantee that funding will accompany the requirements of the plan, even for the first year, let alone for the out years. With Florida ranking 50<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states in education funding per capita, school boards have a very difficult job balancing the needs of students with limited funding as it is without adding another program that will consume large amounts of available dollars. Already, 58% of the funding we receive is categorical, severely limiting our flexibility in providing programs of excellence for our children. With this additional drain on resources, districts will be forced further into an inflexible, restrictive funding box.

Finally, the Northeast Florida Coalition of School Boards is very concerned that NO school board member was invited to the table when this decision was made. In addition, no school board member has been invited to participate in the committee selected to address the concerns with the new rule. We are constitutionally charged with the governance of the school districts of Florida. We feel that our voice should be heard when major decisions which radically impact our ability to govern are made.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these concerns. We trust that compromise can and will be reached which is in the best interest of the children of Florida.

Sincerely,

Beverly Slough  
Co-Chair  
Northeast Florida Coalition of School Boards