



Performance Based Compensation *Linking Compensation to Student Achievement*

OVERVIEW

Over the course of the past three decades, education and governmental leaders have worked to promote standards-based K-12 education reforms, with an emphasis on the development of accountability systems tied to improved student achievement. Following the enactment of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), education officials at every level – state, local district, and school – are working to realign their efforts and focus limited resources to more effectively serve those students who are most at risk of failing to meet state educational standards. In this context, states and districts are beginning to understand the critical linkage that needs to exist between what teachers earn and what students learn. Moreover, they are finding that reforms built around this linkage can be a major catalyst for positive change, with the potential to influence educational achievement on a scale unmatched by many of the reforms of recent years.

In all aspects of their operations, teachers and administrators are being called upon to ensure that virtually every activity undertaken and every dollar expended directly supports the overarching goal of improving student achievement. There is stronger accountability for districts and schools that consistently underperform, including oversight and interventions that escalate in severity over time. In this context, states and districts have suffered from a lack of emphasis on how to establish performance standards for teachers that are tied to the district's core mission of education and to the budget. That pattern is changing. From Rhode Island to California, from Nevada to North Carolina, numerous state, local, and corporate leaders have begun seeking to include teacher performance as a core component in new accountability models, including those that link teacher compensation to student performance.

With a track record of success addressing this precise issue—including forging landmark management, union and community agreement supporting the implementation of appropriately designed pay for performance systems—the Community Training and Assistance Center [CTAC], assists states and local school districts to improve student achievement, with a focus on linking what students learn to what teachers earn. CTAC's work ensures that such efforts to improve student achievement involve fundamental systemic change and engage stakeholders. In short, CTAC supports state and district reform efforts, recognizing that while teacher pay for performance can be a critical element of overall reform and improved student achievement, the linkage of teacher pay to student performance is not by itself a silver bullet. Success requires more—with a strong focus on shaping common visions, building consensus among relevant stakeholders, and changing practices so that the driving force for change *and* the end product is improved student achievement.

CTAC's partnerships with states and districts are critical to the development of effective pay for performance models. These partnerships focus on these key tasks:

1. Redesigning the education infrastructure to support pay for performance as a cornerstone of efforts to improve student achievement.
2. Implementing systems that reward teachers for improved student achievement.
Demonstrating results and sharing valuable lessons.

If properly structured and implemented, with careful attention across each of these three areas, systems that reward teachers with greater earning potential for demonstrated gains in student performance can become a catalyst for even more powerful educational reform efforts.

CTAC SERVICES

With serious challenges before them, states and districts must leverage limited resources and coordinate their efforts to achieve maximum results. Fundamentally, CTAC helps educational entities align their organizations from both the bottom-up and top-down to improve student achievement. A core component of these alignment strategies is the inclusion of teacher compensation models which support the overarching goal of improved student achievement.

Through extensive experience with school districts, including its landmark work with the Denver Public Schools, CTAC has demonstrated that implementing pay for performance strategies can generate dramatic change. However, if such a strategy is adopted out of context, without being part of a serious and systematic reform agenda, its potential will be undercut. Keeping this challenge in mind, CTAC's Teacher Pay for Performance Initiative provides a range of services available to school districts committed to improving student achievement. These services include:

Comprehensive policy guidance centered around a review and analysis of pay for performance concepts and strategies and ways in which such strategies can be used to support the educational goals of the state or district;

Technical assistance in developing and implementing teacher-compensation systems to improve student achievement and reward teacher performance; and

Research-based services customized to help districts establish a teacher pay for performance system that will result in measurable progress in improving student achievement.

Implementing performance-based compensation policies, while resource- and time-intensive, furthers effective education reforms and can help satisfy the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—with greater teacher quality, targeted instruction, and improved student achievement.

CTAC works in three key areas:

1. *Redesigning the education infrastructure to support pay for performance as a cornerstone of efforts to improve student achievement.* As a starting point, districts must have strong infrastructure that is aligned with other aspects of the reform agenda. To that end, CTAC works to increase district leadership capacity, involve teachers and staff in the reform efforts, identify and overcome obstacles to effective reform, support the development of longitudinal data systems, and engage community stakeholders in the process. CTAC helps establish a firm foundation upon which effective pay for performance models may be built. This work involves a focus on:
 - Establishing clear and coherent accountability objectives that support the overarching goal of improving student achievement;
 - Developing an actionable strategic plan that operates as a vehicle for engaging parents and members of the community;
 - Enhancing leadership development through an exclusive focus on instructional issues;
 - Establishing (or enhancing) a data-driven system for district accountability, which involves the district capacity to collect, disaggregate, analyze and act on data related to student achievement, the effectiveness of instruction, and school performance;
 - Strengthening the curriculum framework and ensuring that teachers are provided instructional support and guidance, as needed;
 - Designing and implementing an effective program of teacher professional development, evaluation, compensation and leadership—developed in collaboration with the teachers' union and the community; and
 - Implementing a teacher recruitment and retention plan, as needed.

2. *Implementing systems that reward teachers for improved student achievement.* CTAC's assistance in this area is carried out in two phases – 1) implementing a pilot program that will provide a framework for pay for performance system design; and 2) establishing a new teacher compensation system, based upon that framework, that can be taken to scale. Specifically, the focus of this work is on:
 - Piloting a performance-based strategy includes:
 - Identifying initial levels of readiness and capacity to pursue fundamental reform and any major constraints that may adversely affect the likelihood of success;
 - Developing a district-specific strategy for linking teacher compensation and student achievement, to include the identification of possible measures of teacher performance, descriptions of pilot plans, targets, resources, goals, benchmarks and timelines;
 - Designing the pilot program and establishing steps to transition from the existing compensation schedule to the new plan; and
 - Building a base of institutional, constituent and community support, to include a coordinated communications strategy, outreach support, and training regarding the design and contemplated implementation of the pilot.

- Developing a new compensation system includes:
 - Crafting a system, based on an analysis of pilot findings, cost and revenue projections and strategies, and legislative plans, as necessary;
 - Supporting the collaborative development of a new compensation plan proposal through intensive work with key executive and policy level partners (including the teachers union);
 - Informing key stakeholders and providing research and other support to enhance understanding and support for the new compensation system, along with opportunities for assessing and incorporating constituent feedback; and
 - Providing key operational information to teachers and board of education members before voting on the new compensation system occurs.
3. *Demonstrating results and learning valuable lessons.* CTAC conducts rigorous research, providing evidence of what works—and what doesn't—in the context of district efforts to link teacher compensation to student performance. This work involves:
- Examining the actual impact various models have on student performance;
 - Determining the evolution of key site level factors and their relationship to student performance;
 - Investigating the causal factors that may affect student achievement in light of the reformed compensation plan;
 - Conducting an ongoing longitudinal analysis of student achievement results—both quantitative and qualitative;
 - Evaluating the impact new policies have on teacher quality, recruitment, retention and job satisfaction; and
 - Preparing a final report to be available to local, state and national education leaders.

RESULTS

Districts and states that use CTAC's pay for performance comprehensive policy and technical assistance and its intensive, research-based services can achieve:

- Improved student achievement, along with more expansive and accessible student achievement data;
- Specific and high-quality teacher objectives aligned to student learning standards;
- Improved teacher morale and better interaction among teachers (grade-to-grade) and between teachers and school/district management;
- Improved professional development strategies, along with smarter resource allocations supporting that development; and
- Demonstrable progress toward meeting the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act and other federal laws.

www.ctacusa.com/PDFs/Rpt-StudentLearningObjectives-2008.pdf

www.ctacusa.com/PDFs/Rpt-TyingtoLearning-2008.pdf