Quite a crowd gathered in the Raleigh Convention Center, as well as in front of individual computers across North Carolina and 36 other states, for the 29th annual Emerging Issues Forum, Teachers and the Great Economic Debate. They gathered because they know teacher quality impacts student success, and student success boosts the economy through higher earnings. With a common quest for insights on the more difficult questions surrounding ways to develop and support world-class teachers, participants left with some amount of agreement on the paths forward and a giant sense of the work that remains ahead.

Forum speakers and attendees are already at work. Senator Jerry Tillman served on the Forum’s legislative panel, and he spoke yesterday to a first meeting of General Assembly members, teacher group leaders, education experts and parents. These participants will be poised to make recommendations to the legislature on teacher compensation by mid-April. Click here to see the video of the Forum’s legislative panel.

As groups such as the one Senator Tillman addressed proceed with their work, many of you have written to ask, “what more can I do?”

If the Forum made anything clear, it was no one person has THE answer. Many people must bring their piece of the answer to the table to create smart approaches and solutions on teacher quality.

As we turn our attention at IEI from questions and move to a focus on solutions, it is time to open the conversation to greater numbers in our state.

Please offer your thoughts – advice, questions, or examples of promising practices – for the five top priorities identified during the Forum to help train, retain, and support world-class teachers in every classroom:

- Rebrand teaching through a statewide campaign that attracts young people to the profession, and helps the greater community understand the value of our teachers.
- Increase teacher competitiveness by enhancing entry-level requirements and tying compensation to multiple measures.
- Build career ladders that allow top teachers to stay in the classroom, and reward teachers with differential pay for taking on leadership responsibilities such as coaching peers.
- Emulate the medical profession’s structure for establishing status by focusing on better training, standards and leadership opportunities.
- Develop 11-month contract options for teachers to allow for more effective talent development.

Visit the Emerging Issues Commons to share your thoughts.

If you were not at the Forum, here are videos of two other speakers who may be helpful for you to hear as you think about your feedback.

Watch Amanda Ripley, Author of The Smartest Kids in the World -- And How They Got That Way share
international comparison data as well as patterns of transformation within the teaching profession that have led to positive change in other countries.

Watch Pasi Sahlberg, Director General of the Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation (CIMO) in Helsinki, Finland present approaches to teacher recruitment, preparation, support and accountability, as well as answer the question of why Finland has such a tremendous commitment to highly-trained teachers.

Your thoughts will be shared with leaders in IEI’s upcoming six-week self-guided online program into ways to develop support structures for teachers. Participants will learn more about the topics discussed at the Emerging Issues Forum, dialogue with some of the Forum speakers, identify necessary resources, build important networks, and facilitate the formation of community teams.

Sign up for our Massive Open Online Course (MOOC-Ed) today to take part in this collective effort, offered in partnership with the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation and Fidelity Investments. The effort launches on March 10th.

Everyone has a part to play.

Warmly,

Anita