

## F. Building Teacher and Community Support for New Compensation Systems

Do surveys indicate that teachers, principals, and the public support new forms of teacher and principal compensation?

Surveys suggest that the public supports performance pay for teachers. The annual Gallup poll of public attitudes queried people about this issue in 2010. That survey found that 72 percent of public school parents and 71 percent of adults nationwide believe that each teacher should be paid based on the quality of his/her teaching as opposed to the standard pay scale (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010). The same poll asked participants how closely teacher compensation should be tied to student achievement, and 75 percent of public school parents and 73 percent of adults nationwide stated that it should be *very closely* or *somewhat closely* tied. A 2004 Gallup survey asked the public about financial incentives for teachers who teach in high-need schools. Sixty-five percent of respondents agreed that teachers who teach in schools “identified as needing improvement” should be paid more (Rose & Gallup, 2004).

Surveys also suggest that support for new forms of compensation is increasing among teachers themselves, but this increase is neither uniform nor universal. Positive attitudes toward new forms of compensation tend to be strongest among younger teachers. For example, in a survey among young adults preparing to be teachers, Milanowski (2006) found that most

students who planned to teach expressed a preference for some form of performance pay. In a study conducted by Learning Point Associates and Public Agenda, 71 percent of Gen Y teachers and 63 percent of older teachers *strongly favored* or *somewhat favored* financial incentives for teachers who “consistently work harder, putting in more time and effort than other teachers” (Coggshall, Ott, Behrstock, & Lasagna, 2010, p. 2).

A Public Agenda poll conducted for The Teaching Commission found that 85 percent of teachers and 72 percent of principals said that providing financial incentives would help to attract and retain high-quality teachers (Public Agenda, 2004; The Teaching Commission, 2004).

An extensive 2003 Public Agenda poll of teachers nationwide found that teachers gave mixed reviews to performance pay and that their answers varied depending upon the type of incentive. Seventy percent of teachers favored paying more to teachers in low-performing schools. This same poll found that 63 percent of teachers were in favor of paying more to teachers who teach difficult classes in hard-to-staff schools; 62 percent supported paying financial incentives to teachers who consistently receive outstanding evaluations

from their principals; and 57 percent favored paying more to teachers who earn certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003).

However, only 42 percent of the teachers surveyed by Public Agenda favor paying more to teachers in shortage areas such as mathematics and science. Only 38 percent support financial incentives for teachers whose students score consistently higher on standardized tests (Farkas et al., 2003).

In addition, the egalitarianism of the teaching culture is evident in the Public Agenda survey. Sixty-three percent of teachers indicated that they fear that “merit pay” would foster unhealthy competition and jealousy among teachers. Fifty-two percent believed that such a system also would lead to principals playing favorites by rewarding those teachers who are loyal to them or do not rock the boat (Farkas et al., 2003). A recent study by the National Center on Performance Incentives, however, showed that of the teachers participating in the Texas Educator Effectiveness Grant program, 54 percent of teachers surveyed did not think that performance pay would adversely affect teacher collaboration, and 55 percent believed that incentives could encourage teacher collaboration (Springer et al., 2008).

Goldhaber, DeArmond, and DeBurgomaster (2007) argue that the body of research on teacher attitudes regarding performance pay paints a somewhat confusing picture: “depending on the poll, teachers are either for or against compensation reform” (p. 3). They propose that one reason why opinion polls have yielded somewhat inconsistent results is

that only a few of these studies have examined how teacher attitudes vary by individual and workplace characteristics. Ballou and Podgursky’s (1993) analysis of the national Schools and Staffing Survey was one of the first studies to examine the effect of these variables on teacher attitudes. Some of their findings were consistent with what one might expect. For example, teachers who had previously received performance pay tended to support it; private school teachers held more favorable opinions about it than did public school teachers; and female teachers and more experienced teachers tended to oppose it.

Ballou and Podgursky’s analyses also yielded a number of surprises that challenged the widely held belief that most teachers oppose performance pay. For example, contrary to the conventional wisdom that suggests teachers in districts with low base pay would oppose performance awards, the level of pay in such districts appeared to have no effect on teacher attitudes. Counter to the common belief in the profession that performance pay would demoralize teachers who did not receive financial awards, nonrecipients in districts that used performance pay were not hostile toward it. In fact, they were generally more supportive of performance pay than teachers in districts that did not use it. And although there is a widely held belief that teachers of low-performing students would oppose performance pay as unfair, the researchers found that teachers of disadvantaged and low-achieving students were more supportive of performance pay than other teachers.

In a more recent survey of teachers in Washington State, Goldhaber et al. (2007) examined how teacher attitudes about pay and incentive reforms varied by individual and workplace characteristics. They, too, found that teacher opinion was not uniform. Overall, nearly 75 percent of teachers favored higher pay for teachers who work in hard-to-staff schools. In contrast, only 17 percent favored performance pay.

Moreover, the level of support for performance pay among Washington teachers varied significantly among subgroups. High school teachers, for example, were more supportive of performance pay than were elementary teachers. On the other hand, female teachers and those with more experience were less supportive of performance pay, a finding consistent with that of Ballou and Podgursky (1993). Teachers who identified themselves as members of teachers' unions also were less supportive of performance pay. Teachers were more likely to support performance pay if they had a high degree of confidence in their principal but were less likely to support performance pay if they had a greater sense of trust and respect for their fellow teachers than in their principal. Teacher support for other types of pay reforms and incentives also varied by individual and workplace characteristics.

These findings strongly suggest that districts and states should carefully survey teacher opinion before attempting to adopt new pay systems. Although support for new forms of compensation generally is growing, preferences for types of pay systems differ substantially among teachers and vary by individual and workplace characteristics. Goldhaber et al. (2007) recommend that "policymakers interested in implementing compensation reforms should think carefully about where (and how) they place their bets" (p. 3). They conclude that differences in teachers' attitudes and beliefs suggest that new teacher pay plans may well be more likely to succeed if they allow teachers to opt in and they introduce more popular compensation reforms first.

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