A New Series of Papers on Teacher Compensation from the University of Wisconsin CPRE Group

There is strong consensus around the country that talented and capable teachers will be needed in all classrooms in order to accomplish the nation’s goals of teaching all students to high standards, and closing the achievement gap. Although there are many policy and practice issues that have to be addressed in order for the nation’s education systems to recruit and retain the quality of individuals that are required, including schools and classrooms in many of the country’s large urban and poverty impacted districts, the teacher compensation system itself must be changed. Teacher salary levels will have to be hiked in many places to enable school systems to compete for the quality of talent required to be successful, and the salary structures themselves need to be changed in order to pay teachers for the knowledge, skills and responsibilities to be successful, including bonuses for improved student performance.

With support from the College Board, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) Group at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is producing a series of papers that addresses the compensation aspect of the strategic management of human capital in public education:

2. Do Teacher Pay Levels Matter?, by Anthony Milanowski
3. How to Design New Teacher Salary Structures, by Herbert G. Heneman, III and Steve Kimball
4. How to Pay Teachers for Student Performance Outcomes, by Anthony Milanowski
5. How to Fund Teacher Compensation Changes, by Allan Odden
6. Exploring a Federal Government Role in Funding Increased Teacher Compensation, by Andrew Reschovsky

This paper is available in the Resources section of http://www.smhc-cpre.org.

September 2008

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HOW TO DESIGN NEW TEACHER SALARY STRUCTURES

By

Herbert G. Heneman, III, and Steve Kimball

Much has been written about the inadequacies of teacher compensation given today’s educational demands. The push for teacher pay reforms seems to grow daily, with “pay for performance” used to refer to any number of reform options. But neither reform proponents nor opponents typically go deep into the structures and differences in compensation designs. In this paper we focus on the pay structure of a district and differences in pay among teachers within a school district. Such pay differences exist at any moment in time, and they also emerge over time through various methods of pay progression. Examining a district’s pay structure involves studying what the actual pay differences among teachers are, and what factors account for those differences. Teachers’ base pay is an incentive intended to focus and stimulate certain behaviors and it represents by far the largest portion of teachers’ compensation. Design of the pay structure thus has important implications for the types of behaviors the district wants to encourage and reward in teachers.

We focus our attention in this paper to the base pay of teachers, meaning just the pay that is guaranteed to teachers, as opposed to variable pay that is not guaranteed and must be re-earned (the matter of variable pay for teachers is explored in a separate monograph in this series). Base pay for a teacher is comprised of three components: (a) the school year base pay amount, almost always determined by the single salary schedule; (b) additional stipends or supplements to the base pay; and (c) base pay progression that is provided to the teachers, such as through movement on the single salary schedule or the earning of additional pay for certain actions or accomplishments. These three components likely encompass almost all, if not all, of a typical teacher’s pay in a school district. In other words, the base pay structure of a school district sets the major parameters on how pay is used to guide and motivate teachers.

Imagine a school district in which all K–12 teachers received identical base pay that is at the average for the state, and that once a year that base pay level is increased to provide for changes in the cost of living. Underlying such a “single rate” system are many assumptions, including (a) all teachers compete for jobs in a single labor market, regardless of factors such as subject matter, and type of school assignment, (b) all teachers in the district have similar knowledge, skills, and abilities, (c) all teachers are equally effective in classroom performance, (d) teachers are willing to assume other instructional roles, such as master teacher, without additional pay, and (e) the ability of the district to attract and retain teachers does not depend on pay. It is difficult to imagine such a district. In fact, districts attempt to create and use pay structures because the above assumptions are not true. Pay differentiation exists among teachers in explicit recognition of the powerful motivating force that pay provides in teacher attraction, assignment, performance, and retention.

Bearing this in mind, we turn now to an in-depth look at pay structures. We begin by describing the single salary schedule, and its many advantages and disadvantages. We then address base pay supplements for specific actions or accomplishments. These include prior experience pay, athletic and academic stipends, expanded role stipends, hard-to-staff schools and subjects, and
National Board certification. Next we look at base pay progression. The single salary schedule and its many possibilities for creating a pay progression framework are described. Attention then shifts to newer ways that pay progression is being provided to teachers, based on indicators of teachers’ quality. Examples include skill blocks and targeted professional development, teacher evaluation, and career ladders. Our next topic is that of diversified pay plans that have multiple components for determining base pay and pay progression. To illustrate diversified plans we describe the Denver Public Schools Professional Compensation System for Teachers (ProComp) plan, the Douglas County (Colorado) School District plan, the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) plan, and Minnesota’s Quality Compensation (Q-Comp) plan. The last section of this report identifies and emphasizes the importance of many issues to consider when designing and implementing variations from the single salary schedule. The inherent complexity of these variations means that considerable attention must be paid to these issues if the plan is to be successful.

1. **Base Pay: The Single Salary Schedule**

The single salary schedule developed as an outgrowth of adverse reactions to the often arbitrary and discriminatory ways in which teachers’ pay was set in the early part of the 20th century. Prominent undesirable factors that drove pay determination were gender, race, school level taught, marital status, and highly subjective administrator assessments of teachers’ “merit.” The single salary schedule was created to provide a framework for more objectivity and equity in pay determination.

An example of a single salary schedule is shown in Table 1. In the schedule a teacher’s pay is a joint function of years of service and level of educational attainment. Years of service are represented by the 30 steps in the schedule. Educational attainment is represented by lanes in the schedule, of which there are seven, going from “bachelor’s” to “master’s plus 60 additional credits or a doctorate.” While the single salary schedule represents the overall pay structure, there are also mini-pay structures within steps and lanes. For example, the overall structure ranges from $28,000 to $67,967; but within the bachelor’s lane the structure is from $28,000 to $41,607. The greater the differences in pay, the greater the pay differentiation; alternatively, the smaller the differences in pay, the greater the pay compression.

The single salary schedule has several advantages. It eliminates the potentially discriminatory and arbitrary influences on teachers’ pay determination. It also provides for two objective factors to create pay differentiation: length of service and educational attainment. These two factors serve as financial incentives for teachers to remain with the district and to seek additional educational credits. The greater the differentiation across the steps and lanes, the greater the incentive potential of the single salary schedule. Another advantage is that the single salary schedule creates pay progression predictability for the teacher, allowing teachers to estimate pay expectations over their entire careers. Such predictability also reduces potential teacher competition for pay increases, thus fostering collegiality and cooperation among teachers. Finally, compared to many of the variations to the pay structure described below, the single salary schedule is relatively easy to negotiate, administer, and cost out.
Table 1

Example of a Single Salary Schedule

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Against this backdrop of advantages, certain disadvantages arise. One major disadvantage is that the single salary schedule is inflexible and cannot be used to create additional pay differentiation. That is, the schedule does not allow for differences in teacher supply and demand across subjects or assignments, differences in additional pay to serve as a compensating differential for undesirable working conditions, or differences in teacher performance and effectiveness. The single salary schedule is thus a blunt incentive instrument. Another criticism of the single salary schedule is that it does not allow for much teacher quality filtering in pay progression. Here, teachers automatically progress through the steps and across the lanes, regardless of the type and quality of their experience, or educational credit content and proficiency. A single salary schedule can also become very expensive over time if teachers on balance remain with the district and pursue additional educational credits. Finally, the single salary schedule “locks up” the district’s base pay budget, leaving little room for more flexible and innovative methods of compensation.

In summary, the single salary schedule established a pay structure and pay differentiation among teachers to provide for equity and objectivity. Those purposes remain today. They are ingrained in negotiation and administration of teachers’ base pay, and base pay progression, and in teachers’ acceptance of their pay and how it is determined. These purposes, along with the many perceived advantages of the single salary schedule, account for the high degree of both teacher and district acceptance of the single salary schedule. It is likely that 95+% of teacher’s pay is determined and delivered via the single salary schedule nationwide. But many ways to supplement teacher’s base pay, even though proportionately small in magnitude, have emerged and are important to districts as specific incentives for teachers.

2. Base Pay Supplements

Many teachers receive base pay supplements, including prior experience pay, traditional supplements, expanded role supplements, greater pay for hard-to-staff schools or subjects, and pay for National Board certification. These are used to reward prior teaching experience, and to reward teacher actions for assuming additional responsibilities or for teaching at a high level of professional standards beyond the standard teacher role and work day.

Prior Experience Pay

Newly hired teachers with prior teaching experience in another district may receive some amount of credit for that experience on the single salary schedule. It appears that standard practice is to provide for some amount of prior experience, up to a maximum number of years. In Cincinnati, for example, entering teachers with 0-2 years of experience will start at the first step on the single salary schedule; those with 3 or more years will enter at the step corresponding to their number of years of experience, up to a maximum of 10 years. A district may also place limits on how far back in time it will go to determine creditable prior service.

More recently, districts have had to fashion special policies for newly hired teachers in hard-to-staff schools or subjects. One common practice is to allow for higher placement on the single salary schedule than would be provided by prior experience itself. In Douglas County School District (DCSD), positions that are determined to be hard-to-fill are eligible for up to 12 years of
prior experience pay (instead of the normal 10), provided that it occurred with the first 14 years of preceding employment. Cincinnati allows for up to 17 years of experience (as opposed to the standard 10) for Superintendent-declared areas of shortage.

**Traditional Supplements**

Districts have a long history of using traditional supplements for teachers who guide athletic and academic extracurricular activities. Cincinnati, for example, provides supplements to about 45 athletic positions (mostly coaches) and 50 academic positions (mostly advisors and coordinators). Athletic stipends range from about $300 for an elementary school coach to over $5000 for the athletic director. Academic position stipends range from about $600 for an elementary school club advisor to $2,900 for a senior band director.

**Expanded Role Supplements**

Districts create roles for teachers that expand their areas of instructional expertise and responsibility. These are not roles that necessarily come about through a planned career ladder progression of some kind (discussed later). Rather, they are specially-created roles for which teachers might be eligible, depending on qualifications. Cincinnati created a generic position of lead teacher, with specific titles within the role, including: subject area leader, team leader, consulting teacher, curriculum specialist, curriculum council chair, and program facilitator. A special lead teacher panel is responsible for reviewing and evaluating applicants' qualifications for lead teacher. Lead teachers receive some released time and an annual stipend between $5000 and $6500, depending on specific assignment.

In the Douglas County School District, teachers are eligible for both site and district "responsibility" pay. At the site level it compensates teachers for activities not covered by traditional activities stipends. Examples of these services include committee or curriculum work, mentor roles, and additional responsibilities during the school day. At the district level responsibility pay is primarily for service on district-wide committees. Separate school and district responsibility funds are established each year, and administered at that level. For example, stipend amounts and teacher selection for assignments are determined at the site level.

**Hard-to-Staff Schools and Subjects**

The single salary schedule is intended to apply to all teachers, regardless of their specific school and subject area assignments. While such a practice promotes one form of equity, it ignores the existence of teacher shortages and surpluses in certain subject areas, and it ignores the possibility that teachers in a district will experience differences in working conditions (broadly defined) across schools and subject areas. The reality of shortages and differential working conditions likely contribute to the existence of hard-to-staff schools and subjects. In part, this is a reflection of teachers choosing to avoid certain schools and subjects (an attraction problem), in part a reflection of less experienced and qualified teachers (a performance problem) and in part it reflects an unwillingness of teachers to choose to remain in certain schools and subjects (a retention problem).
A response to the hard-to-staff problem is to evoke another form of pay equity, in which some teachers receive additional compensation as an inducement to enter, perform, and remain in more challenging school and subject assignments. Such a compensating pay differential is intended to cause teachers who receive it to feel more equitably treated than they would by receiving the standard pay as determined by the single salary schedule.

Hard-to-staff schools encompass a wide variety of types of schools and designations. These designations include rural, inner city, low performing, high need, high poverty, low socioeconomic status, critical need, and high priority. The designation, and schools it encompasses, are determined by the district. Likewise, the district will identify which subjects are hard to staff. Examples include math, science, and special education.

The basic incentive for hard-to-staff schools and subjects is a base pay supplement, one that is time-limited to when the teacher actually serves in the hard-to-staff school or subject. Other incentives might also be used, including tuition reimbursement, relocation assistance, housing subsidies, state income tax credits, and providing teachers with computers.

An example of a district that is a leader in the development of hard-to-staff schools and subjects incentives is Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina. It has several incentive programs in place. The district has both FOCUS (high need) and NONFOCUS schools. In the recruitment bonus program, NONFOCUS school recruits are eligible for a $1000 bonus, and math teachers for a $2000 bonus; in the FOCUS schools both regular and math teachers receive a $3000 bonus. To attract teachers into hard-to-staff subject areas (math, science, technology, foreign languages, English-as-a-second language, and exceptional children) teachers receive $500. In another program at FOCUS schools only, teachers, assistant principals, and principals participate in the Successful Teacher and Administrator Reward (STAR) program, in which bonuses are tied to meeting academic growth and achievement level targets. Bonuses are up to $1400 for teachers and $5000 for administrators. Finally, the district provides a retention bonus program for teachers and administrators in FOCUS schools, with bonus amounts from $1500 to $2500. Further description of the CMS policy is available at: http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/discover/pdf/FocusSchools.pdf.

The Superintendent of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools created a special "Zone" of 39 troubled, low performing schools. The Zone is administered separately from the rest of the district. Among its many innovations for improvement, teachers are paid an additional 20% of base pay. In exchange, teachers agree to an additional hour of school each day, two additional work weeks, and completion of 56 hours of professional development each year. More information on the Miami-Dade policy can be obtained from: http://salary.dadeschools.net/pdf/Compensation_Matters_0708.pdf.

The Dallas Independent School District gave bonuses of $6000 to teachers in 16 of the district's neediest middle and high schools. But the bonuses were not across the board for all teachers. Rather, they only went to the teachers with an above average "classroom effectiveness index" (CEI). The CEI is a statistical way of identifying teacher effectiveness based on students' scores on standardized tests. The district may extend the plan to 59 schools, and to teachers in the core subjects of math, science, social studies, computer science, and world languages. The CEI
measure has been controversial, and a recent court ruling allows for teachers' CEI scores to be kept confidential by the district. For additional information on Dallas’ plan see the performance pay manual for teachers available at: www.dallasisd.org.

Finally, in Denver's highly publicized ProComp plan, teachers on board prior to the time the plan was adopted may opt in to the plan or remain under the single salary schedule. If they opt in, base pay raises are calculated from a salary index amount (currently $35,568). Rather than having their raises based on steps and lanes progression, raises are based four components, one of which is called "market incentives." In this component, a teacher will receive a 3% of index bonus for being in a hard-to-staff position and another 3% of index for being in a hard-to-serve school. Though these raises are not built into a permanent base, they do count toward pension contributions and in calculating pension benefits. The ProComp plan will be described more fully later on.

All of these hard-to-staff schools and subjects plans are complex. They require the district to consider many new issues that could simply be ignored under usage of just the single salary schedule. Inspection of the Web site for Denver's ProComp plan (denverprocomp.org) shows many of these complexities. Examples of issues that arise include types of incentives to use, size of incentives, eligibility requirements (schools, subjects, teachers, grade levels), assessments of teacher quality, usage of quality assessments in making school and subject assignments, seniority and transfer provisions, funding sources and levels, funding stability, professional development and other supportive systems, leadership changes, human resource (HR) technology, labor contract negotiations, and number and capabilities of current HR staff members. In short, movement toward incentive programs for hard-to-staff schools and subjects requires that the district seriously assess and reconfigure much of its HR system. We will amplify on these spillover effects into HR later in our discussion of HR alignment.

**National Board Certification**

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is an independent organization that was formed to assess experienced teachers' competencies against specific teaching standards. Teachers volunteer to be assessed by specially trained peers. Teachers demonstrate their teaching practice through completion of four portfolio entries and through demonstration of content knowledge in response to assessment center exercises developed for the chosen certification area. Teachers who successfully complete the certification process are considered “Nationally Board Certified (NBC).” There are about 64,000 NBC teachers nationwide. Because of the rigor and prestige of the certification process, states and districts often reward Board certified teachers by reimbursing them for their certification fees (about $2,500). In addition, a base salary increase may be given for as long as certification is maintained. These stipends range from about $2,500 to $15,000.

**3. BASE PAY PROGRESSION**

Base pay progression encompasses the ways in which teachers earn salary increases above their starting pay level. In most school districts, teachers typically receive pay raises through some combination of additional years of experience and accumulation of educational credits or degrees. These forms of salary progression characterize the single salary schedule with its steps
and lanes. As described above, they were designed to be predictable, equitable, and applicable to teachers regardless of the school level or subject matter taught. Increasingly, school districts and states have experimented with small and large scale changes to base pay progression. Basic descriptions of progression on the single salary schedule and variations in base pay progression based on teacher quality factors will be examined in this section.

**Progression Under Single Salary Schedule**

The two primary ways teachers progress on the single salary schedule is through seniority (the steps) and by obtaining advanced degrees or some combination of education credits (the lanes). Obtaining advanced degrees or education credits can move a teacher across the salary schedule resulting in some level of additional pay; simply returning to teach in subsequent years can move a teacher down the schedule to earn increased pay. These provisions were put in place as incentives to encourage teachers to continue their education beyond the bachelor’s level and for retention purposes. The more education credits or degrees a teacher receives (up to the doctorate), and the more years with the district (generally with an upper limit of 30 years), the more pay the teacher receives.

This basic system of pay progression has persisted for decades. States and districts have made some minor modifications to these features of the single salary schedule to meet organizational or budgetary needs. These changes include limiting or increasing the number of types of lanes and constraining or extending the number of steps.

**Limiting or expanding lanes.** District salary schedules commonly include multiple levels of pay progression for obtaining educational credits or degrees. Credits may include district approved continuing education units (i.e., district or external professional development classes) and/or college coursework. For example, the Douglas County School District includes eight lanes: BA; BA with 14 credits; BA with 28 credits; MA; MA with 16 credits; MA with 32 credits; MA with 48 credits; and Ph.D. The difference between the starting salary of BA with no experience ($33,388) and the top of the schedule, Ph.D. with 17 years experience ($78,818) is $45,430. Some districts may include even more lanes for completion of educational units. Although such approaches encourage teachers to pursue credits, coursework and degrees for higher pay, there may be very little control on the quality of learning experiences teachers pursue or the value of those experiences to instructional practice, student learning, or school improvement.

Credit and degree attainment is often disconnected from organizational strategies or instructional competency models. Most districts allow pay progression on the lanes for any advanced education degree. Many teachers obtain master’s degrees in educational administration, in case they decide to seek a principal position with substantially higher pay in the future. Even if they never pursue a school administration position, these teachers still advance on the teacher salary schedule with a degree that has little to do with their instructional practice. Some districts have thus limited the types of degrees or educational units that teachers can obtain, even excluding degrees in educational administration, from movement on the salary schedule.
Another option is to limit the number of lanes eligible for higher pay. The Charlotte Mecklenburg School district condensed the number of lanes on which a teacher can advance. The district has separate schedules based primarily on whether a teacher has a bachelor’s or master’s degree. The most substantial difference between this system and others is that there are no additional lanes for educational credits obtained between a bachelor’s and master’s degree. However, if a teacher obtains a master’s degree and an advanced teaching license, he or she receives an additional $1,260 for each step on the master’s schedule. With a doctorate, a teacher receives an additional $2,530 on the master’s schedule. Similarly, there are two separate schedules for teachers who are certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, one for teachers with bachelor’s degrees and one for master’s degrees. Again, base amounts are higher for teachers with advanced teaching licenses ($1,260) or doctorates ($2,530) on the schedules for National Board Certified teachers.

** Constraining or adding steps.** Districts can also add or constrain experience-based steps on the salary schedule. Rather than automatically granting teachers salary increases for each year of service, some limit the number of steps. One common approach is to include steps for certain numbers of years to make sure beginning teachers receive continuous, gradual salary increases, but then include breaks at certain levels of experience before an additional step increase kicks in. Cincinnati Public Schools has included such breaks in step progression. For example, between the 17-year step and the 21-year step, a teacher remains at $62,879. Then at the 22-year step, a teacher receives a salary increase of $2,577.62 to reach the $65,456.62 level. This approach can save budget expenditures by reducing the backloading of the salary schedule. It could also free funding for initial salary progression for early career teachers in order to attract and retain new hires.

Other variations to salary progression under the single salary schedule include limiting steps within the lanes or educational bands or providing extra pay to reward longevity within the district. Douglas County School District includes both approaches. Teachers at the BA lane, for example, can only receive step increases up to their 11th year, at which point they must obtain 14 educational credits in order to keep obtaining seniority-based pay. Similarly, a teacher at the BA+28 units lane is capped at step 13 and must obtain an MA in order to obtain further step advances. To reward teachers with more seniority, the district also offers stipends of $750 when teachers complete their 14th, 19th, 24th and 29th years.

**Teacher Quality Factors**

School districts have developed several different compensation approaches intended to provide incentives to teachers for developing needed skills, filling organizational roles, or demonstrating competencies in the classroom. These approaches include the use of skill blocks, targeted professional development units, performance evaluation, and career ladders. In several of these cases, the incorporation of these elements represents a break from the traditional single salary schedule. In all of these approaches, there is an attempt to more closely link pay progression to instructional effectiveness and other strategic district goals.

**Skill blocks and professional development units.** Districts have designed compensation elements to include incentives for teachers to obtain specific skills deemed important to
organizational success. This option, referred to as skill blocks or professional development units, has been a part of Douglas County School District’s compensation plan for over a decade. Under the DCSD program, teachers can receive one-time bonus payments ranging from $250 for “technology blocks” to $350 for the “aligning and differentiating standards and assessments” block. Fourteen skill block options have been available, with each one intended to support the district strategic plan. Teachers must complete the training and demonstrate application of the skills to be eligible for the bonuses. Creating district, school or teacher specific professional development units is another alternative that is similar to the skill block approach. In Denver Public Schools’ ProComp system, for example, teachers can be awarded bonuses for completing tailored professional development units that fit within their assignment area. For successfully completing and demonstrating competencies of the units, teachers can receive salary additions of 2% of the $35,568 base salary index.

**Performance evaluation.** Teacher performance evaluation has a long, tarnished history within public education. Although a ubiquitous function within districts, teacher evaluation is frequently carried out in a perfunctory manner, with processes and outcomes disconnected from larger school and district instructional strategies. Typically, teacher evaluation does not have direct implications for teacher pay. In the past, some districts experimented with merit pay plans that did incorporate teacher evaluation as one criterion in pay decisions. These approaches largely failed, in part due to perceptions that the teacher evaluations were highly subjective and plagued by favoritism.

Once again interest is growing in using teacher performance evaluations for determining salary progression, with some states and districts embracing standards-based approaches as part of teacher licensure and performance evaluation systems. Standards-based evaluation systems diverge from traditional evaluation practice in several ways. Traditional evaluation approaches typically rely on one evaluator (the principal) to assess teaching practice on a set timeframe (often every few years) using brief observations of classroom practice and a limited set of performance criteria. In contrast, standards-based approaches are centered on more comprehensive and standards-based conceptions of teaching practice (e.g., National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching). Teachers are assessed using rubrics describing classroom behaviors and instructional practices that range from unsatisfactory to distinguished, draw on multiple evidence sources (e.g., classroom observations, instructional units, and teacher portfolios), and may be conducted by multiple raters. Combined, this system of practice can generate a richer measure of instructional effectiveness that districts can in turn use to provide performance feedback to teachers and which result in decisions for high-stakes purposes, including tenure or teacher pay.

Standards-based evaluation approaches have been applied to knowledge-and-skill-based salary structures. The Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, a charter school in Los Angeles, pioneered this approach. For more information on the Vaughan model, see Kellor (2005), and the UW-Madison, Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) Web site: [http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/cpre/tcomp/research/vaughn.php](http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/cpre/tcomp/research/vaughn.php). Other examples of knowledge-and-skill-based strategies can also be accessed at the CPRE Website. A number of districts have or are planning to incorporate teacher evaluations plans that would have impact on base pay progression. These knowledge-and skills-based pay approaches have been designed by
Cincinnati Public Schools and Denver Public Schools, among other districts. The Teacher Advancement Program, promoted by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, is a school improvement strategy that also includes standards-based teacher performance evaluation in its compensation scheme. The new schedule discussed in the first paper in this series is an example of a pay structure in which progression is based in part on the results from performance evaluations.

The Minnesota Q-Comp program is a state example that includes a requirement for participating districts to design teacher pay changes including awards based on a combination of teacher performance evaluations and measures of classroom and school achievement gains. The most recent attempt at pay reform in Florida also allows for up to 40 percent of teacher bonus payments to be made using teacher performance evaluations. The federal government’s Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) program encourages districts to use personnel evaluations of teaching practice as part of compensation strategies that also include pay for student achievement outcomes. For a thorough review of standards-based evaluation in teacher compensation designs see policy briefs by Heneman, Milanowski, Kimball, and Odden (2006) and Heneman, Milanowski, and Kimball (2007), and the book by Odden and Wallace (2007).

Career ladders/master teacher programs. Experimentation with career ladder programs has ebbed and flowed since the early 1980s. These programs are designed to provide a planned career direction for teachers to expand their responsibilities and share their instructional expertise with colleagues in their schools and districts without having to leave classroom instruction for administration completely. The programs offer additional pay to career ladder teachers to compensate for their expanded professional responsibilities. Career ladder positions have included opportunities for master teachers, mentor teachers, teacher evaluators or curriculum leaders. A number of recent examples of career ladder programs exist within compensation plans. Notable examples include the state of Arizona career ladder program, Minnesota’s Q-Comp initiative, the Teacher Advancement Program, and the Douglas County School District Master Teacher designation.

The Arizona career ladder program is a long running state initiative to promote an alternative career structure for teachers. The program began in the mid-1980’s and has funded a limit of 28 of 200 school districts. Under the program, districts must include basic elements of professional career advancement opportunities based on improvement in teaching skills, measures of advanced teaching skills, evidence of student academic achievement progress, and higher level instructional responsibilities (e.g., mentoring peers). Performance measures include annual, summative teacher evaluations, and multiple measures of student academic achievement. Supports through formative evaluation and professional development must be offered to help teachers advance on the ladder. Districts determine career levels and corresponding compensation levels based on the performance measures. Districts may also establish other award elements, such as group, team, or school performance awards. Funding may also be used for annual increases over cost-of-living. A state advisory committee reviews each plan annually for district modifications. The Arizona Career Ladder program is receiving new interest, with other districts seeking new state support to develop career ladder programs and recent legislation being introduced to lift the cap on funding to allow new career ladder districts. For additional information on Arizona’s program see http://www.ade.az.gov/asd/CareerLadder/.
4. DIVERSIFIED PLANS

Several notable district, state and national models of compensation strategies include a combination of elements described above. We illustrate four here: Denver Public Schools ProComp program, Douglas County School District’s performance pay plan, the Teacher Advancement Program of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, and Minnesota’s Q-Comp program.

Denver Public Schools

The Denver Public Schools’ ProComp program is a widely recognized diversified compensation plan that grew out of a pay for performance pilot study developed by the Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association. Drawing from a four year pilot program, the district and teachers’ association jointly pursued a design course that led to one of the most comprehensive plans in the nation to replace the single salary schedule. Starting in 2006, all new teachers and teachers opting into the new plan received a base pay amount and became eligible for a number of pay enhancements. Base pay for new teachers is determined by their education level (e.g., bachelors or masters degree) and prior experience, if applicable. Experienced teachers who opt in take their base pay level from the prior system into ProComp. Teachers can obtain additional pay in the form of salary increases added to base pay or one-time bonuses from the following components of the system: market incentives, classroom evaluation, knowledge and skills, and student growth. The amounts of these pay add-ons are based on percentages of the $35,568 salary index. By using the salary index as a common base upon which percentage increases are calculated, the dollar amounts of the awards are equal regardless of the experience level of the teacher. The main components of the Denver’s diversified plan are illustrated in the table below.

Performance evaluation. The Denver plan includes a performance evaluation component that awards a base pay increase for teachers who receive a satisfactory evaluation. The evaluation system includes five performance dimensions: Instruction, Assessment, Curriculum and Planning, Learning Environment, and Professional Evaluation. Within each dimension are from three to five criteria. Teachers are rated on each criterion according to a scale indicating their performance as “Not Meeting,” “Developing,” “Meeting,” and “Exceeding” expectations. The criteria include brief descriptions of teacher and student behaviors or performance that indicate levels of performance to each standard. If more than 50% of the individual criteria are rated Developing or above, teachers receive a “satisfactory” evaluation. Teachers are evaluated by their immediate supervisor, which is in most instances the school principal. Each post-probationary (“tenured”) teacher is evaluated once every three years. Evaluators are required to complete only one observation cycle for each teacher, which includes a 20-45 minute classroom observation and conferences with the teacher before and after the observation. Other evidence may include three to five written records of teaching or teacher service, informal observations of performance, and written communication. Probationary teachers are evaluated on the same performance criteria and types of evidence, but must have two observations conducted.

1 Information taken from Denver Public Schools ProComp Website: http://denverprocomp.org/
Table 2:

Denver ProComp Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components Index $35,568</th>
<th>Knowledge and Skills</th>
<th>Professional Evaluation</th>
<th>Market Incentives</th>
<th>Student Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Element</td>
<td>Professional Development Units</td>
<td>Grad Degree/ Nat. License &amp; Certificates</td>
<td>Tuition Reimburse</td>
<td>Probationary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2% of Index Salary Increase</td>
<td>9% of Index Salary Increase</td>
<td>$1,000 Lifetime Account</td>
<td>1% of Index Salary when rated satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar Amount</td>
<td>$711</td>
<td>$3,201</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>$356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment Type and Frequency</td>
<td>Monthly installments upon submission of proper documents</td>
<td>Monthly installments upon submission of proper documents</td>
<td>Up to $1000 upon submission of proper documents</td>
<td>Prorated over 12 months. If unsatisfactory delayed at least 1 yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds pension and highest average salary?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Denver Public Schools, http://denverprocomp.org/generalinformation
Probationary teachers may earn a salary increase of 1% of the index ($356) for each of their three probationary years that they receive a satisfactory evaluation. Post-probationary teachers may earn 3% of the salary index increase ($1,067) with satisfactory evaluations, which is paid out over the following 12 months.

Knowledge and skills. The ProComp plan provides three additional knowledge and skills elements. These include awards for completing professional development units (PDUs), obtaining graduate degrees or National Board certification, and tuition reimbursement.

Professional development units are pre-approved plans designed by the district or individual or group (i.e., cohort of teachers)—developed learning plans. To receive an award, teachers complete a study component, demonstrate knowledge and skills obtained, and submit a written reflection on the training and demonstration. Once the PDU is completed, the plan, description and reflections are submitted for award determination. Teachers can receive a 2% index ($711) salary increase for each PDU.

Completing graduate degrees and certification by the NBPTS qualifies teachers for the largest salary element available under ProComp, a 9% or $3,201 increase. The degrees or certification must be relevant to the teacher’s current or proposed assignment. Teachers under the plan are also eligible for a $1,000 account to subsidize tuition for enrollment in coursework over their tenure in the Denver Public Schools.

Market incentives. Pay bonuses are available to teachers who choose to work in schools or positions determined to be hard-to-staff or serve. Separate, specific criteria determine whether positions or schools are hard to fill with qualified staff. Currently, 31 schools are designated as “hard-to-serve” based on student and neighborhood data (e.g., percent eligible for free and reduced-price lunches, special education status, and crime data). Schools receive this categorization in three year terms, which may be renewed. Hard-to-staff positions include both content area teachers and support staff (i.e., middle school math, special education, physical therapists and school nurses). Teachers receive a bonus of 3% ($1,067) of the index for each of these market incentive categories.

Student growth. Three features of the student growth component can yield awards for demonstrated gains in student learning: student growth objectives, classroom performance on the Colorado state standardized exams, and a school-based performance award.

The student growth component was the main focus of the compensation pilot program in Denver. All teachers are expected to set growth objectives each year, but teachers under the ProComp plan are eligible for payouts for completing the objectives. The two growth objectives must apply to the content and grade level taught. Objectives are set in consultation with principals and ultimately are certified by the principal for the pay decision. Teachers can receive an annual increase of 1% of index salary ($356), if they have met both growth objectives but only a 1% bonus if only one objective is met.

Distinguished school awards are provided for schools that meet measures developed from six sources: 1) School Accountability report index (achievement level), 2) School Accountability
improvement index (growth over two years), 3) attendance rates, 4) parent satisfaction, 5) achievement growth on an index for disadvantaged schools, and a 6) student growth index based on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). Educators in schools awarded as distinguished receive a 2% index ($711) bonus.

Classroom student achievement awards represent the final element of the student growth component. This element provides 3% of index increase ($1,067) in salary for exceeding norms on the CSAP. Awarded teachers whose classes fall below expectations in subsequent years lose the increase amount. As a growth-based calculation, it is only available for teachers in tested subjects (math and language arts) from the 4th through 10th grades.

**Douglas County School District**

Establishing a performance pay agreement in the 1993-1994 teacher contract, the Douglas County Federation of Teachers and the Board of Education set a course for DCSD to become one of the first districts out of the gate in developing a diversified teacher compensation plan. The district retained the core single-salary schedule framework, but included a number of knowledge and skills and pay-for-performance components. The compensation program has been modified over the years and currently contains the following features: performance evaluation; knowledge and skill incentives for master teachers, teachers with National Board certification, and skill blocks; performance awards for outstanding teachers; group performance awards; and responsibility pay. These features are summarized in Table 3.

**Performance evaluation.** Satisfactory results on the district’s teacher performance evaluation system are required for teachers to advance vertically on the salary schedule and to qualify for the performance awards under the DCSD pay plan. The evaluation system is based on five areas of focus: student learning; leadership; staff (e.g., work with colleagues and personal professional development); stakeholder (e.g., communication with students and parents); and process management (e.g., classroom organization and environment). Within each area of focus are from three to seven standards of performance and each of these includes a large number of statements that suggest performance to the standards. The system is not rubric based and does not include guidance on performance differentiation among the three evaluation rating categories: “developing,” “professional,” and “unsatisfactory.” Probationary teachers undergo two formal evaluations by their principal or direct supervisor, with pre-and post-observation conferences, plus two informal evaluations. Post-probationary teachers undergo one formal classroom observation with related conferences, and one informal observation. To advance on the salary schedule teachers must receive an overall evaluation of “developing” or “professional.”

**Knowledge and skills.** The DCSD plan has three knowledge and skills-based compensation elements: skill blocks, master teacher awards, and awards for certification by the NBPTS. Under the skill block option, teachers can chose from 14 options that range from developing technological skills to completing training in district math curricula. When the training is completed, teachers must demonstrate their application of relevant knowledge and

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Payout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance evaluation</td>
<td>Satisfactory evaluation results in “credits” that allow for pay progression in lieu of straight experience pay (step) increases. Also required for eligibility in other award programs.</td>
<td>Credits range from $1256 for BA up to $1936 for Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill blocks</td>
<td><em>Skill blocks</em>: completion and demonstration of professional development from 14 unit options designed by district in technology, curriculum and instruction.</td>
<td>$250-350 bonus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master teacher</td>
<td><em>Master teacher</em>: based on demonstrated student growth, leadership, professional recognition, and community partnership criteria.</td>
<td>$2500 salary increase for 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBPTS certification award</td>
<td><em>NBPTS</em>: teachers awarded increase for first five years after certification, then must transition to master teacher award status.</td>
<td>$2500 salary increase for five years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual performance awards</td>
<td>Outstanding teacher awards for portfolios based on National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Includes four award categories: teacher practice, standards-based instruction, NBPTS activities, and student growth.</td>
<td>$1250 bonus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group performance awards</td>
<td>Awards for successful completion of group (e.g., grade level team, school) goals focused on varied aspects of student growth. Award determination made by district review panel.</td>
<td>$425 bonus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility pay</td>
<td>Additional pay for service at school or district level that is beyond typical classroom duties (e.g., committee or curriculum work, mentoring).</td>
<td>$225-750 bonus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
skills. The blocks have different awards, paid in a one-time bonus, ranging from $250 to $350. Fourteen skill block options have been available and each is designed to support the district strategic plan.

Master teacher awards are available to teachers who have been in the district for six years and meet performance measures for student growth using district, building, or teacher-designed assessments. Other criteria may include two of the following three: demonstrated, sustained leadership activities impacting the school or district’s instructional program, or leadership outside the district that makes an improvement in education; awards and recognition from professional organizations; creativity and innovation in instructional practices; or documentation of a pattern of outstanding work in building community relations or community service. Master teachers receive $2,500 salary increase for the five-year duration of the award, then must resubmit a new application for the designation. Teachers obtaining certification by the NBPTS also receive a $2,500 salary increase. The award lasts for five years, at which time National Board certified teachers must apply for the district’s master teacher designation.

**Outstanding teacher awards.** Awards for this component of the DCSD plan are made for teachers completing a portfolio documenting their performance in four areas: teacher instructional practice; content standards-based; National Board certification process; and student growth. Each portfolio has different criteria that require teachers to demonstrate their instructional practice and student achievement accomplishments. Bonus awards of $1,250 are provided for successful portfolios. School principals decide on awards for the outstanding teacher program.

**Group performance awards.** Groups of teachers may be awarded for developing and accomplishing goals that must be tied to district goals, school accountability, and improvement plans, focusing on improving student achievement. A district Group Incentive Board makes the plans and awards and each participant in the group can earn an approximately $475 bonus.

**Responsibility pay.** Additional compensation in the form of a stipend is provided for teachers who take on additional duties at the school level beyond their regular classroom responsibilities. The amount and nature of the stipend is designed at the school level and varies depending on the time involved, scope of work, difficulty of role, and quality of results. District responsibility pay is awarded for teachers who work on committees of mutual interest to the Douglas County Federation of Teachers and the Board of Education. The amount available is negotiated each year between the union and district. Payments are made at the end of the contract year.

**Teacher Advancement Program (TAP)**

Unlike the prior two plans, the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) was designed as a national model. TAP was initiated in 1998 by the Milken Family Foundation and is now housed within the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). The model is being used in over 36

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school districts and 180 schools within 13 states, including a large number of states and districts awarded five-year grants through the federal government’s Teacher Incentive Fund.

The TAP model has elements designed to provide teachers with a career pathway in teacher leadership, job-embedded professional development, knowledge and skills-based pay, and individual and group performance awards. School-specific professional development is intended to be a centerpiece of the model, and teachers are organized in grade level and subject area “clusters” to engage in on-going professional development that is overseen by mentors and master teachers. Principals are also included in the TAP model and can earn bonuses based on their own evaluation, and school performance. Table 4 represents the main TAP elements for teachers.

**Job-embedded professional development.** Teachers in TAP schools are required to meet regularly in cluster groups and with mentor and master teachers for “on-going, applied” professional development and coaching. The meetings focus on student academic needs through individual growth plans and group goals. Cluster groups may be content area focused or grade level efforts. The groups obtain, develop, implement and assess the effectiveness of new instructional strategies. Individual classroom support and mentoring is also provided. The cluster meetings are led by the master and mentor teachers.

**Performance evaluation.** The evaluation system was developed from a variety of sources and is rubric-based. Standards were developed for the following areas of teaching: designing and planning instruction; implementing instruction; learning environment; and professional responsibilities. Some sites, (e.g., Eagle County, Colorado) have added additional standards. The TAP professional responsibility standards have performance components that relate to expectations of the different teacher job categorizations under the model.

The standards are assessed using a five-level, rubric-based approach. Three of the levels have specific criteria with performance designations at unsatisfactory (level 1), proficient (level 3) and exemplary (level 5). The two intermediate levels allow for evaluator decisions on performance that are judged between the primary levels (i.e., level 2 is between unsatisfactory and proficient). Teaching practice is assessed based on direct observations by multiple evaluators (principal, master, and mentor teachers) and through an instructional portfolio. Up to six observations occur for each teacher annually. Teacher evaluators are trained, must be certified before they conduct evaluations, and are assessed annually for rating accuracy.

The standards-based evaluation approach used by TAP represents the performance evaluation component. The results from the evaluations are considered for career ladder designations and a portion of the performance pay decisions.

**Career levels.** TAP provides three categories of professional teachers: career, mentor, and master. Career teachers are regular, classroom-based teachers who earn the standard base salary according to the school or district participating in TAP. Mentor teachers have increased responsibilities to support career teachers and conduct evaluations. They are partially (30%) released from their classroom duties to handle the added responsibilities and have 10 days added to their contract. Their duties include cluster group leadership, coaching, and evaluation of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Payout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job-embedded professional</td>
<td>Teachers meet regularly in grade level and subject-focused cluster groups, led by mentor and master teachers for “on-going, applied” professional development and coaching. Groups focus on student academic needs, with individual growth plans and group goals. Groups obtain, develop, implement and assess new instructional strategies.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance evaluation</td>
<td>Career, mentor and master teachers receive performance evaluations. Classroom teachers are evaluated on a standards-based evaluation approach with 5 dimensions and 5 levels of performance. Multiple evaluators conduct observations up to 6 times annually.</td>
<td>Awards are weighted based on how high teacher scores on evaluation criteria, included in combined criteria (see below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career teacher</td>
<td>Regular classroom teacher. Required to collaborate in clusters to pursue embedded professional development.</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor teacher</td>
<td>Released from 30% of classroom duties to lead cluster groups, coach and evaluate teachers. 10 days added to contract.</td>
<td>$2000-$4500 salary increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master teacher</td>
<td>Released from 70% of classroom duties, oversee all cluster groups, and coach and evaluate teachers. 20 days added to contract.</td>
<td>$6000-$12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual performance</td>
<td>Value-added analysis used to determine classroom performance; awards weighted based on how high score compares to average expected growth.</td>
<td>See below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group performance</td>
<td>School-level value-added analysis used to determine school performance; awards are weighted based on how school compares with average growth of peer schools.</td>
<td>See below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined criteria</td>
<td>Performance bonuses based on combination of performance evaluation, school value-added and classroom value-added. Awards may vary based on amount allocated by district and a range of possible scores on each element.</td>
<td>Approximately $2500 bonus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
teachers. Mentor teachers earn from $2,000 to $4,500 per year in addition to their base. Master teachers are released from 70% of their classroom duties, have 20 days added to their contract, oversee all cluster groups, and coach, and evaluate teachers. They earn from $6,000-$12,000 on top of their base salary. Career, master, and mentor teachers are all eligible for performance awards.

**Individual and group awards.** Value-added student achievement analysis is used to determine awards for individual classroom-based performance, and school-wide performance. For the school-based awards, a school’s value-added achievement gain results are compared to either the state average or district average. Individual performance awards are determined by classroom value-added achievement gain results where valid assessment data are available with the results for two consecutive years for each student.

**Combined award criteria.** Performance bonuses are awarded based on a combination of results from a teacher’s performance evaluation (50%), individual classroom value-added (20-30%), and school value-added (20-30%). For teachers who do not teach in grades with state or district assessments, the performance award is based on their performance evaluation (50%) and the school value-added achievement results (50%). Similarly, the measures for master and mentor teacher performance awards are adjusted based on their classroom load. The performance awards vary in size, depending on district or school resource availability, and choices made by the district and how high the individual and school scores on each criteria. The program recommends performance bonuses of $2,500 per teacher.

**Minnesota Q-Comp Program**

The Minnesota Quality Compensation Program or Q-Comp was proposed by Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty in 2005 and passed by the legislature the same year. The program allows interested districts or charter schools to apply to the program and if the district or school plans meet state requirements, a state per-pupil allotment of $260 is awarded to implement diversified compensation plans. The program design was influenced by the TAP model, which some Minnesota districts used previously under a state-sponsored pilot pay-for-performance program. As of November 2007, the state had approved 17 charter schools and 39 districts for participation in Q-Comp. District Q-Comp designs must be developed with active participation of the local teacher bargaining unit. The district plans can vary in detail but must represent a negotiated compensation plan that “reforms” the single salary schedule. Plans must also include the following elements: job-embedded professional development, performance evaluation, career ladders/advancement options, performance pay, and an alternative salary schedule. The primary Q-Comp elements are summarized in Table 5 and described below.

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4 Information taken from Minnesota Department of Education Website, [http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Teacher_Support/QComp/](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Teacher_Support/QComp/)
Table 5

Minnesota’s Q-Comp Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Payout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job-embedded professional development</td>
<td>A strategy for on-going, site-based professional development delivered during the instructional day and aligns with state and district improvement plans and staff development plans. Teachers are to work in teams that focus on student achievement data. Teams are led by master or mentor teachers.</td>
<td>Activities may tie into alternative pay structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance evaluation</td>
<td>Classroom teachers are evaluated on a standards-based evaluation approach that is aligned with district educational improvement plan and district professional development plan. Multiple, trained evaluators conduct annual evaluations with multiple observations.</td>
<td>One criteria for overall performance award (see below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career ladder</td>
<td>District plans must include career ladder/career paths. Positions may include: leadership team participation, team planning and implementation; overseeing teacher professional development growth plans; conducting evaluations and related conferences; coaching teachers; and modeling professional growth.</td>
<td>Additional compensation at district discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance awards</td>
<td>Performance bonuses based on combination of performance evaluation, school academic achievement gains on standardized tests, and other performance goals must represent 60% of the performance award. Other 40% is not specified.</td>
<td>District discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Salary Schedule</td>
<td>Must describe how the district will reform the traditional single salary schedule, replacing “steps and lanes” approach. Examples include school-based performance awards for school achievement gains, knowledge- and skills-based pay, and pay competitiveness. No teacher will receive a pay cut in the transition.</td>
<td>District discretion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Job-embedded professional development. Plans must include a strategy for professional development that is on-going and delivered during the instructional day. The strategies must align with state required staff development activities. Similar to the TAP program, this type of professional development strategy groups teachers in teams that focus on student achievement data and teacher needs. The teams are facilitated by master or mentor teachers.

Performance evaluation. District performance evaluation systems must be standards-based approaches that are locally adopted and aligned with the district’s or state’s educational improvement plan and the district’s professional development plan. The standards must include performance rubrics, with descriptions of performance to different levels of the standards. Every teacher must be evaluated multiple times, on an annual basis, by multiple raters (principals and teacher leaders) who are trained in the evaluation approach. Results form one of three measures of performance used to determine compensation increases.

Career ladders. District plans must include multiple career paths or a career ladder program. The law specifies that these positions allow teachers to retain teaching roles and facilitate school professional development activities. Responsibilities may include: leadership team participation, team planning and implementation; overseeing teacher professional development growth plans; conducting evaluations and related conferences; coaching teachers; and modeling professional growth. Teachers receive additional compensation to fit their roles, but amounts are not specified.

Performance pay. Performance awards are made in three forms: gains in school student achievement on standardized tests; other student achievement measures; and teacher performance evaluation results. Districts have discretion to determine measurement criteria under the three features and how much pay is awarded if the criteria are met. Combined, these elements must account for 60% of the performance awards granted to teacher salary increases.

Alternative salary schedule. Districts have flexibility in how the remaining 40% of performance awards are allocated. However, the overall plan, which must be negotiated by the district and teacher bargaining unit, is required to describe how the new system will reform the steps and lanes features of the standard single salary schedule. Features may include knowledge and skill elements, school-based performance awards, or differentiated salaries for teachers in license shortage areas or schools that are hard to staff. The law specifies that districts awarded for Q-Comp funding must have an alternative pay system that describes:

a) how teachers can achieve career advancement and added compensation;
b) how the district will provide career opportunities allowing teachers to remain in instructional roles and facilitate site-based professional development to help other teachers improve: how the “steps and lanes” salary schedule will be reformed, while preventing teachers from losing pay, with 60 percent of the compensation increases based on performance (referenced above). The performance categories are school wide student achievement gains, other measures of student achievement, and “objective” evaluations;
c) the structure of integrated job-embedded professional development;
d) eligibility for all teachers to participate in the plan; and
e) how collaboration among teachers will be encouraged.
5. Issues to Confront

Districts may pursue a wide variety of options as they adopt pay innovations that will move the district beyond the single salary schedule. We reviewed those options above, for the most part ignoring the many types of issues that the district will likely face as it travels down the pay innovation path. We turn now to a discussion of ten of the most important issues that districts must confront. The district must consider these issues as it decides whether to innovate, which innovations are most promising, and how best to approach the chosen innovations. Some of these issues are more relevant to some pay innovations than others, but all are worthy of serious consideration.

Pay Structure Strategy

Generally speaking, strategy is a set of deliberate decisions and actions by a district to help it move toward the attainment of its goals. Pay structure strategy refers to the ways that the district decides to use pay differentiation and innovation beyond the single salary schedule in order to encourage and reward teachers for pursuing district goals. It is important to note here that a decision to use the single salary schedule is itself a strategic decision, because the single salary schedule encourages teacher longevity and educational advancement. A more nuanced pay structure strategy, however, considers possible drawbacks to simple reliance on the single salary schedule and seeks to use innovative pay practices to guide teachers toward other important behaviors that contribute to the districts goals. The issues we now turn to arise in the context of these innovative pay practices.

Strategically, the innovative pay practices described above are designed to encourage and reward three major teacher behaviors: pursuit of a new assignment, performance, and retention. Pursuit of a new assignment involves expanded roles for teachers, and teachers' movement into hard-to-staff schools and subjects. Teacher performance is a combination of acquisition of new knowledge and skill, actual classroom performance as assessed through teacher evaluation, and teacher effectiveness as assessed through student achievement. Retention refers to not only staying with the district, but also staying in a particular assignment, such as a hard-to-staff school or a lead teacher position.

The district must decide strategically which of these teacher behaviors it wishes to encourage, and why. Such decisions will require judgment about whether the district currently has assignment, performance or retention problems, whether these problems are short or long term, and whether pay innovation likely is an effective way for dealing with the problems. Woven into these deliberations should be consideration of how much more pay differentiation the district wants to create. Additional differentiation may run afoul of the current culture that has grown up around the single salary schedule and its emphasis on objectivity and equity. In addition, pursuit of additional differentiation will mean new financial and administrative burdens for the district, as explained below. Is the district ready for such challenges?
Funding Pay Innovation

Pursuit of a pay innovation without known and adequate funding is a hollow pursuit, and an innovation without funding guarantees will encounter serious launching and survival problems. States, districts, and teachers have all experienced the realities of these statements, either personally or vicariously. Hence, funding requirements must be at the top of strategic issues to consider. Unfortunately, funding is invariably tight, and new funds for pay innovation can only come from internal reallocation or external infusion. Internal reallocation is difficult because the single salary schedule “locks up” compensation and does not set any aside for innovation. Permanent external infusions for pay innovation are rare (Denver's funding of ProComp through a permanent, earmarked, sales tax increase is a notable exception). Temporary earmarks or seed money are much more common, but they tend to evaporate over time and threaten the initial viability and long-term survival of any innovation. It is best to confront the funding issue early on, rather than delay it with the hope or promise of new funding on the horizon. While some parallel design of the pay innovation with funding pursuit may be necessary, an in depth development of the innovation may end up blocked because of funding quagmires.

Teacher Motivation and Attitudes

Given the enduring usage of the single salary schedule, it has become the norm for acceptable differentiation among teachers. New pay structure innovations will create new forms and amounts of differentiation. What impacts might the pay innovation have on teachers' motivation and attitudes?

Teacher motivation. A pay innovation signals to teachers a need for behavioral change and money is being used to send the signal and reward the change. In other words, the pay innovation is being used to motivate teachers. Drawing on motivation theory, the pay innovation must meet three critical tests if it is to successfully motivate change by teachers.

The first test is that the new reward(s) must be valued by the teacher. For a monetary reward, it must be of sufficient size to be a true difference to the teacher. This will likely mean rewards in the thousands, rather than hundreds, of dollars (how motivating is $300 for completion of a skill block?). But the issue becomes more complicated because any pay innovation occurs within the teacher's current work environment, which itself provides all kinds of other rewards and experiences collectively referred to as “working conditions.” These other rewards and experiences must be reckoned with since they can either support or undermine the pay innovation. In hard-to-staff schools, for example, ineffective principals and student discipline are often cited by teachers as primary problems. Simply offering additional pay to accept an assignment in a hard-to-staff school may not be enough to motivate teachers to seek those assignments. Rather, changes in principals and student discipline may also be needed to support a decision to enter and remain in a hard-to-staff school.

The second motivational test is that the teacher must see a clear “line of sight” between the desired behavior and the additional pay. In some cases, this is quite straightforward, such as receiving a base pay increase for accepting an assignment in a hard-to-staff school or as a master teacher. In other cases, however, the line of sight is murky or misunderstood. Such can often be
the case with performance pay plans. They typically have weaker lines of sight due to complexities in performance measurement, complicated “payout” formulas, and changing rules of the game over time. The Dallas Independent School District performance pay plan, which uses the statistically complex classroom effectiveness index (CEI) is a good example of the issues that can arise to weaken the teacher's sight line between performance and pay.

The third motivational test is that the teacher must believe that high effort will lead to the desired result. This belief is referred to as a teacher's expectancy, and many factors can serve to dampen or enhance it. In a performance pay plan, a teacher's expectancy might be shaped by whether successful performance is clearly defined for the teacher, whether the teacher has (or is provided opportunities to obtain) the necessary knowledge and skills to perform successfully, and whether the teacher receives feedback and coaching on performance improvement.

In short, a decision to migrate to an innovative pay plan will raise motivational issues for teachers, and the district must anticipate and address them. It must design a pay innovation that will provide meaningfully sized rewards (both monetary and “working conditions”), it must create a clear line of sight for the teachers between the desired behavior and the reward, and it must ensure that teachers will have high expectancies that their efforts will lead to the desired rewards.

Fairness. Having a pay structure, and pay innovations that are perceived as fair also is an important goal. Fairness issues will arise in any pay innovation. Three types of fairness come into play. The first refers to the size of the reward (for the effort required) and the formula that links the behavior to the reward (a “payout” schedule); this is called distributive fairness. The second type of fairness, referred to as procedural fairness, involves teachers' perceptions about the design and implementation of the pay innovation, and how it is subsequently administered. The third type of fairness is interactional, meaning fairness experienced by the teacher when interacting with others, especially principals and fellow teachers. As a pay innovation is designed and implemented, continual attention to all three forms of fairness will be necessary if the innovation is to have a good chance of acceptance and survival.

Acceptance. Whatever the presumed soundness and logic of the pay innovation, its success is not guaranteed. The ultimate test of a pay structure is teacher acceptance of it. Acceptance is exhibited in many ways, such as “buy in” and a favorable vote for a pay innovation, giving the innovation a fair chance for its inevitable glitches to work themselves out, responding to and using the pay innovation as it was intended to be used (i.e., no sabotage), being collegial, and going the “extra mile” to help make the innovation work.

Communication

For a pay innovation to be understood, motivational, accepted, and lasting, communication with teachers and their representatives is critical. This is particularly important while deliberating whether to innovate, while designing the innovation, and while implementing the program. Experience of organizations with pay innovations outside of education indicates that the mantra “communicate, communicate, communicate!” is not an idle slogan, but a make-or-break feature of pay innovation. The Denver ProComp plan is an excellent example of a complex pay
innovation that took this advice to heart early on and continues to the present. There is considerable value to be gained from such transparency.

Eligibility and Qualifications

Issues about plan eligibility, along with required qualifications, arise both for schools and for teachers. A beginning point is whether participation by schools and/or teachers will be mandatory or voluntary. Mandatory requirements ensure participation by those most in need of change, and they help ensure broad scale and quick implementation. Voluntary participation helps ensure cooperation and teacher acceptance, and it provides a smoother transition to the pay innovation.

Districts must specify criteria for inclusion in the pay innovation, whether mandatory or voluntary. What, exactly, will be considered in the determination of whether a school is hard-to-staff? Factors to consider include teacher job offer acceptance and retention rates, school demographics and achievement indicators, and location, among others. Likewise, what is a hard-to-staff subject? Potentially, any subject is fair game for the designation, not just the traditionally chosen subjects of math and science. Another tack is whether to focus on hard-to-staff, as opposed to “high need,” schools and subjects. Such a focus might require different criteria for inclusion in the designation.

A potentially thorny, and under-discussed, set of issues is whether teachers will be required to possess certain qualifications, how those qualifications will be assessed, and who will make the final selection decisions. Consider, for example, the expanded role of master teacher. Qualifications for entry into this role, assessment tools and processes, and decision-makers must all be determined. As another example, consider hard-to-staff schools. What qualifications must teachers have to teach in such a school, and who will make the assessment and final choice (e.g., the principal, or a special panel)? Moreover, how will seniority and transfer provisions be changed so that seniority is not the sole determinant of transfer into such a school and that both the teacher and the principal choose mutually whether the teacher will in fact become a member of the school? And then there is the matter of the teachers currently in hard-to-staff schools. Will they be allowed to stay, or transferred to another school? If they stay, must they acquire the qualifications required of those from outside the school?

Plan Complexity

The single salary schedule, and its administration, is a relatively straightforward proposition. It is simple, non-controversial, and unencumbered by the need for supportive systems and programs. Most pay innovation approaches, however, are just the opposite, resulting in substantial complexity in conception, design, implementation, administration, and evaluation. A district thinking of pay innovation must be aware of these administrative realities from the very start, including upfront conception and design time. A good example of the recognition of this requirement is the Minnesota Q-Comp plan. In this plan the district is required to submit a letter of intent to the State Department of Education to develop and file a proposed pay innovation. The district must then wait a full year before submitting the proposed plan for evaluation and approval. This waiting period gives the district time to confront the complexities of plan design
and carefully develop a proposed plan, rather than jumping into an innovative pay plan prematurely. Districts considering a movement toward a pay innovation would be wise to consult information about districts that have already done so in order to learn about plan complexity and the range of issues that must be addressed.

**Capacity for Innovation**

Most pay structure innovations, and their inevitable ripple effects throughout administrative and instructional systems, create problems of capacity for the district. The plans require more time of people, along with new technology, measurement, data collection and management, and organizational change processes. Very importantly, pay innovations require staff with the competencies needed to guide their design, implementation, and administration. An unfortunate unintended consequence of the single salary schedule is that it requires very little staff competency relative to the demands of innovation. The district must thus anticipate the need to acquire (as new hires or as consultants) more staff, and/or develop the needed competencies in existing staff. This requirement is likely to be particularly acute for the HR function, where much of the responsibility for pay innovation will lie. Such staff acquisition will require the district to search for such individuals in an expanded way, including the recruitment of talented HR individuals from large governmental units, private sector companies, private sector consulting firms, and training grounds such as business schools, industrial relations programs, and industrial/organizational psychology programs in universities. The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems is one promising alternative source for developing urban district leaders for superintendent positions and other top district managers.

**Human Resource Alignment**

The district's human resource system is responsible for acquiring, deploying, developing, motivating, and retaining a highly qualified workforce, especially teachers. The HR system for teachers has eight major components: recruitment, selection, induction, mentoring, professional development, compensation, performance management (includes teacher evaluation, plus performance feedback and coaching), and instructional leadership. The actual management of these components may be housed within the HR function, or shared with other instructional units. Regardless of their location, the pay innovations we have discussed will spill over and affect some or all of these components.

As an example, consider again hard-to-staff schools. Districts must recruit new teachers for these schools, and must establish a new selection system for choosing those applicants with the special qualifications thought necessary to be effective in such schools. Induction and mentoring of the new teachers, and possibly some of the veteran ones already at the schools, will be needed to inculcate teachers into the new vision and direction, and curriculum that have likely been established for the schools. The district may need to develop special professional development programs to provide learning support and skill enhancement for teachers in the schools, both new and veteran. They may also need to select and train new instructional leaders for assignments in the schools as part of a larger change strategy, and the performance management of teachers will become a high priority for these leaders to help ensure that teachers receive the information,
resources, and support they need to be effective. And finally, the district will need to design the actual pay supplement program for the teachers.

In other words, an innovative pay program for hard-to-staff schools is anything but just a new pay system. All other components of the HR system will be affected by the decision to pursue a pay innovation. Not only will the HR components be affected, but also they must be redesigned in ways that will make them supportive of the pay innovation itself, as well as each other. This leads to the concept of HR alignment and the need to create it in the HR system. Vertical alignment refers to having each of the eight components of the HR system focused on the desired strategic objectives of the school, such as student achievement improvement and closing the achievement gap. Horizontal alignment occurs when the eight components are mutually supportive and reinforcing of each other. Without both vertical and horizontal alignment of the HR system, the effectiveness of a pay innovation is threatened. Creating HR alignment will first require an HR alignment assessment to identify alignment strengths and weaknesses in the current HR system. Armed with the results of the assessment, plans can be developed and implemented for improving HR alignment, and fostering HR practice improvement in the drive toward strategic objectives.

As an example, consider a district undertaking a move toward a diversified pay plan, and one of the pay plan components is linking base pay raises to an assessment of the teacher's classroom performance. The goal of the plan is to raise math and reading test scores by 5% per year over each of the next five years. An HR alignment assessment might reveal that the professional development course and in-service work contain relatively little content around reading and math improvement, suggesting a lack of vertical alignment. Another revelation might be that after a teacher evaluation, principals or other school leaders typically do not even discuss performance improvement and professional development needs with the teacher, suggesting a lack of horizontal alignment. Knowing such HR alignment gaps, the district can take steps to eliminate them, thus removing barriers to the effectiveness of the pay innovation itself in improving student achievement.

The types of spillover effects and interdependencies among HR components discussed above illustrate the need to move beyond thinking about separate, stand alone, HR components. Rather, the district must seek to visualize and integrate the HR components into an overall HR system, thus engaging in what we refer to as the strategic management of human capital.

**Evaluation of Pay Innovation**

When a district is planning a pay innovation, part of the plan should include provision for evaluation of the plan's effectiveness. The scope and breadth of the issues above are a signal that a pay innovation faces many obstacles to success. Evaluation will help the district better understand both the plan's intended effectiveness, as well as obstacles that arose to thwart effectiveness. Evaluation can focus on many topics, including changes in outcomes such as student achievement or teacher classroom performance, glitches in implementation, impacts on teachers' and principals' attitudes, and financial and administrative costs.
As an example, Denver’s ProComp plan is currently undergoing an external review. The evaluation has many focuses and questions, including (a) changes in student achievement by teachers in ProComp compared to those teachers not in ProComp, (b) attraction and retention of high quality educators, (c) teachers’ satisfaction with the ProComp program, initial salary setting, subsequent pay increases, and misunderstandings and concerns about the program, (d) effectiveness of each of the four components of ProComp, and (e) program understanding and level of communication across the district.

**Teacher’s Association or Union**

The teacher’s association or union is a vital player in pay innovation, and it must be engaged in the process. Association/union and district leaders can discuss possible pay innovation programs and work together to identify and tap new funding sources. Association/union and district leaders can receive training together in pay innovation through joint participation in seminars. With knowledgeable leaders, the association/union can communicate effectively with members about pay innovations and also champion them. The association can provide helpful feedback to the district about teachers' attitudes regarding motivation, differentiation, fairness, and acceptance. Association/union members can serve on joint district-association pay innovation design and implementation teams, often outside of the traditional bargaining relationship. And association/union members can help identify and resolve the many issues that will arise once the pay innovation program is up and running.

**6. Conclusion**

Clearly, school districts must consider many issues when they assess, design or reform a district pay structure for teachers. These issues and possible design features present many decision points for school districts. Understanding pay structure is important, yet often overlooked in education policy tomes or the popular press. It is incumbent on district leaders, teachers and other stakeholders to cut through the rhetoric on teacher pay reform in order to determine which features strategically fit district objectives, and then systematically proceed with the design and implementation process. In addition to the resources listed below, this manuscript is one of many sources that may help in that process.
Additional Resources


Denver Public Schools. Denver ProComp web site: http://denverprocomp.org/generalinformation


Minnesota Quality Compensation (Q-Comp) Program Description. Available at [http://children.state.mn.us/MDE/Teacher_Support/QComp/index.html](http://children.state.mn.us/MDE/Teacher_Support/QComp/index.html)


