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VIEWPOINT

MAY 25, 2016 4:56 PM

Promising signs on teacher pay at legislature

HIGHLIGHTS

Governor and House prioritize teacher pay in their budgets

Senate unveils plan that builds on that

We must pay to recruit and keep top talent in the classroom



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North Carolina has raised teacher salaries more than any state over the past two years, but more is needed. **Robert Willett** - rwillett@newsobserver.com

BY ALAN E. GANT JR.
Special to the Observer



VIDEOS



Kemba Walker, Charlotte Ranger



Education transformation in North Carolina depends on our ability to attract and retain the best and brightest teachers and school leaders. That's why we commend our elected leadership for their bold commitments to raise teacher pay.

The National Education Association reports that North Carolina has raised teacher salaries faster than any other state over the last two years. More importantly, legislative leadership has made it a top priority to significantly boost not just starting pay, but pay for all early career teachers.

Gant **Photo by** - Steve Exum

Business leaders know that talent is the key to the success of any organization. That's why we must continue investing in a teacher pay plan that enables every teacher to earn more earlier in their career and compensates experienced



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teachers who expand their career into classroom leadership and/or hard-to-staff schools and subjects.

BEST NC members believe North Carolina can have the best education system in the nation. We start by looking at the reality of today's teaching profession.

The truth is that schools are competing with other professions to retain new, talented teachers. Even though starting teacher pay was raised significantly over the past two years, teachers quickly fall behind their college graduate peers with the slow progression of our pay schedule. That is one big reason turnover is so high among younger teachers in North Carolina.

The other hard reality is that we don't compensate teachers as we do other highly skilled professions. In most other professions, earnings potential keeps up with early career growth and includes additional opportunities for specialized skills or achievement. Currently, North Carolina teachers can't reach top earnings until they are nearly 50 years old. No other high-skilled profession follows such a slow curve.

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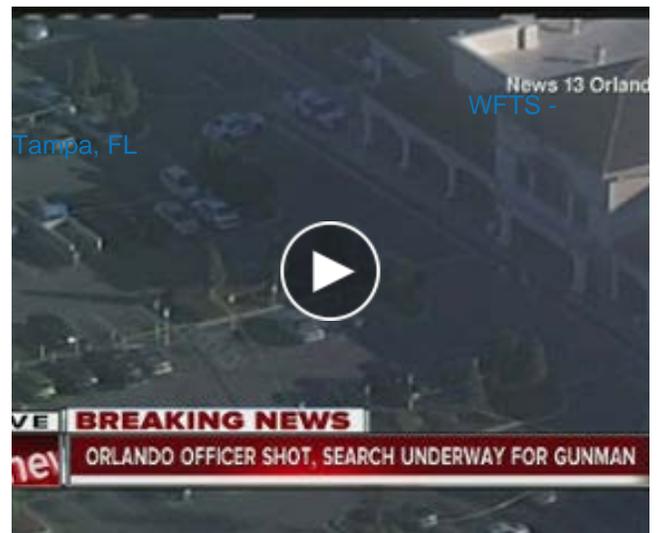
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To be clear – teaching is a highly skilled profession, requiring teachers to make complex, real-time decisions to ensure students are engaged and learning. Plus, the demands of the economy require teachers to meet higher expectations and provide personalized learning for all students. We must ensure that our classroom teachers have the respect and compensation commensurate with this demanding job.

Giving higher raises to early-career teachers will help recruit top talent to the profession, reduce turnover, and enable them to earn more, faster. We can continue building on these gains by compensating experienced teachers for taking on leadership roles, teaching in hard-to-fill subject areas or taking positions in hard-to-staff schools.

We commend both the governor and House leadership for prioritizing pay increases for teachers and principals in their budget proposals. The Senate pay plan that was previewed Wednesday appears to build on those proposals, offering a multi-year commitment to a visionary plan for paying teachers commensurate with the importance and skill of their profession.

Gant is chairman and CEO of Glen Raven, Inc. and a member of BEST NC.