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**Education Leaders Call for Innovative Thinking for Teacher Salary Reform**  
***Former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige Highlights Need to Change Compensation Structure, Not Just Add-on***

*Austin, TX* –Former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige joined the leaders of the Texas Institute for Education Reform (TIER) today at a press conference to urge state lawmakers to redesign the teacher salary structure with the goal of increasing teacher effectiveness, expanding professional support for teachers, and improving student achievement. The group cited the state’s budget shortfall as an opportunity to embrace real change in how teachers are paid and supported.

“With many education reforms in the past, we’ve spent more money to do more of same,” said Jim Windham, chairman of TIER. “With less money available, we can’t just add on; Texas lawmakers need to embrace systematic *changes* to education policy and in the way we do business in the schools.”

TIER’s recommendations hinge on the concept of “strategic compensation” for teachers, not to be confused with “pay for performance,” which as a stand-alone reform is not a silver bullet to improve teacher effectiveness or student achievement, according to the research cited in TIER’s report, “A Teacher Compensation Strategy for Excellence in the Texas Classroom.” The report has received encouragement from state and national researchers and policy experts and from representatives of the Association of Texas Professional Educators, the Texas Association of School Boards, and a former trustee of the Houston Independent School District Board.

“Most successful teacher salary programs are not isolated, stand-alone initiatives,” said Chris Patterson, author the TIER report. “Instead, strategic compensation programs are connected to teacher appraisals, professional development, professional learning communities, educator career paths and sophisticated data systems. Instead of focusing on pay in isolation, the Legislature should take an integrated salary approach that not only improves teacher pay, but give teachers the tools they need to work more effectively.”

TIER recommends that the state establish guidelines for strategic compensation programs and empower the local school districts to implement them. TIER offers strategic compensation as a promising alternative to the teacher salary schedule, a 60-year-old structure which has proven to be unresponsive to the market and doesn’t address the specific needs of public schools.

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“The key here is giving local school districts the authority to design compensation reforms that work for their district. Right now, many local school districts follow salary schedules based on seniority,” said Paige. “Instead, local school districts need flexibility to invest money more creatively and effectively.”

“We can no longer rely on historical ‘fixes’ to the teacher salary schedule such as across the board pay raises or new salary supplements for small groups of teachers,” said Don McAdams, president of the Center for Reform of School Systems.

Specifically, the TIER report suggests the Legislature can take five important steps to pave the way to successful strategic compensation programs by reallocating funds, cutting costs, and finding new education dollars:

1. **Establish a Public Commission on Educator Policy** -- Appointed members of this state commission would represent key public education stakeholders. The commission would be responsible for drafting state plans for district compensation programs, teacher appraisal, and professional development, and identifying the statutory and regulatory reforms required to support district efforts to improve educator effectiveness.
2. **Redesign the State Teacher Salary Schedule Around Strategic Compensation** – Lawmakers should remove constraints on local district decisions related to salary and salary supplements. In addition to establishing five levels of base pay, state guidelines for pay could include supplements for effective teachers, those who teach in hard to staff schools, and those who acquire new skills and responsibilities. Additional supplements should be allowed for teachers who demonstrate individual impact on student achievement and goals, based on quality teacher appraisals.
3. **Create State Guidelines for Locally Designed Strategic Compensation Programs** –Districts should rely on teacher work groups to help design a strategic compensation program that is based on state guidelines. Districts should rely on a community task force to conduct annual reviews, monitor outcomes, and recommend improvements. Teachers should progress through salary steps based on annual appraisals that include multiple measures (student learning objectives, value-added measures of student growth, core competencies, and annual professional development goals). Appraisal results should be connected to professional development, pathways to professional advancement and annual salary decisions.
4. **Establish Sustained Funding for District Strategic Compensation Programs** – Long-term financial solutions to sustain strategic compensation include creating an allotment from the School Foundation Program, redirecting funds out of ineffective programs into a strategic compensation program; and redirecting state and federal categorical aid programs into compensation programs.

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5. **Create or Redesign State Systems, Policies, and Programs to Improve District Capacity for Improving Teaching and Learning** – Texas leadership should establish state teacher appraisals that districts can use locally, establish state standards for professional development, and establish recommendations for students learning objectives and teaching standards. Finally, the state should incorporate value-added measures in the state education data system. Local school districts should have access to data free of charge.

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