

# *Tying Earning to Learning:*

THE LINK BETWEEN  
TEACHER COMPENSATION AND  
STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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CTAC ISSUE SERIES

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*The Community Training and Assistance Center is a national not-for-profit organization with a demonstrated record of success in urban communities. It focuses on developing leadership, planning and managerial expertise within community-based organizations, school systems, collaborative partnerships, state and municipal governments, and health and human service agencies. Since 1979, the Center has provided assistance to hundreds of community-based organizations, coalitions and public institutions in the United States and several other countries.*

*The Center's staff is comprised of nationally recognized executives, educators, policy makers and organizers who have extensive experience working with city, county and state agencies, educational institutions, federal legislative bodies, not-for-profit organizations, philanthropic institutions and the private sector:*

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### *Foreword*

This document is a collection of working papers and resources compiled by the Community Training and Assistance Center based on its work in Denver and subsequently with other districts developing strategic compensation systems grounded in or including a teacher-developed objective component. The information herein does not represent the totality of what can be said on this subject, nor is it likely the last word.

The document is intended for reflection and dialogue with design or planning committees in a workshop setting. A compensation component based on student learning objectives should be designed to fit each district's strengths, culture and resources.

### *Credits*

This document was prepared by the Community Training and Assistance Center of Boston, Massachusetts. The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement of the Federal Government.

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# TOPIC I

## Recognizing and Rewarding Teacher Expertise

Students, parents, and educators alike recognize the significant role teachers play in the intellectual life and achievement of young people. There is a body of literature and film about the impact of exceptional teachers, and almost everyone has a story about at least one influential teacher. However, it is only in the last two decades that educational researchers have probed more thoroughly the qualifications of teachers in relation to their impact on student achievement and concluded that teachers who know their subject matter and how to teach it have the greatest potential to impact on student achievement positively; the flip side is also true: teachers less qualified in their subject matter may impact student achievement negatively.<sup>1</sup>

“Effective teachers, as measured by student results, demonstrate a high level of fluency in the subject matter that they teach, as well as with subject-specific pedagogy, that is, teaching strategies that are specific to learning the subject matter rather than only those of a generic nature (Education Trust, 1998)... These findings provided impetus for the teacher qualifications element of No Child Left Behind (2001).

A review of professional development research (AERA, 2005) ...found that professional development had the greatest impact on student achievement when focusing on *teacher knowledge of the subject matter and on those instructional practices that specifically relate to learning the subject, while simultaneously strengthening and deepening teacher knowledge of the subject matter that they teach.*”

Adapted from *Focus on Literacy: Professional Development Audit*,  
Community Training and Assistance Center, 2008

Clearly, districts must recruit and hire teachers highly qualified in subject matter and related pedagogy and then commit to the ongoing development of subject matter expertise in their professional workforce.<sup>2</sup> After ensuring the access of students to highly qualified teachers, the next effort for districts should center on bringing the combined qualifications and strengths of teachers to bear on the thorny learning problems that many schools face. While there is a current concern about the teacher qualification gap in many districts, particularly in hard-to staff schools, it has long been the case that even *available and exceptional teacher expertise is under-recognized and strategically under-utilized by schools and districts*. In every neighborhood in the country, there is at least one public school with twenty to eighty or more educated and well-intentioned people who are already successful with many students and are positioned to solve many other learning problems confronting school systems.

To summarize, it is evident, both intuitively and through educational research, that well-prepared, highly qualified teachers present the best hope for improving student learning and closing the achievement gaps prevalent in American schools. Secondly, districts are acknowledging that hiring and supporting a highly qualified classroom workforce is an ongoing effort but key to improving student achievement. Finally, educational systems are not strategically employing the expertise of the qualified teachers that they do have.

## A New Way

A consensus is growing among teachers, educational leaders, teacher leaders, and the public about one starting point for a more strategic approach to the classroom workforce: the teacher compensation system could use a facelift, one that recognizes the contributions of teachers, attracts a new generation of teachers, and subsequently engages them more systematically in addressing learning issues in their classrooms. Recently, a teacher research group<sup>3</sup> looking into new types of compensation spoke up.

One way to reward teachers who positively impact student achievement, as well as capitalize

"It's time.... More than half a century ago, the teacher single-salary schedule was designed with good reasons in mind—to promote gender and racial pay equity, to protect teachers from...capricious employment and pay decisions, and to encourage teachers to pursue advanced degrees.... In a new era, with challenges and opportunities before us that were unimaginable in post-WWII America, our public schools need a far more nuanced approach to professional compensation—an approach that acknowledges teaching quality as our best guarantee of student achievement."

Teacher Solutions,  
Center for Teaching Quality, 2007

on their expertise and willingness to hone their craft and be accountable, is to create a teacher objective component. In objective-based extra compensation, teachers review the data available about their students early in the year, including prior year performances and any pre-tests administered, set a designated number of objectives (usually two) and identify appropriate measurements. Evidence of attainment, validated by the principal, leads to extra compensation. Principals, as well as key district departments, have a significant role to play in a successful outcome.

Compensating teachers based on annual objectives that they set and reach is not the only method to reward and recognize the classroom teacher, but it may be the only one currently that makes a direct connection to student learning, puts the teacher in the driver's seat, and overcomes many of the negative associations of implementing merit or bonus pay in education.

A recent article in *Time* magazine<sup>4</sup> asks, "How should excellent teaching be rewarded so that the best teachers—the most competent, caring and compelling—remain in a profession known for low pay, low status and soul-crushing bureaucracy?" The article points to the growing interest in and the rationale for connecting extra compensation to performance as a way to address the teacher quality gap in the nation's schools and overcome the checkered history of merit pay in education.

“What holds more promise is broader efforts to transform the profession by combining merit pay with more opportunities for professional training and support, thoughtful assessments of how teachers do their jobs and new career paths for top teachers.

There are better ways.... In Denver, for example, Professional Compensation, or ProComp, is the product of a seven-year collaboration among the teachers' union, the district and city hall. Rolled out last school year, ProComp includes nine ways for teachers to raise their earnings, some through bonuses and some through bumps in salary. New hires are automatically enrolled, while veterans have the option of sticking with the old salary schedule. But in just one year, half of Denver's 4,555 teachers have signed on.”

Claudia Wallis, *Time*, 2008

## Why Link Compensation and Learning Objectives?

The concept of basing extra compensation on teacher-developed objectives is the creation of the Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association. The Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) conducted a four-year study and provided technical assistance for the Denver pilot on the use of objectives in extra compensation. The two-phase study in Denver<sup>5</sup> demonstrated that teachers brought various levels of skills, thinking styles, and motivation to developing objectives and planning for how they would attain them. Evaluations show that the quality of the objective (as measured on a four-point rubric) was linked to the attainment of it by the teacher's own measure as well as by student achievement

### Seven Reasons Why Objectives

1. The development or selection of classroom instructional objectives is *uniquely a teacher activity* and, as such, is particularly suitable for use as the basis of extra compensation for individual teachers. Entering compensation reform through the classroom treats teachers as the professionals they are—starting with something they know and do well and extending their opportunities for further thought about improving student learning.
2. Developing instructional or student learning objectives is usually part of teacher “boot camp.” It is a familiar activity, and while training to hone objective development skills for the purpose of compensation is strongly recommended, *writing objectives is within the expertise of most teachers.*
3. *Instructional (or planning) objectives* are commonplace in many of the curriculum guides, textbooks, and other materials that teachers use in the classroom and may serve as models or prompts for developing objectives.
4. Teachers often do not have ready access early in the school year to meaningful assessments or student performance data, even though it may be available in the district or building. Using data to help set a baseline and measure the quality of student learning will positively *impact the accessibility and effectiveness of the data system for teachers*, as the need for timely and comprehensive student information scales up, and the school district responds.
5. Objective-based compensation *dovetails with and enhances other reforms.* It does not impose teaching models or conflict with state or district standards. It works for individual teachers, teachers in professional learning communities, and teachers of students with special needs or in special subjects.
6. Even though objective and goal-setting is commonplace enough in classrooms, schools, and districts, assessment of objectives and goals or evaluation of the results may be cursory or passed over all together. An objective-based compensation system will influence the entire organization to *become more accurate, open, and reflective about student outcomes.*
7. Teacher quality is *the most critical variable in student achievement.* Using a compensation model that maximizes a teacher's capacity to plan, focus, problem-solve, and seek solutions that improve achievement capitalizes on the most under-utilized resource in education reform today.

Community Training and Assistance Center (2005)



measured on organized state and local assessments.

Over time, with training and experience, more pilot teachers in Denver constructed quality objectives. As teachers became more trustful of the process of objective setting for extra compensation in Denver, they also became cautious proponents and critics, advising on how the process could be improved. Some acknowledged that they were “bringing more science to their art” and, like all scientists, became interested in systematizing their work and controlling the quality of it.

During the course of studying the Denver pilot and subsequently in working with other districts, CTAC research team members have given considerable thought to the potential of objectives as not only the basis of extra compensation,

but also as an *impetus for linking individual instructional planning and accountability to school and district planning and evaluation*. Reflecting on feedback from Denver teachers over the course of the pilot and observing some teachers in action, CTAC found seven reasons—all very practical—to explain why objectives, well planned and implemented, can be a viable option for the basis of extra compensation and improved student learning.

Besides these very practical reasons for “why objectives,” there is also sound psychology to explain why going down the objective route for compensation reform has the potential to impact positively the performance of teachers and their students. This research is summarized in Topic Two.

# Understanding Objectives for Extra Compensation

“When we entered into this, I didn’t see the difficulty in a fairly simplistic objective setting process. I can’t get over that objectives are so hard to write.”

Denver Public Schools Board Member, 2002

Instructional objectives are part of the educational landscape, so much so that they may not be particularly noted, much less analyzed or evaluated for the degree of rigor or the quality and difficulty of attainment. Herein lays the objectives paradox: *instructional objectives are familiar in classrooms and schools, but often missing in action.* In fact, a survey of educational literature shows that the term objective may be used in different contexts and with various meanings or may be referenced interchangeably with *goal* or *standard*, with different meanings for different users.

## Terminology Issues

There is little need to attempt to resolve the myriad uses of terminology, but looking at uses within the district and state and coming to some agreements about meaning at the local level will be helpful. The examples in the box below and the definitions following demonstrate some uses and definitions that might emanate from them.

An *educational goal* is frequently one of institutional or systemic—school, district, state, or in the case of the example of highly qualified teachers, national—improvement.

**Educational Goal:** All classrooms will have a highly qualified teacher by 2008.

**Subject Area Standard:** English Language Arts Standard 2.4 Using the writing strategies of grades nine and ten outlined in Standard 1.0, students write persuasive compositions.

**Benchmark Standard:** English Language Arts Standard 2.4.c Clarify and defend positions with precise and relevant evidence, including facts, expert opinions, quotations, and expressions of commonly accepted beliefs and logical reasoning.

**Yearlong Instructional Objective:** Tenth-grade students will learn and apply the principles of written argument, as measured by their performances on four argumentative/persuasive essays collected throughout the year and assessed on a six-point rubric.

The *subject standard* shown above is from the California K-12 English language arts standards for grades nine and ten. In most states, broad subject standards have been established for public schools with specific standards for grade levels. They indicate what a student should know/be able to do—in this case, compose a persuasive essay.

The *benchmark standard* (may be called criteria in other systems) is one of four identified in the standard for the persuasive composition. Benchmark seems to be the term with the greatest variety of meanings.

The *instructional* or *student learning objective* shows how a teacher, guided by this state standard, might set one yearlong objective. The persuasive essay example is yearlong and includes an incremental, rubric-based method of measurement—a portfolio of four essays administered quarterly. Such objectives are designed by and intended for the use of the teacher—the expected outcome of a year, semester, unit or daily lesson planning process. Teachers are frequently provided with ready-made objectives, but when teachers develop their own teaching objectives, they carry out analyses of all of the standards to be addressed, in conjunction with the student performance data, the material available to use, the time available to get the job done, and more.

Teachers work with more than one standard and many instructional objectives throughout the year. Developing instructional or teaching objectives usually involves several standards. On

the way to teaching argument in writing, for example, the teacher will address other standards for writing, as well as ones for speaking and listening, literature, reading, researching, and more. Objectives selected for extra compensation will represent only a portion of a teacher's plan for the year.

## Standards, Goals, and Objectives Guiding District Practices

Student learning objectives designed by teachers for compensation will co-exist with many other standards, goals, and objectives, already in play in the state, district, and schools. A chart (see Figure 1) can be used to identify and compare the features of each set of goals or objective, along with the organizational purposes and practices that accompany them. The comparison should yield an analysis that demonstrates alignment and perhaps redundancies or overlaps. Lack of alignment, inconsistencies, or gaps among the features of these documents may signal that parts of the organization have not caught up with changes, some of which may originate with state or federal regulations; it may also mean that planning documents emanating from different departments suffer from a “silo” effect, isolation of organizational parts from the whole.

In compiling all of the standards, goals, and objectives to be found in district planning documents (Figure 1), one may very well ask, “Why add more?” A thorough analysis and an honest and open dialogue about how effective these goals and objectives are in improving student performance may answer the question of “why add more?” In many instances, an evaluation of progress on meeting the organizational goals and/or objectives contained in the documents does not occur and if it does, there may be little evidence of impact of student achievement.

Other questions may also arise and should be addressed: How will teacher-developed objectives be aligned with goals and objectives that now exist? What if there is a conflict of purpose among the various planning documents? Will they replace something else? And most of all, why would student learning objectives, developed by individual teachers, be any more influential in improving student learning than all of the current goals and objectives in the district?

Fig. 1 **Feature Analysis of Organizational Goals and Objectives**

TYPE	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	EVIDENCE/EVALUATION	SIGNIFICANCE
State Standards and Benchmarks				
District Strategic Plan				
Local Curriculum Benchmarks				
Local School Plan				
Program Plans				
Subject/Department; Grade Level				
Employee Performance Evaluation				
NCLB Title I Program Improvement Plan				
Other				

## The Psychology of Goal or Objective-Setting

There is sound psychology to explain why a teacher's setting an objective or goal, measuring a starting point, and then working to get a good result may be more influential than other types of organizational goals. Athletic coaches and trainers speak of setting goals that reach for one's "personal best." Organizations like Weight Watchers exist to encourage people to set and reach weight goals. Why and how does individual objective-setting impact performance?

One meta-study of goal-setting literature argues that goals affect performance by (1) directing attention and effort toward activities that are relevant; (2) energizing, or creating greater effort; (3) impacting effort (more time on task); and (4) arousing

"We compared the effect of specific, difficult goals to a commonly used exhortation in organizational settings, namely, to do one's best. We found that specific, difficult goals consistently led to higher performance than urging people to do their best.... In short, when people are asked to do their best they do not do so. This is because do-your-best goals have no external referent and thus are defined idiosyncratically. This allows for a wide range of acceptable performance levels, which is not the case when a goal level is specified."

Locke and Latham, *Building a Practically Useful Theory of Goal Setting and Task Motivation* (2002)

"task-relevant knowledge and strategies." The study's findings further suggest that the highest or most difficult goals produce the highest levels of effort and performance and that the more specific (what, who, when, by what standard) and personal they are, the greater the likelihood of attaining them.<sup>6</sup>

According to this stream of research, specific and personal goals or objectives produce better outcomes than just a general exhortation to "do one's best." Denver pilot teachers analyzed the impact of objectives on their teaching as one of creating greater focus and more focused effort. They frequently observed that they had not changed any practices as a result of compensation objectives, that they always did their best for students; yet, the act of setting the objective was a change in practice that focused what they were already doing, making them aware earlier in the year about learning issues in their classrooms and leading them to implement strategies that would be needed to get the desired result.

Individual objective setting did not have a negative impact on either shared goals or collegiality in the pilot schools, as originally feared. In fact, teachers and principals reported improved collegiality and teamwork in developing and measuring objectives.

State, district, and school goals and objectives exist as accountability standards for outcomes, but organizations actually improve with individual know-how and personal accountability, as both the goal-setting theory and the Denver study indicate.



# Designing the Student Learning Objective

While there is not one design for objective-based extra compensation, several features are critical to a successful design and implementation. As indicated in the Denver pilot study findings, “writing objectives [for compensation] requires better information and greater precision than is customarily associated with planning objectives.”<sup>77</sup> The student learning objective is the fundamental building block of this type of compensation, so designing the objective protocol or template—what the objective will look like, what kind of thinking it will engender, what elements or components it will contain, how it will be documented, what reporting mechanisms will be put into place, and who will maintain the integrity of the process—is significant work.

Creating objective-based extra compensation within a district cannot be about duplicating the Denver effort, though there is much to learn from their experiences and to admire about the outcome of their trailblazing. Each district embarking on this path needs to develop an approach to objectives that takes into consideration that district’s strengths, challenges, and culture.

## **Components for Instructional or Student Learning Objectives**

Because of the everyday and varied uses of terminology, as noted in Topic Two, and because student gain for extra teacher compensation will be measured based on the objective, it is important to agree ahead of time on the components that will be included in an objective to be used as the basis of extra compensation. Denver requires seven elements to be included and provides a web-based protocol

Fig. 2 **Components of Student Learning Objectives**<sup>8</sup>

COMPONENT	ANSWERS THE FOLLOWING...
<b>Population</b>	Which students are being addressed?
<b>Interval of instructional time</b>	What is the instructional period covered? year? semester? quarter? unit?
<b>Expected gain or growth</b>	What is the baseline? How much will each student grow on the selected measurement(s)?
<b>Assessment</b>	How will learning be measured?
<b>Rationale</b>	Why choose this objective?
<b>Learning content</b>	What is being taught?
<b>Strategies</b>	What methods of teaching will be used?

for teachers to complete. Specificity about what is to be included in the objective means that there is a fundamental rule and universal understanding, which becomes the basis of equity and fairness in how objectives are written and eventually evaluated for compensation.

A caution: sometimes the parts do not add up to the whole, nor does a list of elements necessarily provide the best heuristic for thinking about objectives. Figure 3 shows an elaborated checklist with criteria created by the Denver Public Schools/Denver Classroom Teachers Association for the use of teachers in developing objectives.

Originally, a protocol/heuristic form with elements and questions was provided for Denver teachers to complete and discuss and file with their principals, but soon an intranet site was developed for teachers to use to record their objectives and outcomes and for principals to sign off on after a discussion with the teacher.

### **Rationale for Defining Components of the Student Learning Objective**

Establishing ahead of time the components or elements to be included in an objective and the quality criteria for objectives are important activities for the following reasons:

- *Objectives used as the basis of extra compensation will be more effectively—scientifically—measured and will produce results that will be evaluated by another person(s).* It is important to remember that improved teaching and learning are the primary goals of this type of extra compensation program, not improvement on an assessment, no matter how high the stakes or the overall quality of the assessment.
- *Objectives used for compensation represent each teacher's opportunity to earn extra pay and must be fair, equitable, and consistent in administration.* Providing a clear picture of what is expected, so that no one has to guess about the expectations and everyone has a chance to succeed are the first steps in building trust with teachers and principals, as well as with parents and community.

### **Development of Exemplars**

All of us benefit from good examples. While it is possible to look at exemplars from other districts, particularly for discussion during the development phase, the best examples will be developed in the district. As the protocol for the objectives is drafted, it will be helpful for the design group to draft their own objectives and/or invite some interested teachers to try it out. This work will help refine the protocol or heuristic as well as begin to create a set of district

Fig. 3 **Checklist for the Development of Teacher-Developed Objectives**<sup>9</sup>

<p><b>Population</b> Who are you going to include in this objective?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Defines a recognizable population.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Includes a majority of the defined student population.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Assumes 85% attendance of the defined group.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Writes in any agreed upon exceptions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interval of instructional time</b> Unit, quarter, semester, one school year?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Identifies time that instruction will occur.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Matches the amount of time in the curriculum.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provides adequate time for content complexity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Expected gain or growth</b> How much will students in your population grow? Why is this appropriate for students at this time?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Meets or exceeds standards of practice.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provides summarized baseline data.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Predicts gain based on past performance of students when available.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Address growth, gain, or change of at least 3/4s of the identified population.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explains any exceptions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment</b> How will you measure your objective? Are you measuring what you seek to accomplish?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Uses the assessments agreed upon by principal and teacher.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provides pre and post data.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Measures the growth, gain, or change expected.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Seeks training on measurement if required.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Aligns with the learning content.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provides a formula for combining more than one assessment, if needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rationale</b> Why did you choose this objective?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Supports school improvement plan.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Aligns with one or more state and district standard.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Addresses observable student need.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning content</b> What academic concepts, skills, behaviors or attitudes will you teach?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Uses baseline data to guide selection and instruction.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Targets needs of the identified population.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Aligns with district curriculum/one or more state standards.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Targets specific academic concepts, skills, behaviors, or attitudes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategies</b> What methods or interventions will you use to support this objective?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Identifies the model of instruction or the key strategies to be used.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Selects strategies appropriate to the content and the skill level observed in the pre-test data.</li> </ul>



exemplars to use for professional development.

Creating ready-made objectives for teachers to use is a possibility, but it is a practice that has the potential to nullify a major intended outcome of the initiative—more teacher opportunity for analysis, objective-setting, and reflection.

## Quality Instructional Objectives

Traits or criteria like the ones contained in Figure 3 demonstrate a way to set expectations for the components of the objective. By adding performance levels, one can develop rubrics to help teachers improve the quality of their objectives and increase their success in helping students attain the objective and in receiving extra compensation.

CTAC's four-year comprehensive study of the pay for performance pilot in Denver demonstrated that the quality of the objective correlated positively to (1) teachers meeting the objectives by their own identified measures and (2) increased student achievement of their students as measured on the Colorado standards exam and another nationally norm-referenced assessment. A rubric for describing the quality of teacher objectives in Denver, based on their design for objectives, was designed by CTAC to evaluate the objectives and

compare the level of performance with the student outcomes.<sup>10</sup> Figure 4 shows the criteria and Figure 5 show the rubric with performance levels.

## Some Further Distinctions

- *Student learning objectives should be set to improve student learning, as measured on a suitable assessment, rather than to improve performance on an assessment.* As a demonstration of why this distinction matters, one can consider the difference between the following two examples of an objective relating to reading non-fiction.

*Example One:* Sixth graders will increase their number of items correct on the functional reading section of the *Stanford Achievement Test* by five NCEs or more.

*Example Two:* Sixth graders will learn and apply six critical reading strategies for understanding non-fiction, as measured by the *Stanford Advanced Paragraph Test* and the functional reading section of the *Stanford Achievement Test*.

In the first example, the assessment appears to be the content to be taught, leading to a perception of “teaching to the test,” and potentially having the effect of narrowing the reading strategies learned to those measured on a particular assessment.

### Fig. 4 Traits or Criteria for Quality Instructional Objectives

#### Trait 1: Learning Content

Learning content is that which the teacher will teach and the student will learn. Quality learning content is significant to the subject or discipline, appropriate to the student level, and rigorous in thought and application. Content choices should reference agreed upon standards for the subject and grade level.

#### Trait 2: Completeness

A complete expression of an educational objective includes those elements agreed upon as the basis of extra compensation. These elements can include: the student population to be taught; the objective with learning content; the assessment; any baseline data available to show prior knowledge and/or skills; and finally, the evidence that persuades the teacher that the objective has or has not been met. The strategy or strategies used by the teacher to address the content and the rationale for selecting the objective may also be included.

#### Trait 3: Cohesion

Cohesion refers to the logic and unity among the elements of the objective and demonstrates that rigorous thought and careful planning have taken place in the development of the objective. It gives a sense of the whole over the parts.

#### Trait 4: Expectations

The complete learning objective demonstrates that the teacher understands both the student population and individuals to be addressed and holds high expectations for each student as well as for himself/herself.

Fig. 5 **Rubric for Describing Teacher Objectives**<sup>11</sup>

LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE	DESCRIPTORS FOR PERFORMANCE LEVELS
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4</b> <b>Excellent</b></p>	<p>The teacher states clearly what students will learn, expressing completely and coherently all elements of the objective, including the assessment, and demonstrating high expectations for students. There is a strong sense of the whole.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b> <b>Acceptable</b></p>	<p>The teacher refers (i.e., from a skill section in a book or test or a program acronym) to what the student will learn but may lack thoroughness in addressing the elements or in making clear the relationship or unity among the elements. The student expectations may seem somewhat conditional or low.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b> <b>Needs Improvement</b></p>	<p>The teacher has attempted to address most of the elements of the objective but may not have stated the learning content, showing a lack of understanding about what is expected or confusing the elements (i.e., stating the objective as an assessment goal rather than a learning goal). Expectations for students may be low.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b> <b>Too Little to Evaluate</b></p>	<p>The teacher does not address the objective in a manner that shows either an understanding of the task at hand or an effort to complete the task as requested. Objective may place too many conditions or exclude too many students to be reliably assessed.</p>

- *Cohesion of the elements of an objective—appropriate content for the grade level, measurable, reliable assessment(s), appropriate length of time, and a reasonable expected gain—means that the parts explain the objective but do not overwhelm the intention of the objective.* Attending to connectedness of all of the elements increases the likelihood that the teacher can focus and achieve the objective. Example Three shows the objective of a teacher intending to be comprehensive, but creating an objective that, while still focusing on an assessment, only lists topics.

*Example Three:* Fourth-grade students will increase an average of three points on the Aprenda Lectura through reading comprehension strategies, effective written and oral communication, higher-level thinking skills, research skills, literacy terminology, and literature of diverse cultural traditions.

These are desirable topics but too general to teach or assess. Narrowing the content focus for

the instructional objective to be measured will be necessary in order to create an objective where all of the parts are cohesive. *This is not narrowing the curriculum.* The teacher quoted above will likely teach all of the included topics and skills during the year and have instructional objectives for each of them, but in developing objectives for extra compensation, *the teacher will be selecting two of interest and importance to her and her students, a choice she will explain in her rationale.*

- *The rigor of the teacher-developed objectives is a concern that may arise.* Is an objective measuring growth in spelling accuracy on the 100 Most Commonly Misspelled Words List rigorous enough? A rubric, such as the one above, can give some guidance that addresses this concern, which may be in the public eye as well as a worry among educators. However, in avoiding the perception that objective-based compensation is a “gray train” for some teachers, it may be desirable to address the concept of rigor directly. One district

has developed a rigor rubric separate from the objective rubric/template.

As the literature on goal motivation indicates, the more difficult the goal, the higher the performance; thus, more rigorous objectives may be more motivating and lead to higher performance. Often rigor in education is associated with higher levels on Bloom's Taxonomy; however, in practice, it will be more complex to define and implement; therefore, a little research and some reflection and dialogue on what constitutes rigorous learning within the district curriculum and culture will benefit everyone.

### Parameters for the Objective-Setting Process

Establishing parameters will assist teachers and principals in setting, implementing, and measuring student learning objectives for extra compensation. Parameters should be defined well enough that all participants can trust that there is fairness and equitability in the treatment of individuals; on the other side, parameters should not be so restrictive as to prevent a teacher and/or principal from following the best judgment in setting objectives for students. Some potential parameter decisions include the following:

- *Definition of Teacher:* Besides the classroom teacher of record, many other teachers contribute to student achievement. If non-classroom teachers are to be included in the compensation plan, then a methodology for setting and measuring objectives among this group will need to be described. Sometimes the teacher contract defines the teacher and, in some cases, a grant or funding source may define a teacher. Working

this definition out ahead of time is important to the integrity and success of the initiative.

- *Number of Objectives:* How many objectives will each teacher set for extra compensation? This question is not the same as how many will the teacher set in her yearly plan for students. It is likely that a district will decide to ask for more than one student learning objective, but not so many as to create a paper storm. CTAC recommends two.
- *Population:* At least one objective should be focused on the entire class of students. The second objective might be also focused on the entire class or possibly on a smaller population within the class. If the district decides to adopt this option, the teacher can, based on evidence and dialogue with the principal, select students who will need additional or specialized instruction and set an objective for that group. This option is intended to promote differentiation practices and encourage the teacher with special issues in the classroom (i.e., mobility, non-English proficiency, etc.).
- *Instructional Unit:* Will all mathematics teachers of seventh graders in the district set the same problem-solving objective and try to reach it together? all seventh-grade teachers in a school or learning community? each teacher individually? If unit is to be schoolwide gain, how will each teacher's contribution be determined? If school or group objectives are not a requirement, will an affiliated group of teachers (learning community, grade level, department, program, for example) still have the flexibility to develop objectives together?

# IV TOPIC

## Assessing Student Achievement

Much of the criticism of accountability reforms during the last decade or so originates with the sense of many educators and parents that assessments have become the determinant of what will be taught. It is a criticism that need not attach itself to student learning objectives for compensation. Nonetheless, some critical thought about the current use and adequacy of student assessments in a district is recommended.

One way to keep assessment in perspective is to employ a model of thinking about teaching and learning in the classroom that helps keep in mind the important connections between what is taught, how it is taught, and what constitutes evidence of learning. There are other such models, but one simple, though powerful, model can be found in *Understanding by Design*.<sup>12</sup> The planning backward model proposed by the authors is formulated in three stages characterized by the following questions: “(1) What is worthy and requiring of understanding? (2) What is evidence of understanding? (3) What learning experiences and teaching promote understanding, interest, and excellence?” The first question is one of choosing learning content; the second question is one of assessment; and the third is about teaching strategy and methodology. The third stage is the one that teachers like best and is often the center of their creativity and focus; however, the effect of this creativity may be minimized if the other two stages are not given significant reflection and planning.

Planning for what will constitute convincing evidence of attainment before planning learning activities may feel strange to some teachers. However, planning for assessment and determining what evidence will satisfy each teacher and his or her principal that students have achieved the objective, and to what degree, emphasizes the *science of teaching, the ability to be deliberate and precise in what is taught, how it is assessed, and how it is taught*. Teachers who believe that their classrooms have been taken over by the state will be empowered by this process.

"[Backward design requires] an important shift in our thinking about the nature of our job...thinking a great deal, first, about the specific learning sought, and the evidence of such learnings, before thinking about what we, as the teachers, will do or provide in teaching and learning activities."

Wiggins and McTighe,  
*Understanding by Design* (2005)

## District Planning for the Assessment Element of Student Learning Objectives

Developing a district plan to use student learning objectives as the basis of extra compensation will invariably lead to a serious discussion of the adequacy of assessments for this purpose. In thinking about what constitutes evidence of learning, several issues and, perhaps, a few dilemmas may arise. In working through these, it is critical to distinguish between *those introduced by the student learning objectives initiative and those pertaining to assessment practices already existing in the district*. If the assessments in use in the district are inadequate to measure student learning objectives for compensation, they are probably also inadequate for most other purposes for which they are currently being used. One can take objectives for extra compensation off of the table and any problems with adequately and accurately assessing student learning will remain. However, it is certainly true that identifying and evaluating assessments for use with student learning objectives requires analysis and planning.

## Questions for the Analysis

A report commissioned by the National Academy of Sciences<sup>13</sup> addresses the issues of assessments used in large-scale and classroom contexts for the purposes of assisting learning, measuring individual achievement, and evaluating programs. Several points in the report are worthy to note here: one assessment cannot fit all contexts or priorities; a model of cognition and learning should function as the cornerstone of the assessment design process; and assessments must be aligned with curriculum and instruction. These seem obvious, but are easy to forget when we become enamored of a particular assessment. Keeping the expected curriculum

outcomes in mind should ground any dialogue about assessments. The following questions are offered to guide an analysis of assessments for use with student learning objectives follow.

*What is available?* Analyzing assessments is, first, one of information gathering—finding out what assessments are available and in use in the district and for what purposes. A chart is included here (Figure 6) for collecting this information. Some districts already compile and publish assessment lists such as these, but it is a good idea to involve teachers and principals in rounding out the list. Many schools rely on published assessments that are not part of the district master list. Some of these are published normed assessments (i.e., the Gates MacGinitie Reading Assessment) and some are inventories or curriculum-embedded assessments that accompany textbooks or reading and mathematics programs; others include essay, portfolio, performance tasks, or online assessments.

*How suitable is the state test for assessing attainment of objectives?* The quality of large-scale assessments has improved, though assessments may be uneven from state to state. An analysis of the suitability of the annual state assessment for measuring student learning objectives is essential. Some state assessments are not vertically scaled for annual comparison purposes, may have limited numbers of questions for some standards, and/or may have cut-off levels that change from year to year. Since test question development is expensive and assessment security is a priority, it has also become increasingly difficult for districts to see assessment information at the item, or even sub-category level. So a teacher deciding to use the state assessment to measure her objectives may have access only to broad categories or clusters of performance outcomes, which may work for measuring some objectives, but not all. Another complication with using state assessments for this purpose is that information may not become available before the end of the school year, not insurmountable, just inconvenient for closing the books on compensation in the same fiscal year.

Even if the state assessment is not used as the final measure by a teacher, what is known about the particulars of that assessment, and certainly the state standards, should be considered in each teacher's selection or development of objectives

and assessments since classroom learning should help students meet state standards. Whether or not teachers use this assessment as evidence of having met their objectives, they will want to have access to this stream of student information to use as baseline data in developing objectives, selecting measures, and setting growth targets.

*What about the formative assessments?*

Benchmark or formative assessments developed or adopted by the district to mark student progress toward standards are a critical component of a district's instruction and assessment portfolio. How they are constructed will determine their usefulness in measuring student learning objectives. For example, the assessment may measure smaller components of a curriculum standard but lack a cumulative assessment of the standard along the way or a summative assessment at the end of the year. This is not to say that these assessments should not be used as evidence of attainment, only that an evaluation will be needed to ascertain how they may be used with the best effect.

*Will teacher-generated assessments be used?* A chart is included (see Figure 7) that lists and discusses briefly some of the advantages and disadvantages of teacher-generated assessments and can be used to initiate a discussion on this topic. There are subject areas and grade levels for which there are few, if any, published assessments, much less ones that are of high quality; thus, teacher assessments are likely to be an option. If teacher-generated assessments will be approved for use in measuring student learning objectives, quality control measures might be considered, such as professional development opportunities for teachers and principals on assessment development and feedback or a juried process so that these assessments are not developed in isolation from the professional community.

*Should there be a process of evaluation and/or approval of assessments?* A final step is to establish a method of evaluating all available assessments and their effective use in measuring student learning objectives. Although educators tend to trust published assessments as being valid and reliable, not all are suitable for use in measuring student gain in a year. A chart with possible evaluation criteria is included in Figure 8.

The central task of assessment planning is to create a list of published assessments that are

pre-approved (imagine a pull-down menu of assessments) and a process whereby a teacher who chooses assessments not on the list or who needs to create an assessment can do so successfully. Another desired outcome of this work is the refinement of assessment tools and practices in the district so that they reflect research and best practices and work more effectively for teachers and students. Bringing good science and critical thought to bear on teaching, learning, and assessing is a worthy endeavor in its own right, even were there not teacher-developed objectives for compensation.

### Further Assessment Questions

*What is baseline data?* In order to make a considered decision about setting and measuring growth on objectives, a teacher and principal will want to look at all of the available data about students from the previous years along with assessments or pre-test data collected early in the year. In some districts, a formative assessment program may provide achievement data early in the year.

*What is a pre-test?* A pre-test is a different version of the summative assessment (to be given at the end of the year) that is administered early in the year before formal instruction begins. The pre-test should alert teachers to student needs. If most students perform well on this assessment, that is a clue that neither the objective nor the assessment will not be appropriate.

*What is the expected growth or gain for students?* Once an assessment(s) is selected, deciding what is a worthy target is one of several important decisions for the teacher and principal. Making this decision will likely go hand-in-hand with the selection of the assessment. After determining that an assessment or assessment(s) will constitute evidence of meeting the objective, the teacher will want to consider, using baseline data, what a growth target should be and predict how each student will approach the target. If this number is too low, or expectations are low, the overall goal of improving student learning cannot be achieved, but setting a high target and expecting 100% of the students to meet it denies some of the factors of real classrooms. Even though teachers should and do target all students in their instructional planning, some may

not reach the objective for reasons truly beyond the teacher's control. Some districts prefer to set minimums on growth targets, however.

The intention should be to measure growth or progress toward stated objectives, not necessarily to hit the mark on a fixed standard. The type and scale of the assessment will determine how growth targets are set and measured. Rubrics, normal curve equivalents, proficiency levels, indices are examples of assessment scales. Percentiles and stanines are not useful for comparisons for several reasons, and raw scores, unconverted to a formal or standardized system, are uninterpretable. Time spent thinking in advance about what an assessment actually measures, how it aligns, and what the top of the scale looks like (Is it high enough for the highest performers?) is time well-spent.

*Should multiple assessments be used? Will more than one assessment create a more reliable basis for extra-compensation? For example, suppose a mathematics teacher with an objective and a traditional paper and pencil assessment on problem solving includes several lab assessment tasks throughout the year where students use reasoning strategies to solve actual problems. These could be the bases of a rubric-evaluated math lab portfolio or a lab summative assessment included as part of the pre and post assessment. More than one assessment may increase the credibility of the outcome and/or enable the teacher to interpret findings with more certainty.*

When more than one measure is to be used, the teacher and principal will want to agree at the outset about what will constitute accomplishment of the objective—growth on both or all measures, growth on any of the measures, growth on an average of the assessments, or some kind of weighted formula.

## The Big Picture of Assessment

Developing accurate and reliable measurements is a concern of all scientific fields; those who study and develop assessments in the behavioral sciences also pursue improvements in methodologies. In recent years with better technology, new modals of organizing assessment data for analysis have emerged.

Methodologies, such as value-added, hierarchical linear modeling, etc., used to organize and draw conclusions from large numbers of data points, are adding to the repertoire of educational researchers. However, these methodologies rely on large numbers of students and data collected over time, two features that do not describe a typical yearlong classroom situation. Nonetheless, useful information about individual student growth history and trajectory may become available to teachers as systems implement these approaches.

A final word: The goal of analyzing district assessments and making the best recommendations for their proper use, given what is available and what can be provided in short order (like professional development on assessment) is to refine the knowledge and proper use of assessments. It is not to create assessment dilemmas that seem insurmountable. This type of initiative is in most ways about using teacher expertise, so over time, teachers themselves will work through many of thorny assessment issues and make recommendations for improvements. That said, it is still important to clear away as much bramble as possible so that teachers are not caught up unnecessarily in issues that can be cleared up with some thought and planning.

## Assessment Terminology

The Center for Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning (CAESL)<sup>14</sup> uses the following mnemonic for assessment criteria concepts from Jeanne Ormrod<sup>15</sup> in an assessment course for student teachers.

### RSVP

**Reliability** — the assessment yields trustworthy information.

**Standardization** — the assessment administration is the same for all students—content, tasks, instructions, time limits, constraints.

**Validity** — the assessment is appropriate for the intended use of its results.

**Practicality** — the assessment is inexpensive and can be quickly and easily administered and scored.







Other frequently used terms are shown in the following boxes.

<b>FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS</b>	<b>SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS</b>
Before and during instruction	After instruction
Identify misconceptions, intervene with individual student	Make final or summary determinations of student achievement
Use to plan or adjust lesson plans	Use to assign final grades, make accountability decisions

<b>QUANTITATIVE DATA</b>	<b>QUALITATIVE DATA</b> <sup>16</sup>
Norm-referenced/criterion-referenced tests	Interviews; focus groups
Demographic data; financial data	Surveys; questionnaires
Years of experience; hours of education	Observations; artifacts; portfolios

### **Teacher-Generated Assessments**

Even as the accountability movement has ramped up with more formative assessment and textbook publisher's curriculum-embedded assessments, it is likely that most student evaluations are still based on teacher-generated materials and assessments and that there currently exists a range of quality to be found in such assessments. It is important to consider the position that a district entering into objective-based compensation will take on the use of these assessment for compensation. There are advantages and disadvantages.

With planning and coaching, it is possible to capitalize on the advantages and overcome the disadvantages. For example, the principal and, perhaps, a learning community will be looking at the baseline and summative assessment with the teacher, so that there will be other sets of eyes. A window for classroom assessments can (and should be) established in the school calendar so that interruptions are controlled. Further, districts may take the option of defining an approval process for teacher-generated assessments and providing professional development, as needed, for quality assessment development. Objectives or no objectives, these are desirable practices.

Fig. 7 **Advantages and Disadvantages of Teacher Generated Assessments**

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Teachers know the intersection between students and the teaching content very well and can assess the curriculum better than general knowledge assessments.	The level of student performance can vary based on teacher pre-judgments about what students have learned.
Teacher-developed assessments overcome some of the timing problems associated with state and district assessments, such as when the assessment occurs and when the data become available for use, particularly as a post test.	Teacher-generated assessments may not be consistently administered (increasing or decreasing the amount of time for test completion), reducing their reliability.
Teacher-generated assessments may be part of a plan that includes multiple assessments.	Development of assessments may be an afterthought (done at the end of the teaching cycle rather than before) in the teaching-learning cycle.
Given a new purpose, teachers can improve their assessments. Evaluation of and feedback to teachers on their assessments is a good activity for professional learning communities.	While the school administration controls the schoolwide testing environment very well, they may be less cognizant of the effect of administrative interruptions on local classroom assessments.
Improving assessments will build the capacity of teachers and also impact their thinking about the curriculum and their teaching practices.	A teacher may use the same tests or questions from year to year so that the questions become part of the public domain.
It places the teacher in the role of the assessor as opposed to being the recipient of a faceless assessor.	The teacher may not have developed two forms of the assessment that are equated to use for baseline and summative assessment.

Fig. 8 **Evaluation Criteria for Assessments**

<b>Name of Assessment Criteria</b>  	
<b>Availability</b> Are there adequate copies for use in assessment windows and in close proximity to the user?	
<b>Reliability</b> Is there consistency of scores across raters, over time, or across different tasks or items that measure the same thing?	
<b>Validity</b> To what extent does the assessment measure what it is supposed to measure and to what extent are inferences and actions made on the basis of test scores appropriate and accurate?	
<b>Bias</b> Does the test place any students at a disadvantage because of gender, ethnicity, language, or disability?	
<b>Training</b> Do users require training in administering the assessment or as raters of the assessment?	
<b>Teacher Trust</b> Does the assessment have standing with teachers?	
<b>Student Impact</b> Does the assessment contribute to improving student learning?	
<b>Other</b>	

## Notes



# Identifying Principal Leadership Components

Setting and measuring objectives for compensation purposes and evaluating the evidence of attainment requires collaboration between teacher and principal. Thus, the principal will need to know as much about the process as the teacher—and will need to be particularly vigilant about the body of evidence that demonstrates that each teacher has accomplished what he or she intended and predicted. Many of the activities associated with the principal role will already be a part of some principals' repertoires; but even so, principals will find it necessary to think ahead about several leadership and management issues. As with the teachers, principals should participate in any district pilot of student learning objectives and be afforded an opportunity to give feedback that improves the use of student learning objectives for teacher extra compensation.

## **The Roles of the Principal**

"The quality of interaction between the building principal and each of his or her teachers is pivotal to the success of [the pilot]....Descriptions of principal processes—from both the teacher and principal perspectives—show that some principals are extremely thorough and assiduous in overseeing and supporting the objectives process. Concurrently, others practice a kind of benign neglect....Principals identify a lack of clarity and direction regarding their roles in teacher objective setting."

*Catalyst for Change (2004), CTAC*

Interactions between building principals and teachers may be sensitive in the piloting schools because teachers may feel more vulnerable. There is a time-honored practice in many American schoolrooms of keeping teaching secret, except for a few salutary visits from the principal, so when teachers enter into a process that creates a need to be more open and thoughtful about their teaching, they need clarity and support from people they can trust—the principal most of all.

In schools where there are active professional learning communities, teachers will be members of teams who interact and support one another. The principal may have already carved out a niche in these communities and have a base of quality interactions upon which to construct a role in overseeing teacher objective development and implementation. If principals are new to the school or have not been involved in professional learning communities in the school, good communication and relationship building will be in order.

### **Accurate Information and Consistent Process**

- Connect this new initiative to the overall improvement goals of the district and school, pointing out elements of the school plan that might be considered as content or context for a student learning objective.
- Ascertain that the entire school staff has the requisite information and parameters and understands the expectations, parameters, and process of the pilot, even though district staff may do the initial training. Staff other than teachers should also know the fundamentals of the pilot.
- Ensure that any co-administrators who are to provide part of the oversight of the pilot teachers or objectives are included in trainings. Routine sessions with the co-administrators in the interest of consistency and fairness in interactions with pilot teachers will be helpful.
- Lead the student learning objectives process through shared vision and values rather than excessive rules and procedures for teachers. Demonstrate where there may be overlap between principal activities that relate to student learning objectives and ones that relate to

formal teacher evaluation, but clarify that they are not the same. See the comparison of typical features of the two processes that follows on page 30 for this purpose and develop one for the district that is official and can be shared with teachers.

- Remind faculty and staff that a pilot is for learning and that they will have the opportunity to provide feedback and to shape the final recommendations about student learning objectives. It may also be a time of making mistakes and mid-course corrections, but these will contribute to learning as well.
- Seek more information, materials, assessments, and resources as they are requested or as a need becomes apparent.
- Establish credibility by modeling behaviors that are congruent with the vision of the district and goals of the pilot—a spirit of inquiry and learning, evidence-based decisions and actions, and accountability for student results.
- Set up a process, time slots, and a timeline so that all teachers have uninterrupted individual dialogues with the principal or co-administrator about their objectives and how they want to be supported. Establish consistent practices and procedures—a system of collecting teacher-provided material and artifacts of the process and keeping notes of visits and dialogues. Sometimes site administrators are re-assigned during the course of the year; transitions should be seamless for the teacher.
- Work out talking points, in collaboration with teachers, for parent communications about the pilot with a particular emphasis on helping parents understand that their youngsters are safe from untried practices.
- As always, listen and observe. Ask for help when needed.

### **Keeping the Record**

A record of teacher objectives and supporting materials, principal-teacher interactions, and evidence of attainment will need to be collected at the school site. Already principals maintain interim personnel records for teacher interactions, including evaluation, though final records may reside somewhere else in the district. Records for student learning objectives may be electronic or

hard copy, but in either case, someone will need to verify that there is a body of evidence that tells the teacher's story of accomplishment, along with timely communications that lead to earned bonuses. The student learning objective protocol/heuristic for the development of the objectives is the primary document around which all other activity will coalesce. If an intranet or web-based site is provided by the district to record the teacher objectives (as has been done in some districts), the principal should verify that the objectives of teachers from his or her school are complete and accurate.

An example of what a paper principal record sheet for each teacher might look like follows on page 29. An Excel or other spreadsheet form can also be developed for use by those who prefer an electronic format. There are other possibilities for collecting this information, but it should be consistent across schools and within schools.

*Inconsistencies in collecting information may lead, unintentionally, to unequal treatment of participants and certainly can lead to the appearance of unequal treatment.*

Several district systems have a stake in maintaining an accurate record, namely Human Resources, Data Processing, and Payroll. Some dialogue about with these departments about what will fill their needs and work within established timelines should occur prior to the finalization of the objective process and any forms that will be distributed to teachers.

### **Professional Development and Support for Teachers**

We have been making the case that setting and assessing two objectives is within the expertise of the classroom teachers, which we know to be true. However, principals will want all of their teachers to succeed at a high level, and most of us can always use a refresher. Working with the district designated project director and with other instructional resource staff, the principal will want to create a calendar that allows all teachers the opportunity to learn about the objective process at the beginning of the academic year; then as the planning sessions/dialogues with teachers take place, the principal can help teachers find

student data, professional development sessions, or support groups for designing and implementing their objectives.

### **Support Group for Principals**

Principals already have role (job alike) groups with which they meet throughout the year to discuss mutually interesting topics. As the initiative is getting underway, however, those principals in the first phases of the compensation initiative will benefit from some time together where they can discuss what they are seeing and work for consistency across schools in implementing student learning objectives. As a group, these principals can suggest topics to the district for professional development that they need, as well as any that seem to be emerging for teachers.

### **A Comparison of the SLO Process and the Performance Evaluation Process**

Some of the duties of providing leadership for the pilot may overlap with the performance evaluation tasks of principals, but it is critical that the two are not confused and that teachers understand the difference at the outset. Look at the following sample and then use the form on the next page to develop a comparison that represents the district.

Everyone is busy, so where there is overlap of activities, the discussion between the principal and the teacher should help both to clarify intentions and form a plan of action that makes sense for both, while still following any regulatory requirements.

### **Teacher Credential Continuing Education Requirements**

Teachers may be able to meet some of their requirements for continuing education with the objective process and collected evidence. Principals and districts will want to verify this fact and provide accurate information and support. Additionally, some of the National Certification requirements may parallel the student learning objective process. Accuracy and clarity about connections among these processes will be important.



Fig. 9A **Principal's Record/Notes of Objectives and Evidence**

<b>ELEMENTS/CRITERIA</b>	<b>CONFERENCE 1</b>	<b>CONFERENCE 2</b>	<b>OUTCOME</b>
<b>Objective One</b>			
<b>Objective Two</b>			
<b>Baseline Data</b>			
<b>Assessment(s)</b>			
<b>Professional development needed/provided</b>			
<b>Changes; corrections</b>			
<b>Observations; comments</b>			
<b>Summative Data</b>			
<b>Met or Unmet</b>			

Fig. 9B **Feature Analysis and Comparison of SLO and Performance Evaluation**

<b>FEATURE</b>	<b>EXTRA COMPENSATION</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE EVALUATION</b>
<b>Basic Unit of Reference</b>	Two teacher-developed objectives	State and local teacher standards
<b>Authority</b>	District pilot; professional action research	Board policy; teacher contract; state law
<b>Teacher and Principal Roles</b>	Teacher as planner and researcher; principal as colleague and supporter	Teacher as employee; principal as supervisor
<b>Teacher Options</b>	Teacher-defined objective following district protocol	Mandatory elements to be completed using prescribed timeline
<b>Process and Timeline</b>	Planning dialogue led by teacher at mutually agreed upon date	Conferences and observations conducted by principal according to policy timelines
<b>Classroom Observations</b>	Add to teacher formative information about students	Meet requirement to evaluate teaching
<b>Closing Process</b>	Teacher presents evidence of attainment; principal asks questions and discusses evidence and results	Principal presents written evaluation; teacher and principal sign off on the document
<b>Satisfactory Outcome</b>	Extra compensation award to teacher	Continued employment

Notes

# Engaging the Entire System

“A major initiative that focuses on improving student achievement—while concurrently exploring changes in the teacher compensation system—goes to the heart of the district mission and structure. In this context, a district can not achieve greater than usual results while using business-as-usual practices. Central departments, in particular, need to move beyond responding to requests and become active in reshaping their services to address issues and impediments [related to new program implementation]. This is not an easy course of action. All departments struggle with many pressures and deadlines. Additional tasks are not always welcome.”

*Catalyst for Change (2004), CTAC*

Initiating compensation reform through student learning objectives is not “tinkering around the edges,” as much school reform has been aptly termed. It engages the entire system sooner or later in the process, and sooner will mean that district departments have a chance to plan and to provide input into a new compensation initiative before it moves to the second phase and on to the rest of the district. There are many details for district departments to mull over, and there will be more decision points down the road, but some of the initial thinking and actions of central staff will be among the most important to the success of the initiative.

## **Rationale for Initial and Ongoing District Participation**

- Teachers and principals will observe the level of district engagement as a measure of the seriousness and staying power of new extra-compensation concept. Being an active supporter of the pilot means understanding the components, thinking how they interface with one’s own work, and speaking positively in public about the reform effort, even if there are personal reservations. District leaders are like celebrities—the paparazzi are out there listening for a sound bite.

- An initiative is about learning, not only for students, teachers, and principals, but for the system. Educators who are staffing the district office are often knowledgeable and experienced, so their observations, perceptions, and reflections can assist the schools that have stepped up to the plate to pilot a new compensation system and be able to influence the outcome in a constructive way.
- The district has the role of maintaining quality standards for students and teachers while schools are transitioning into objective-based compensation, but it also has the role of enabling the initiative—helping overcome impediments, thinking creatively about needed changes, and troubleshooting when needed.
- Parent and community communication need to be planned. This initiative is complex—linking instruction and compensation—requiring the use of several communication channels—web, school newsletter, parent nights, for example.

### **Getting into the Game and Staying**

How should district departments contribute? What tasks for district departments will emerge or change as the initiative moves forward?

### **Where in the World...?**

Objective development, assessment, and teaching all depend on student data. Teachers will make better predictions if they know all there is to know about their students at the beginning of the year. Chasing down special sets of data takes time away from the planning component of student learning objectives. Can you help teachers who need the following data or items in order to set objectives and make plans? Better yet, is it possible to pre-package some of this information so that teachers have it when they return for the new academic year?

### **The Information is Great, But...**

Even where data are available through the computer or web databases, there can be discouraging complications for teachers. Teachers who have not been using district web-based data may have lost their passwords and/or may need a refresher on using a database. Is there a classroom computer with the appropriate software? Has training on the software been provided? Can the teacher print

a document without lining up in the principal's office to use the printer?

Ascertaining with users that computer hardware and software are working and understandable and then providing any needed support in the form of training and troubleshooting connects the Data Management department with the successful outcome of the initiative. While more recently credentialed teachers may manage their own technology well, other users may require additional assistance—and it should not be humiliating to ask or arrange for it.

### **Student Learning Objectives and the District Agenda**

No one in the district or schools needs added duties or tasks, but the work on objectives impacts both teachers and students, the major clients of the school district. It has to be everyone's role to see that the impact is positive. It is easy to forget the significant role of district departments in student learning, that accountability for lack of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) any where in the district is shared by all, including district staff. Paying attention during the design and planning phase (as in having someone on the design team) means an opportunity to shape an initiative and contribute to its success.

For a district department leader, analyzing the components of the initiative, identifying ways the department can contribute to or advance it, and then communicating these ideas to departmental staff means that everyone can participate. It also validates the services of the department. For example, quality assessments are a significant component in this initiative. An ongoing search by the assessment department for what is best in the field or for new and better ways to use the available assessments will not only promote the pilot but improve the quality of evaluation at all levels of the district. A second example can be found in the need that the initiative generates for professional development. The professional department that probes the initiative to pull out instructional components to strengthen improves not only the initiative but contributes to overall teacher growth and expertise. Running a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) link on the district website is a communications strategy that benefits the pilot but also engages and informs those teachers not yet involved and the community at large.

Fig. 10 **Planning for District Involvement**

<b>DEPARTMENT OR FUNCTION</b>	<b>ANTE</b>	<b>STAYING IN THE GAME</b>
<b>Curriculum and Instruction</b>		
<b>Professional Development</b>		
<b>School Planning</b>		
<b>Special Education</b>		
<b>English Language Education</b>		
<b>Assessment and Accountability</b>		
<b>Data Systems</b>		
<b>Human Resources</b>		
<b>Finance/Payroll</b>		
<b>Program Evaluation</b>		
<b>Superintendent and Cabinet</b>		

Fig. 11 **Location and Access to Student Information and Data**

<b>DATA SET</b>	<b>LOCATION/CONTACT INFORMATION</b>
<b>Student achievement data for three years</b>	
<b>Student demographic data</b>	
<b>Student attendance data</b>	
<b>Parent access information</b>	
<b>Student language surveys and assessments</b>	
<b>Student IEPs</b>	
<b>School and district goals and objectives</b>	
<b>Grades</b>	
<b>Program enrollments (after-school, gifted, etc.)</b>	
<b>Curriculum materials, texts, assessments, answer sheets</b>	

# VIII TOPIC

## Implementing Student Learning Objectives

“A landscape designer imagines and creates a design for a beautiful garden, but it is workers with shovels, wheelbarrows, nursery plants, and other materials and equipment who implement the design. School planning staff are often playing both roles—designer and worker. No matter how perfect the plan, it will not implement itself.”

*Guide for Standard Bearer Schools (2007), CTAC*

Implementation is hard work, much harder even than planning. While planning involves creative and critical thinking, implementing becomes the thoughtful practice of regular tasks and routines, ongoing monitoring, adjusting, and correcting as needed. Once the design of the initiative is set, fidelity to the design becomes important. Any changes and adjustments must be agreed upon by all school participants so as to maintain consistency across schools.

The implementation of a compensation initiative begins with a demonstration phase, or pilot, with a smaller number of schools who are willing to pioneer the student learning objective terrain. The term “pilot” may be considered trite in educational settings, and in many cases, does not denote a study or evaluation, just the start-up year of a new program, text, etc. However, a compensation initiative requires a formalized demonstration study or pilot with at least the following features:

- Preliminary data collected through interviews and surveys that document the issues and concerns of participants and other stakeholders and their recommendations and preferences.
- Annual follow-up interviews and surveys with participants and stakeholders in order to evaluate the effectiveness of components of the initiatives along with any recommendations for revisions and corrections.
- Collection and analyses of student achievement data and demographic data from three years prior to the start-up year and continuing annually; selection of similar schools for comparisons of student growth.



- A focus on evaluating the core design, in this case the protocol and parameters for the student learning objective, and the impact on teaching and learning.
- An emphasis on learning, action research, and recognition of teacher contributions to improving student learning.
- A transparent process and study of the initiative, with publication of results and revisions to the initiative.

## Implementation Planning and Calendaring

School and district calendars are established well in advance of each school year, and every district function is operating in relation to a cycle of events, some of which are regulatory or mandatory from the state or which have been worked out by multi-district agencies, like athletic leagues. So developing a calendar of events for the pilot is about collecting these calendars and working within the prescribed parameters.

The district may have a preferred planning document format, and if so, that is the one to use for developing the implementation plan for this initiative. A sample planning document can be found in Figure 11. (Using spreadsheet software is preferable as it enables those who are managing the process to sort by date, event, or person responsible.) Working from the earliest starting date (when principals return for the new academic year or before they leave for the year?) to the date when teachers will receive their extra compensation in their paychecks, insert dates for the following:

- Principal initial workshop
- Principal monthly working group meetings
- District or central administration working group meetings
- Periodic formal communications on the status of the initiative
- Teacher initial workshop
- Teacher professional development (distinguish between essential and voluntary)
- The window for teacher development of objectives
- The window for teacher-principal initial conferences
- The last date for entry of the objective on the website
- The window for midyear adjustments agreed upon by the teacher and principal
- The last date for entering adjustments

- The window for confidential interviews and surveys of teachers
- The window for summative assessment and collection of evidence
- The window for teacher-principal final conferences
- The last date for entering met/not met status on the website
- The compiled data due to payroll
- The anticipated date when extra compensation is distributed

Other activities and events, particularly for the project staff and for some department heads will likely wrap around these events and may include preparation of materials and agendas, school visits, and development of communications to various groups.

For principals who also evaluate teachers on another cycle, it helps that the plan does not conflict or create deadlines that cannot possibly be met. Watching for closing of grading periods, assessment windows, including advanced placement, and holidays should minimize the need for multi-tasking.

## Plan for the Rollout of the Pilot

As already noted, consistency of information, process, and communications is highly desirable. Planning three initial agendas together increases the likelihood that all parties learn the basics. Agenda planning formats follow in Figures 12 and 13.



Even though, initial work will be focused on the opening year and the first phase schools, planning needs always to consider the time “when we go to scale.” First of all, there is little purpose in beginning policies and practices that cannot be sustained when all teachers become eligible to write objectives and earn extra compensation. Secondly, planning ahead to the next phase of schools means that when the time rolls around to engage this group, the project will be ready to maintain support to the first phase of schools and orient the second phase of schools. Penciling into the calendar regular intervals to update the next phase of schools will help build anticipation and provide consistent and accurate communications.

Each phase of the pilot should be implemented with as much effort and heart as the first phase. In some ways, successive phases will be advantaged by learnings from the first phase of schools; in other ways, teachers in successive phase, may feel the loss of support as the work becomes routine.





Fig. 12 **Comparison of Agenda Items for Student Learning Objectives Orientations**

<b>Audience Agenda Topic</b>  	<b>Principals Staff</b>	<b>Start-up Schools</b>
<b>Rationale for Objective-Based Compensation</b>		
<b>Process/Parameters for Objectives</b>		
<b>SLO Worksheet for Planning and Recording</b>		
<b>Assessment Options</b>		
<b>Access to Student Achievement Data</b>		
<b>Teacher-Developed Assessments</b>		
<b>Objective Quality Rubric</b>		

	<b>SLO Orientation</b>	<b>Central</b>

Fig. 13 **Three Orientation Agendas**

<b>PRINCIPAL AGENDA (AN OVERVIEW FOR PRINCIPALS)</b>	<b>FACULTY INVITATIONAL AGENDA (FOR USE DURING SCHOOLS SELECTION)</b>

	<b>TEACHER ORIENTATION TO SLO PROCESS (AN OVERVIEW FOR TEACHERS)</b>

## Endnotes

### Topic I

- <sup>1</sup>“Good Teaching Matters: How Well-Qualified Teachers Can Close The Gap,” (1998), *Thinking K-16*, Education Trust, 3 (2).
- <sup>2</sup>“Teaching Teachers: Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement,” (2005), *Research Points: Essential Information for Education Policy*, American Educational Research Association, 3(1).
- <sup>3</sup>“Performance-Pay for Teachers: Designing a System Students Deserve,” (2007), Teacher Solutions, Center for Teacher Quality @ <http://www.teachingquality.org>.
- <sup>4</sup>Wallis, C. (2008). How to Make Great Teachers, Time (February 13, 2008), V 171, no 8, 28-34.
- <sup>5</sup>*Pathway to Results: Pay for Performance in Denver (2001) and Catalyst for Change: Pay for Performance in Denver.* (2004). Community Training and Assistance Center: Boston.

### Topic II

- <sup>6</sup>Locke, E.A. and Latham, G.P. (2002), Building a Practically Useful Theory of Goal Setting and Task Motivation: A 35-year Odyssey, *American Psychologist* (September 2002), 706.

### Topic III

- <sup>7</sup>*Catalyst for Change: Pay for Performance in Denver* (2004), Community Training and Assistance Center: Boston, MA, 42.
- <sup>8</sup>Denver Public Schools/Denver Classroom Teachers Association, see <http://www.dpsk12.org>.

- <sup>9</sup>Adapted with thanks to Denver Public Schools/Denver Classroom Teachers Association

- <sup>10</sup>*Catalyst for Change: Pay for Performance in Denver* (2004), Boston, MA: Community Training and Assistance Center, 48.
- <sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 40. This rubric was developed by CTAC for the purpose of evaluating objectives for a research study. Rubrics/checklists developed by the Denver Design Team for use in training identify additional and more elaborated criteria.

### Topic IV

- <sup>12</sup>G. Wiggins & J. McTighe (2005), *Understanding by Design*, Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 14. Using this approach to planning will also help teachers address the issue of rigor.
- <sup>13</sup>Pellegrino, J. W., Chudowsky, N., & Glaser, R., Ed (2001), *Knowing What Students Know: The Science and Design of Educational Assessment*, Washington, DC: National Academy Press. Also at <http://www.nap.edu>.
- <sup>14</sup><http://www.caesl.org>
- <sup>15</sup>Ormrod, J.E. (2000) Assessing Student Learning, *Educational Psychology: Developing Learning* (3rd ed.), 632-683. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- <sup>16</sup>Some qualitative data are analyzed quantitatively, such as surveys.







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