

## Audio Podcast Script

Introduction to the Center for Educator Compensation Reform and the Teacher Incentive Fund  
James Guthrie

**Tamara:** The Center for Educator Compensation Reform provides technical assistance to the Teacher Incentive Fund grantees and develops resources for a national audience. Listeners with a question around alternative compensation or to view our other resources can visit our website at [www.cecr.ed.gov](http://www.cecr.ed.gov). CECR is a partnership among Westat, Vanderbilt University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Synergy Enterprises and Learning Point Associates.

**James:** This is James Guthrie. It's my good fortune to be the policy director for the Center for Educator Compensation Reform Project, and I'd like to talk about the significance of this undertaking.

I'd like to talk to you about two matters. One, I'd like to explain what the Center for Educator Compensation Reform does and second, I'd like to explain why it's so important at this point in America's history.

Starting about 25 years ago with the publication of an important document called "A Nation at Risk", this publication explained the global dynamics by which the American economy and much of America's life was changing. In another era a century ago, the nation was operated by about a 10 percent educated elite. They ran the Army, business, academia, government et cetera and that was okay. Most people did not go to or graduate from high school and in a sense that was alright, too, because there were many good jobs available for them— jobs in which they could lead a comfortable, maybe even fulfilling, middle class existence and pursue the American dream.

But in the last quarter of the 20th century and certainly continuing into the future, that comfortable pattern began to disappear with the globalization of the world's economies. The digitization of information, rapid transportation, the movement of capital across national boundaries in a way that it never had before, meant that jobs no longer were awaiting those who didn't graduate from high school. Those jobs had gone overseas or disappeared altogether. So and what we have begun to learn is that we had to change our education system, because this was at the heart of offering individuals an opportunity for a fulfilling life.

So what we now understand more forcefully than at any time in our history, is that in order for any individual to have a rewarding life and have to earn a good living, they're going to have to be educated. They're going to have to go to school. They're going to have to learn more. You're going to have to stay in school. You're going to have to learn something in school and schools themselves are going to have to be more effective in their ability to transmit information and encourage people to gain a longer run of education.

So, as I said initially, for more than a quarter of a century, we've been striving to make our schools better. And pay for performance is a component of that effort. By itself it won't render

schools dramatically altered, but it can contribute to it. We spend approximately \$600 billion a year operating our public schools. Most of that goes for paying teachers; more than half of it, about 60, 65 percent is wrapped up in teacher pay. And we've been striving for more than 30 or 40 years dramatically to reduce class size and to have more educators and we've succeeded. We've dropped the pupil/professional ratio from 28 to 1, to 14 to 1. There are 14 students for every certificated educator in, in the United States now. We've spent a lot of money on this and we really haven't seen the results from this that we'd, we'd hoped for. And our hope is that we can find ways in which we can restructure the amount that we pay so as to induce to even larger numbers of able people to be interested in teaching and for those who are already teachers, we'd like to motivate them to think harder about how it is that they undertake their instruction and perhaps how more effective they could be.

For over 40 years the National Assessment of Educational Progress results have been very flat, very stagnant. So we've been searching for ways in which somehow our teacher workforce could be rendered more effective. No one thinks for a moment that simply paying teachers for some easy result will turn it all around. We don't know that to be the case, so we're experimenting with a broad spectrum of ways in which teacher compensation can be altered. Our hope is that we can find arrangements that will induce even more able individuals to consider being a teacher; we will find other arrangements that will motivate teachers to think hard about how they conduct their business and how they teach their students.

CECR, the Center for Educator Compensation Reform, is funded by the United States Federal Government. Its principle mission is to assist local school districts and the charter schools that have applied for and have received a Teacher Incentive Fund grant.

These TIF schools are located throughout the United States. Some are very small, they're in rural areas, others are in big cities. They encompass a wide spectrum of different kinds of districts and even charter schools.

The Center for Educator Compensation Reform offers these districts, should they choose, technical assistance on matters of financing and alternative pay system for teachers and other educators. It offers them technical assistance about evaluation matters, about communication and engagement of their communities and their teachers. It offers them technical assistance about structuring teacher pay or alternative ways in which to do that.

Additionally, CECR monitors these projects for the United States Government to ensure that they're on track and then finally, the Center for Educator Compensation Reform does provide information to a wider audience through its web sites and publications about educator compensation reform. And we've got to find ways to motivate teachers to think even harder about how it is that they will teacher their subject and engage their students with it. That's what the Center for Educator, Educator Compensation Reform does.

So we have a spectrum of activities that CECR is sponsoring. We have ways of assisting local school districts in designing and operating these undertakings and we encourage people, of course, to evaluate them carefully so that we have information that can come back and reshape the activity in the future. Thank you very much.

**Tamara:** Dr. James Guthrie is the Policy Director of the Center for Educator Compensation Reform. CECR provides technical assistance to Teacher Incentive Fund grantees and maintains an information clearinghouse on educator compensation reform efforts. Please visit our website [www.cecr.ed.gov](http://www.cecr.ed.gov) for more information.