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Op-Ed: Merit pay should stay in budget

By Terry Ryan

For as long as anyone can remember, in Ohio as in the rest of America, a public-school teacher's effectiveness and performance in the classroom have had little to no impact on decisions about whether she is retained by her district or laid off, how she is compensated or assigned to a district's schools or how her professional development is crafted.

Instead, these critical decisions are made on the basis of quality-blind state policies, like the notorious "last-in, first-out" mandate governing layoffs, and tenure rules that allow teachers to have job protection for life and "bump" less-senior teachers when jockeying for positions. Effective teachers are forced to go, simply because they have not taught as long as others, regardless of how successful other teachers might be. Students are left with whichever instructors have been in the system the longest, and teachers receive professional development that is not tied at all to their individual improvement needs.

To their credit, Gov. John Kasich and the Ohio House have been trying to transform the system by which the state handles these crucial teacher human-resources decisions. The biennial budget bill passed by the House makes classroom effectiveness key in determining how teachers are assigned to schools, whether their contracts are renewed, and- when budgets make it unavoidable - how they are laid off. It would put in place a teacher-evaluation system that incorporates student academic growth and several other key job-related performance factors and would rate teachers according to four tiers. Basic personnel decisions around tenure, placement, dismissal and professional development would be tied directly to the evaluation results.

Op-ed continued here: <http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/editorials/stories/2011/06/02/merit-pay-should-stay-in-budget.html?sid=101>

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