

# Facts about HB 7189

## 1. **HB 7189 DOES NOT reduce teacher pay. HB 7189 deals with future RAISES for teachers.**

No teacher will see their pay reduced under HB 7189. Starting in 2014, teachers who are assessed as “effective” or “highly effective” will receive raises. Teachers who are rated “needs improvement” or “unsatisfactory” for two out of three years will not be eligible for raises. Teacher compensation will be based on student learning gains and the work the teacher does in the classroom- which are what matters in the educational system- not just seniority.

Rewarding successful teachers is not a new concept here in Florida. Currently we reward teachers whose students perform well in Advanced Placement courses. This bill takes that innovative approach and expands it in three ways:

- All teachers would be eligible for this extra compensation;
- The additional reward would not be based on performance on the test, but rather the learning gains by the student. Meaning the student has more knowledge on the subject at the end of the course, than they did at the start;
- And, while 50% of pay increases would be based on learning gains, the remaining portion is based on instructional practices like classroom management, knowledge of subject matter and interaction with students and parents.

Unlike the current AP exam rewards, HB 7189 will have salary increases, not bonuses, and those increases carryover into a teacher’s future years.

These ideas are not limited only to Florida. In fact, the two states that were just rewarded Race to the Top funds by the Obama Administration have made the foundation of their proposals the same very common sense proposals that the Florida Legislature is considering right now.

- Delaware recently passed legislation to increase accountability for teachers and principals. No educators can be rated as “effective” unless their students demonstrate satisfactory levels of growth. Delaware teachers rated as “ineffective” for two to three years can be removed from the classroom, even if they have tenure.
- Tennessee has created the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System to use data that has been collected since 1992 in the teacher evaluation process. Tennessee is moving to the “effective teacher” model

immediately, and using this data as a significant part of evaluations by school year 2011-12.

**2. NO current teacher will lose their tenure status.**

Of the 175,000 teachers who currently have tenure status in their school districts, none will lose their tenured status because of this legislation.

This proposal only impacts newly hired teachers by starting them in a common sense compensation structure based on teacher quality and student learning gains.

**3. Teachers who work with learning disabled or lower performing students will BENEFIT from the bill.**

Currently Florida is experiencing a teacher shortage in our most challenging learning environments; STEM subjects, lower performing schools and classes with special needs students. This very bill addresses that in multiple ways:

- Requiring school districts to implement a differentiated pay system. By providing a financial incentive to go to these more challenging areas, school districts can recruit, retain and reward those teachers who answer this call;
- Placing a premium on learning gains, rather than student performance. EVERY STUDENT has the ability to learn. The teachers who effectively reach out to their students in challenging circumstances deserve to be rewarded for these efforts;
- Recognizing these great teachers, who under the current system, receive no acknowledgement for the important work they do. These teachers, who take on the additional workload associated with the more challenging learning environments, should be recognized and rewarded for their efforts.

**4. Teachers will not be punished for students who enter their classroom performing below grade level.**

Teachers cannot control the circumstances of a student prior to entering their classroom. Because of every student enters the classroom at different levels, student success will be assessed on learning gains, not performance levels. These reforms require that demonstrated progress – what students actually learn during the school year – be considered as the determining factor for 50% of the teacher's appraisal.

While teachers cannot control outside the classroom circumstance, EVERY STUDENT has the ability to learn, and has the right to the best opportunity to learn. We cannot allow the soft bigotry of low expectations hold any student back from their learning potential. By measuring students' learning gains, we have the ability see the progress of every student and more accurately assess our educational system.

## **5. The bill takes into consideration exceptional circumstances.**

Students are not widgets, but are children that come into the classroom with various backgrounds, circumstances and needs. These reforms also take into consideration learning does not take place in a vacuum, but with real life situations and disturbances.

Because of array of issues that may come up in each individual district with flexibility and a staggered timeline for implementation:

- After the reforms are fully implemented, in 2014-15, the appraisal system will take into consideration the learning gains of the preceding three years.
  - By looking at three years of student learning gains, one can better assess the effect that particular teacher has on his/her students.
  - A three-year comprehensive look at student learning gains allows flexibility that may be needed because of exceptional circumstances, while providing a current account of the progress in the classroom.
- School districts will have until 2014-15 to develop or acquire end-of-course examinations to measure student learning gains.
  - Some districts in the state already have end-of-course assessments developed. Other districts could use these and modify to meet their needs.
- School districts know the unique circumstances of their schools. Each district will develop their performance appraisal plan based on the guidelines set forth in the reforms, and on the Department of Education definitions of the levels of performance.
- School districts will negotiate, as they do now, the salary schedule points, and the levels of additional salaries, but based on the DOE defined levels of performance.
- DOE will set forth rules to appropriately compensate those in exceptional circumstances. Situations where learning may have been interrupted or affected because of circumstances surrounding the learning environment as a whole, the teacher individually, or specific students will be addressed.

**6. Test scores are NOT the only measure of teacher success.**

Student test scores are not the only measure of a teacher's success in this proposal. Other factors relating to the instructional practices used by the teacher such as classroom management and subject matter expertise will be considered for half of the evaluation. The legislation will not take effect until 2014, so local districts, teachers and the Department of Education will have time to make sure that suitable standards are in place to properly measure teacher performance.

In addition, stating test scores is the measure of teacher success is misleading in and of itself. When the bill is fully implemented, (2014-15), demonstrated learning gains will be the measure, not student performance.

**7. The bill does not affect teacher pension or retirement benefits.**

Neither bill contains any provisions that impact the pensions nor retirement benefits of Florida's teachers.

**8. These reforms are not an unfunded mandate.**

The announcement that Florida was not one of the winners of the Phase I Race to the Top grant is a strong indicator of how much we need these education reforms. Placing a premium on accountability and rewarding great teachers benefits every one of our students.

It is important to note, these reforms are not dependent upon funding under the Race to the Top grant. Rather, a performance fund will be established to cover the expenses to develop the appraisal system and appropriately award our excellent teachers.

5% of the FEFP will be utilized for these changes. This direction of the FEFP does not equal to an unfunded mandate. These programs readjust our focus already set forth in basic operational funding. Rather than setting salary increases on years served and degrees held, school districts will refocus salary schedules on learning gains, which is what really matters in education.

No dollars will be taken from per student funding. In fact, we are placing a higher premium on what happens in the classroom, by rewarding student progress and quality instructional practices.

**9. By rewarding teachers who provide a quality education for our students, teacher collaboration is not in jeopardy.**

The ability to see student actively learning and progress is why most teachers joined the profession in the first place. Highly effective teachers recognize the value of collaborating and sharing best practices to educate students in a manner that prepares them for college and careers. Teachers join the profession with the ideal of preparing students to be able to succeed to the best of their ability. Recognizing and rewarding excellence in teaching does not diminish, but hopefully encourage more to join the profession. Recognizing innovative teaching and success in the classroom may even promote more collaboration.

HB 7189 does not pit teachers against one another. It measures each teacher based on the learning gains of their students, not against the gains made in other classrooms or other schools. We now have the data to be able to assess teachers on an individual basis, and we can use the results of those assessments to reward teachers for classroom excellence.