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ABSTRACT

Distinctions between levels of professional teaching skills are made in this paper, which illustrates the interdependent relationships among teaching, learning, and the effects upon teacher compensation. Performance pay for teachers is discussed, specifically career ladders that call for the evaluation of teaching performance as a factor in compensation, incentives, and career advancement. Evaluation criteria and methods are examined in terms of the differentiation between proficiency levels. Examples of teacher assessment criteria and five expertise levels on two selected criteria from the comprehensive teacher evaluation system are demonstrated. The interdependency between student learning and teacher skill is illustrated and the compensation effects of each are described. (LMI)

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**Teacher Performance Pay: Career Ladders In Practice  
(Differentiating Levels of Teacher Skill)**

by

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PRESENTATION

TO

STATEWIDE DIRECTOR'S CONFERENCE  
ON RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS

SPONSORED BY:  
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Convention Center  
Des Moines, Iowa  
January 9, 1990

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## ABSTRACT

This paper draws distinctions between levels of professional skill of teachers, and supports the interdependent relationship between teaching and learning and effects upon compensation accordingly.

Performance pay for teachers is discussed, and the criteria and methodology for assessment of teaching in performance compensation systems are described and discussed, including differentiation among levels of proficiency on given areas of teaching behavior.

Examples of teacher assessment criteria are presented, and five different levels of expertise or teacher proficiency are demonstrated on two selected criteria from the comprehensive teacher assessment system.

The interdependency between student learning and teacher skill is delineated and illustrations of the compensation effects of each are described.

This paper was presented by Dr. William K. Poston Jr., Associate Professor of Educational Administration, School of Education, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa. The paper was presented to the Iowa Department of Education Director's Conference upon invitation of the Department, and was presented at the Convention Center in Des Moines, Iowa on Tuesday, January 9, 1989.

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## 1. Introduction.

This presentation is about teacher pay based on teacher performance. Teacher performance pay is not new, but current day forms of compensating teachers based on how well they deliver teaching and learning are relatively new, controversial, and powerfully supported in many states in the U.S.

Iowa's Phase III of the Education Excellence Act (amended 1989) calls for components which pay teachers for superior performance. This paper should provide an illustration of one system of teacher performance pay, and generate interest in its concept and characteristics.

## 2. Rationale For Performance Pay

Paying teachers with a single salary schedule for university credits and years of longevity just doesn't have the credibility it used to have.

Political pressure for accountability, and pressure for improved results, demanded the introduction of demonstrated teacher performance as a pre-condition for improving teacher pay. Obviously, something had to happen.

In other states, teacher performance is a condition of teacher pay, including Arizona, Tennessee, North Carolina, Florida, Wisconsin, Utah, et. al., and now Iowa.

In Iowa, the Education Excellence Act, Phase III, was amended last year in House File 535 to demand a teacher performance component before increased funding could be made available to districts under Phase III of the state's school funding formula.

The new Phase III requires a performance-based pay plan, which as it says, "shall provide for salary increases for teachers who take action to achieve superior performance...." Measurement is not left to chance, and the law requires a method used to determine superior performance.

Perhaps the motivation for teacher performance pay pressure is political, but it seems real, it seems to have powerful support from lay and political leaders alike, and it looks like it is here to stay.

One of the ways teacher performance is compensated is through career ladder programs and plans. Most career ladder plans call for the evaluation of teaching performance as a factor in compensation, incentives, or career advancement.

Career ladders are thought to be designed to provide incentives and motivation for skilled and proficient teachers to stay in the profession. The Wall Street Journal (5-8-87), cited reasons and frequency of reason in a study of teacher drop-outs, and noted that about 60% of the teacher drop-outs mentioned inadequate, low salary as the reason. Hardly any of us would disagree that teachers as a group are underpaid, but in recent years, fewer and fewer of us seem willing to defend paying teachers more without regard to skill, capability, and success at delivering learning.

Despite such economic motives, there are other reasons for career ladders, including the motive to get better teaching and improved learning as we shall see.

### 3. Arizona's Experience

Phase III is going to (and has already started to) change the way we look at teaching. Fortunately, some experience from which we can learn, may be in Arizona's career ladder program.

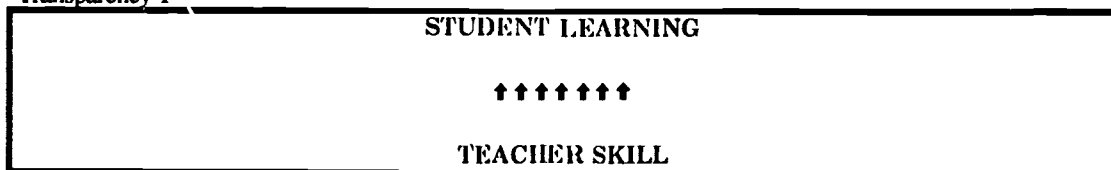
The Kyrene School District in Phoenix, one of 12 school districts in the state who used teacher performance and proficiency in design and delivery of their salary structures, examples of career ladder compensation has successfully been in practice for several years.

The system worked upon some basic assumptions, and followed certain procedures. Such are the subjects of this presentation.

### 4. Assumption

Teacher performance pay systems aren't worth much if the performance doesn't have a link to learning. The prime assumption is that learning is inextricably **DEPENDENT** upon teaching. In other words, what teachers do has a profound effect upon how well students learn.

#### Transparency 1

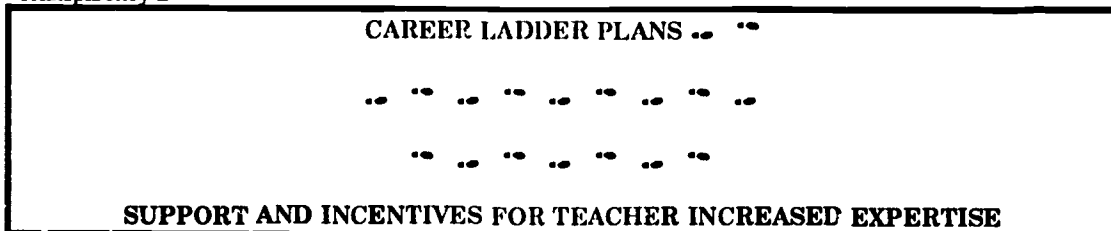


The better teachers teach, the more effectively students learn.

The Career Ladder System begins with this premise. The next premise is that the organization must organize to help the teacher become better at what he/she does.

### 5. Help for teachers' Growth

#### Transparency 2



In the career ladder plan, teachers are given support and incentives for increasing their expertise, proficiency, and level of performance. In this system, beliefs were held in the values of:

- a. Collegial efforts by professional staff
- b. Professional growth and development
- c. Impact of professional staff on learning

6. Plan Includes All Teachers:

Transparency 3

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PERFORMANCE-BASED TEACHER COMPENSATION PLANS:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. INCLUSIONARY (GROWTH ORIENTED AND ATTAINABLE BY ALL)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. EXCLUSIONARY (MERIT ORIENTED AND ATTAINABLE BY FEW)</b></p>
--

Career Ladder Plans tried to avoid one of the major faux pas of Merit Pay Systems. In Career Ladders, EVERY teacher who acquires and demonstrates proficiency and skill gets the reward, incentive, or pay.

In other words, this plan is a career DEVELOPMENT plan, in which a teacher can grow, develop, improve, and receive pay and incentives accordingly. Support and incentives are provided for teachers to develop increased and higher levels of expertise while remaining in the classroom.

Transparency 4

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>KYRENE CAREER LADDER PLAN:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">● <b>INCREASED TEACHER EXPERTISE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">● <b>IMPROVED STUDENT LEARNING</b></p>
--

Of course incumbent in such a system is a firm belief in our first assumption. As teachers get better at what they do, students learn more. As you will soon see, we also turn that around as an assessment, as students learn more, we have evidence that the teacher is getting better at what they do.

7. The Ladder Construction

Given that proficiency can be differentiated into levels, the career ladder looks more like a stairway than a ladder. Each step is a higher level of demonstrated skill, and a correspondingly higher level of pay.

The levels of the ladder have corresponding levels of compensation. Shown here is a recent salary schedule (1988-89):

Transparency 5

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CAREER LADDER LEVELS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">★ PROFESSIONAL LEVEL IV</p> <p style="text-align: center;">★ PROFESSIONAL LEVEL III</p> <p style="text-align: center;">★ PROFESSIONAL LEVEL II</p> <p style="text-align: center;">★ PROFESSIONAL LEVEL I</p> <p style="text-align: center;">★ RESIDENCY LEVEL</p>
---

The schedule only provides three levels of training: BA, MA, MA30. As you can see, years of experience have little or no meaning, and are not a part of the schedule. Initial placement does allow credit for up to 5 years of experience, but it basically only allows placement no higher than professional level 1.

Not shown on the salary schedule are the additional bonuses, incentives, awards, etc. which augment the base schedule .

8. Advancement on the Ladder:

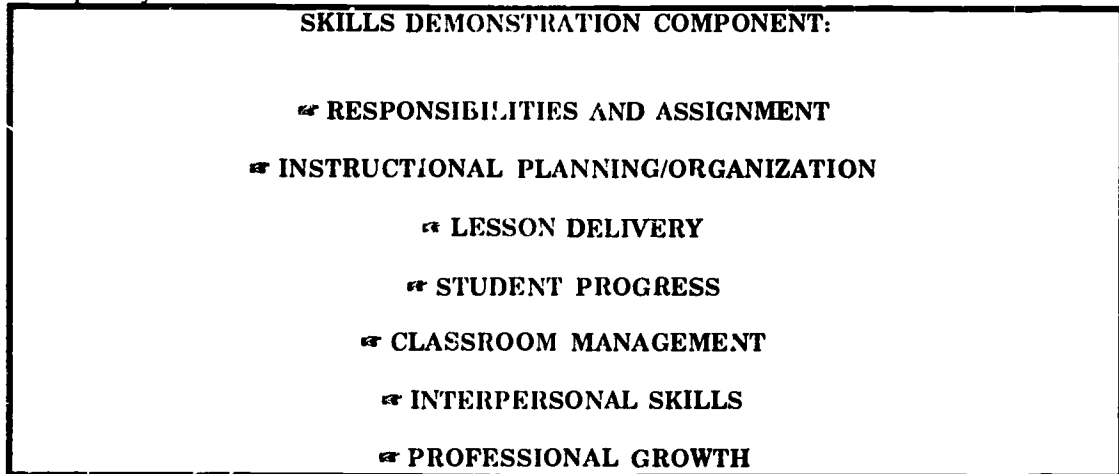
Transparency 6

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MOVEMENT ON THE CAREER LADDER</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">☞ SKILLS DEMONSTRATION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">☞ STUDENT PROGRESS DEMONSTRATION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">☞ PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLAN</p> <p style="text-align: center;">☞ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</p>
---

Teachers move on the Career ladder based on evaluation which involves four major areas, including demonstration of skills, student progress, professional growth, and professional development

Let's take these areas one at a time and look at them more closely:

Transparency 7



**A. Skills Demonstration**

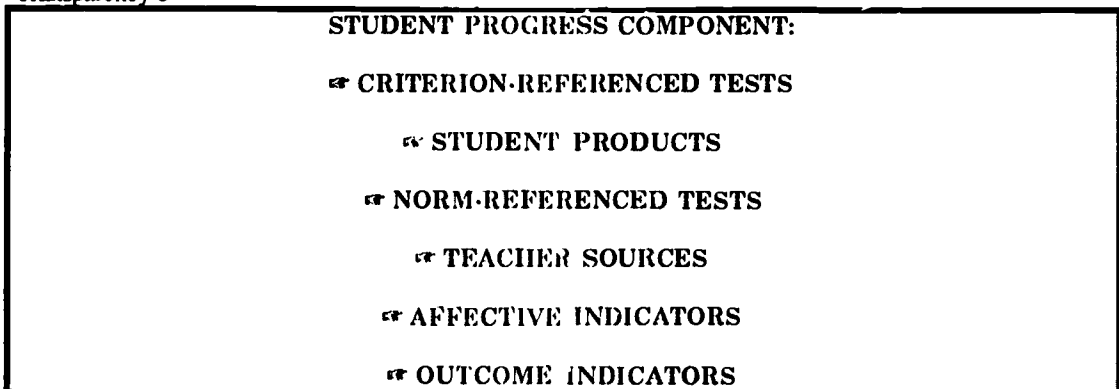
Criteria for skills demonstration include responsibilities and assignment, planning and organization, lesson delivery, student progress, classroom management, interpersonal skills, and professional growth.

Teachers are assessed on all basic skills (residency level) regardless of current career ladder level. They are also assessed on the advanced level skills for the step they are on as well as all previous levels. Examples of skill differences by level will be discussed later in this presentation. The process is ongoing, formal, and year-long.

Skills demonstration is primarily validated with qualified evaluators. Qualified evaluators are certified as qualified with a performance based system. The skills of evaluation with high proficiency in reliability and validity must be demonstrated and validated prior to qualification. Without qualification, the evaluator may not be used in skills demonstration assessment.

**B. Student Progress Demonstration**

Transparency 8



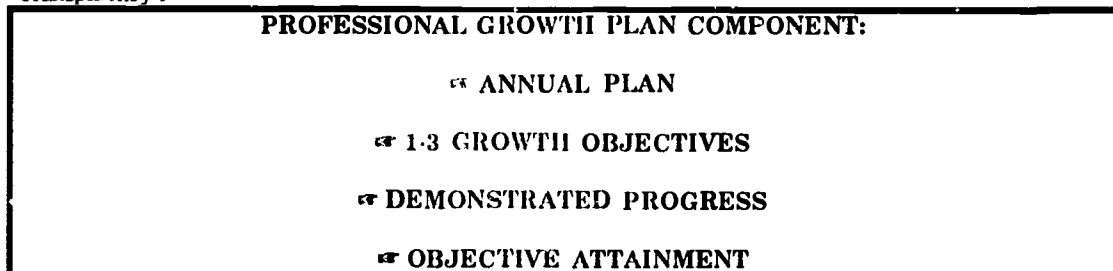
Student progress is a critical piece of the system, and each teacher is assessed on his/her demonstration of appropriate student progress. Data sources are shown. Outcome indicators are flexible, but are established by each teacher and supervisor early in the evaluation cycle.



A central consideration in this component of student progress is the "results" orientation of the career ladder system. The determination of quality in teaching is linked to the quality of learning output, with appropriate measurement. This component adds a high level of credibility to the pay-for-performance program.

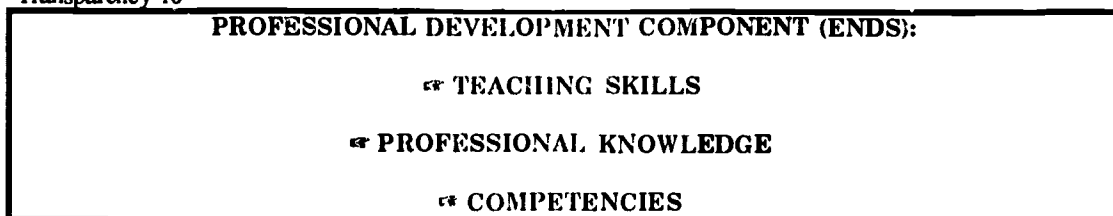
### C. Professional Growth

#### Transparency 9



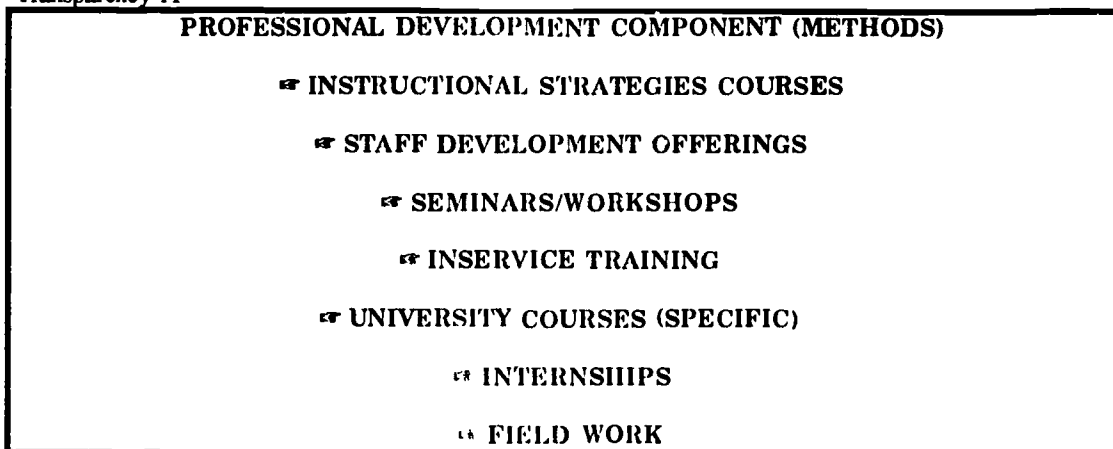
Professional growth is the foundation of the career ladder program. As the teacher engages in training, skill development occurs, and improved instruction results. Training is crucial to professional advancement. With about 385 teachers, our annual staff development budget was about \$200,000, or about \$520 per teacher per year. Anything less would have been injurious to the professional growth cycle. Let's explore professional development further.

#### Transparency 10



As seen from transparency 10, professional development was comprised of skills, knowledges, and competencies, which were provided through the methods illustrated in transparency 11.

#### Transparency 11



It's important to note that training was skill-specific for individual teachers. In other words, we were careful not to "shotgun" training or have everyone take the same training activities. Rather, the design was to provide diagnosis of individual teacher skill deficiencies and strengths and provide an individually prescribed training program for the teacher, which was best suited to his/her individual needs.

#### 10. Differentiating Teaching Skills

The biggest criticism we heard in implementing the career ladder program was, "How can you measure the quality of teaching, really?"

Unquestionably, it is not easy, but it is possible to do it, and with as much if not greater precision than measurement in the sciences. David Berliner in recent work, and Nate Gage in the book, *The Scientific Basis for the Art of Teaching*, present convincing argument that teaching is measurable with appropriate tools and criteria. (For more on this, read *The New Handbook of Teacher Evaluation*, by Jason Millman and Linda Darling-Hammond (1990).

Our career ladder teacher evaluation system used a highly sophisticated system of criteria, involving some 150 or so discrete factors in the analysis of teacher behavior.

The following is to briefly show examples of the hierarchical nature of just two subskill areas selected from the system:

#### Transparency 12

### SKILLS DEMONSTRATION LEVELS:

(EXAMPLE)

#### 2. INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION

##### A. INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING.

The first area is that of instructional planning and organization.

Under instructional planning, the career ladder had dozens of skill areas and subskills. Looking at instructional plan rationale, note the escalation of complexity, starting from the simplest, the residency level:

#### Transparency 13

### 2. INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION

(RESIDENCY LEVEL)

**2.01: INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS ARE BASED ON DIAGNOSTIC DATA GATHERED  
PRIMARILY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR OR SEMESTER**

At the residency level, teachers plan for instruction using broad-based diagnostic data gathered at the beginning of the year or semester. For example, in mathematics, a simple pretest at the beginning of the year would enable the teacher to properly group the students for specific instruction, and would prevent uniform doses of the same instruction to all students regardless of instructional level.

Transparency 14

**INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION  
(PROFESSIONAL LEVEL I)**

**2.02: INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS ARE BASED ON DIAGNOSTIC DATA GATHERED PRIMARILY FROM FORMAL ASSESSMENT MEASURES (SUCH AS DISTRICT TESTS, PUBLISHED PRE-TESTS, OR PLACEMENT TESTS)**

Proceeding up the ladder, a teacher on professional level I would have more complicated and skilled planning practice.

At professional level I, the teacher utilizes more sophisticated assessment measures, such as those which are commercially available, and have field tested validity.

Transparency 15

**INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION  
(PROFESSIONAL LEVEL II)**

**2.05: INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS ARE BASED ON DIAGNOSTIC DATA GATHERED FROM FORMAL ASSESSMENT MEASURES INCLUDING SOME DESIGNED BY THE TEACHER WHICH ARE BASED ON THE DISTRICT COURSE OF STUDY LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

At professional level II, the teacher becomes more skilled at planning:

On level II, the teacher begins to introduce what sometimes is called "precision teaching," which begins to connect the diagnostic data to the learning objectives of the curriculum or district course of study.

Transparency 16

**INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION  
(PROFESSIONAL LEVEL III)**

**2.06: INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS ARE BASED ON DIAGNOSTIC DATA GATHERED FROM MANY SOURCES INCLUDING SCHOOL RECORDS AND DATA GATHERED BY OTHER SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

At professional level III, the teacher begins to expand the diagnostic data collection process beyond the course of study, and synthesizes data from more and more sources, including other professional staff and other school resources:

Transparency 17

**INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION  
(PROFESSIONAL LEVEL IV)**

**2.41 DEVELOPS PLANS FOR INSTRUCTION THAT REFLECT CONSIDERATION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AMONG LEARNERS BY INCLUDING REMEDIAL AND/OR ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES BASED ON DIAGNOSIS OR DIFFERENTIATED ASSIGNMENTS**

At professional level IV, planning becomes as complex, comprehensive, and individualized as possible. The teacher is now able to plan differential assignments, classroom activities, and remediation/enrichment for individual students with unique or differential instructional needs.

## B LESSON DELIVERY

Another criterion of teaching evaluation might help illustrate the hierarchy of teaching skills through the professional levels. Lesson delivery might be a good area to select, since here in Iowa I've noticed considerable interest and background with the Madeline Hunter program, which focuses strongly on lesson delivery, and specifically on retention of learning through practice.

### Transparency 18

#### **3. EFFECTIVE LESSON DELIVERY**

(RESIDENCY LEVEL)

#### **3.09: FACILITATES RETENTION OF LEARNING BY GUIDING GROUP PRACTICE FOR INITIAL PRACTICE SESSIONS**

In the career ladder system, effective lesson delivery contains many components, but look at one sub-criterion focused upon retention of learning.

At the residency level, the teacher uses group practice in lesson delivery, primarily with groups in initial sessions.

### Transparency 19

#### **3. EFFECTIVE LESSON DELIVERY**

(PROFESSIONAL LEVEL I)

#### **3.19: FACILITATES RETENTION OF LEARNING BY MONITORING RESPONSES DURING PRACTICE AND GIVING GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL FEEDBACK**

At Professional Level I, the teacher begins to monitor responses during practice, and gives group feedback and some individual feedback on performance.

### Transparency 20

#### **3. EFFECTIVE LESSON DELIVERY**

(PROFESSIONAL LEVEL II)

#### **3.25: FACILITATES RETENTION OF LEARNING BY REVIEWING PREREQUISITE CONCEPTS AND SKILLS PRIOR TO NEW LEARNING AND RETEACHING IF NEEDED**

At Professional Level II, the teacher becomes more proficient at reviewing prerequisite concepts prior to new learning, and begins to use reteaching as necessary.

### Transparency 21

#### **3. EFFECTIVE LESSON DELIVERY**

(PROFESSIONAL LEVEL III)

#### **3.36: FACILITATES RETENTION OF LEARNING BY SCHEDULING MASSED PRACTICE FOR NEW LEARNING AND DISTRIBUTED PRACTICE FOR PRIOR LEARNING**

At Professional Level III, the teacher uses more complex teaching skills and begins to use both masses practice for new learning and schedules distributed practice for prior learning

Transparency 22

**3. EFFECTIVE LESSON DELIVERY**

**(PROFESSIONAL LEVEL IV)**

**3.37 FACILITATES RETENTION OF LEARNING BY DIFFERENTIATING INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE ASSIGNMENTS AS NEEDED**

At Professional Level IV, the teacher gets more highly analytical and proficient with even better use of practice by implementing the very difficult process of differentiating practice for individual students for individual needs.

**C. Differential Teacher Skill Levels.**

Two different skill areas involved in the levels of the career ladder have been illustrated with examples of differential skill proficiency and difficulty. The hierarchy of complexity in teaching skill is evident, providing the basis for differentiated compensation.

**11. CONCLUSION**

To summarize this presentation briefly, some final thoughts center on the following aspects of career ladder teacher pay systems to this point:

1. Reasons for pay systems based on teacher performance
2. What Career Ladders have to offer Phase III (teacher performance pay) planners
3. Key assumption: Student Learning is dependent upon teaching proficiency
4. The importance of staff development and training in improving teaching proficiency
5. The difference between inclusionary and exclusionary teacher performance pay systems
6. How career ladders are structured
7. What it takes to advance on a career ladder including demonstration of teaching skill, student progress, professional growth, and professional development
8. How teaching evaluation criteria differentiate by levels of proficiency with some examples

The final point is just to share some lessons learned over the years about what it takes to have a successful career ladder. Not that inclusion of these points will guarantee a successful career ladder, but excluding these practices will assuredly obstruct the likelihood of success with a career ladder teacher performance pay system.

Critical considerations for success of career ladders or any teacher performance pay system are shown on the last transparency.

**CAREER LADDER:  
TEACHER PERFORMANCE PAY**

**CONSIDERATIONS**

**LONG TERM PLAN/COMMITMENT  
(ADEQUATE FUNDING)**

**INCENTIVES PUBLIC AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL TEACHERS**

**OBJECTIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND VALID INSTRUMENTATION**

**STUDENT LEARNING MEASURED AND USED IN INCENTIVE DECISIONS**

**STAFF PARTICIPATION IN POLICY MAKING AND PLANNING**

A. **Adequate Funding.** Unless funding is adequate, teachers will not be able to receive the incentive at the time the skill is demonstrated. If a teacher demonstrates proficiency at Professional Level IV, but is held to a salary level lower than that, you can see the folly in such a system. Rewards must follow performance. If they don't, the system is a sham.

B. **Public and Accessible.** The criteria must be public, accessible by all, and no hidden agendas must be anywhere near the program. Objective and accurate integrity must be prevalent throughout. If there is any hint of favoritism or disparity in criteria, the system will die as it should.

C. **Objective Assessment.** Reliable, valid, and research-based measurement tools must be used. The 7 step lesson plan, ala Hunter type (mutations), won't hack it. Teacher evaluation must be as scientific and empirical and comprehensive as we know how to make it.

D. **Student Progress.** The final product, student learning, cannot be left out in the evaluation system. If it is, then we are simply dealing with the process and the inputs, and who knows what the real outcomes are? Learning is our product, and we must show we can deliver it.

E. **Staff Participation.** No system can succeed if the people who have to make it work aren't a part of its governance. Witness Eastern Europe in contemporary terms, and you can see that some systems can survive a long time, but in time they will fail if the people governed aren't an important part of the governance.

That concludes this presentation.