

Home > Resources > School Design > Learning Structures

## Connecting Compensation and Evaluation to Build Professional Development

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At Maryknoll School in Honolulu, Hawaii, a Coalition of Essential Schools affiliate since 1995, teachers and administrators are continually working on the issue of building capacity for leadership. This has led to implementation of an alternative to the traditional salary scale. Our Compensation Committee, made up of teachers, administrators, and school board members, is charged with all matters pertaining to compensation, and has diligently worked for some time now to design a vehicle that is heavily weighted toward the development of teacher leaders and professional growth. Today, as a result of this vehicle, more teachers are reflecting, self-evaluating, and taking responsibility for their own professional growth and learning.

More than ten years ago, the school began an investigation into both evaluation practices and a more equitable means of compensating teachers. The school wanted to clarify expectations and further define what a Maryknoll teacher should know and be, in accordance with best practices and the Common Principles. Although most teachers were aware of the direction the committee and school board were headed, at that time, no one on the committee wanted to use the words "merit pay," which evoked a sense of compensation plans used more often in the corporate world. In the educational arena, "merit pay" is sometimes viewed as divisive. As well, at that time, Maryknoll was already undergoing significant change as the result of the decision to affiliate with the Coalition, so we postponed serious contemplation of the idea. A decade later, after an exhaustive examination of the pros and cons, a plan was devised and implemented in the 2006-2007 school year to compensate teachers differently.

As the committee began its deliberations, teacher attrition was our primary problem. Research shows very clearly that many young teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching. Maryknoll invests significant dollars in professional development for teachers, and naturally, has an interest in retaining them. In addition to attrition, some teachers were unhappy because they did not believe they were being rewarded for what they do. This perceived inequity resulted in occasional lack of motivation and commitment, manifested by teachers not taking personal responsibility for their own professional growth and development. The traditional salary scale was identified as both cause and solution. This is ironic because the traditional teacher salary scale originally came about to address the issues of objectivity and equity, as well as to eliminate competition between teachers for more pay, and to give teachers greater autonomy. This traditional scale, which has hung around for years because of its familiarity and predictability, has instead fostered professional boredom in more than a few cases.

The committee quickly discovered all of the arguments against "merit pay." How can you quantify teaching results? How can you invest in a system that will turn colleagues against one another, when they are supposed to be collaborating? How can you avoid favoritism, which exists in every school? How can you possibly design an equitable compensation plan when there has been no track record of fair and consistent evaluation in our school? Despite these challenges, this group of adventurous school leaders believed that a compensation system based on merit could work if teachers created the system, if merit pay were not seen as a way to reduce salaries, and if a majority of teachers earned it. This was especially important because if you ask teachers, the majority of them will say they want to continue to grow and learn.

So, what are the basics of this plan? First, as several schools and districts have done elsewhere, a base compensation is determined upon the basis of experience and degrees (remember, these criteria are familiar to teachers). Then, the performance portion is awarded on top of the base. Early on, the committee determined that it wanted three tiers or levels of teachers in order to promote professional growth and build capacity, and that to do so, it must adhere to strict evaluation procedures.

The plan is now being phased in. In the first year of implementation (2006-2007), participation was voluntary with about half of the teachers committing to this new method. In the second year, which we are midway through, an additional third of those remaining is expected to come on board. Eventually, everyone will be compensated using this method, and full implementation is likely to occur well before the projected 2013, but the school has used long-range planning to assist in defeating resistance to change, which was expected and has occurred in a few instances.

The school determined what it wanted a Maryknoll teacher to know and to be through a collaborative process of brainstorming and planning backward, essentially the same process used in developing integrated curriculum for our students. Once the evaluation sub-committee of the Compensation Committee determined this, the way was clear to design an evaluation vehicle that would promote important ideas to improve both teaching and learning at the school. The committee decided that there would be three groups of teachers, based on teacher career stages, and called them the beginning teacher, the professional teacher, and the educational leader, and also planned to use the domains that Charlotte Danielson defined in *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Practice* and elaborated upon in *Teacher Leadership that Strengthens Professional Practice*. Danielson's domains include classroom environment, planning and curriculum instruction, leadership and professional development, and philosophy. In the first year of implementation, we used a framework loosely based on Danielson's work that was tailored to the specific needs of the school. However, the rubric did not clearly specify what it meant to "meet expectations," and offered the teacher only the ability to meet or not meet expectations. Based upon teacher comments and suggestions for change, this was adjusted in the 2007-2008 school year to reflect those areas where a teacher might excel.

The criteria now include important teacher behaviors and predispositions. For example, a beginning teacher is expected to manage classroom procedures effectively, create an environment of respect and rapport, demonstrate content knowledge, maintain accurate records, meet deadlines, use a variety of assessment strategies, communicate clearly to students, parents, and colleagues, provide feedback to students in a timely manner, follow national and school curriculum standards, self-evaluate teaching experiences, participate actively in school committee work, interact with students, parents, faculty and staff in a professional manner, and understand student needs, interests, and differences. Exhaustive already (!), and because Maryknoll is a Catholic school, it is also considered important for the beginning teacher to demonstrate understanding of the school and church mission, and to promote a faith community.

At the second level, a professional teacher is expected to move beyond these criteria and use effective teaching techniques, engage students in learning, provide clear and coherent instruction, undertake short-term professional development opportunities, represent the school at community events, accept an equitable share of school responsibilities, and demonstrate the ability to be flexible and responsive. Although there is some overlap in these qualities with those of the beginning teacher, the rubric devised in 2007 makes it clear that at this second level, the teacher is expected to move beyond merely "meeting expectations."

At the third level, an educational leader is expected to continue to demonstrate mastery of content, plan collaboratively, accept school leadership positions, pursue professional growth in a self-directed manner, and actively participate in either extra-curricular activities or professional committees. At each level of the rubric, teachers are offered an "other" category where they may include something that they do that is not included in the form. For example, a beginning teacher may want to include effective techniques of classroom management; a professional teacher may want to include commitment to the school, and an educational leader may want to include collaborative improvement practices such as walkthroughs and one-on-one conversations.

The system is not perfect. The Compensation Committee continues to work on such issues as redundancy in criteria, and compensation decisions being made by one person, despite the self-evaluation component, but it has resulted in members of the school community sharing responsibilities on various committees and student activities more than they have ever done before. Because of the focus on professional development at each level, teachers are now taking their personal responsibility to grow and learn even more seriously. Advantages of the plan include rewarding contributions to the profession and the school, and helping to retain teachers. An added advantage of this work includes sustainability of Maryknoll as an Essential school. Further, a conscious effort has been made to build the 10 Common Principles and the best practices associated with them into the compensation framework. As more and more teachers accept the self-reflective challenge inherent in the school's compensation practice, the school community has become increasingly devoted to the

improvement of learning for both teachers and students, and this is what building leadership capacity, allowing educators to develop as professionals, is all about.

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Maryknoll School, located in Honolulu, Hawaii, is the only co-ed Catholic school on the island of Oahu. The school has an enrollment of 1,400 students, who are taught by more than 100 faculty members. The school offers programs from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, and provides an education that reflects the traditions and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. The school's mission is to engage the entire student body, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, in a value-centered education. At the present time, only the High School Division (grades 9-12) is an affiliate of the Coalition, but the Grade School and Middle School Divisions are seriously exploring CES affiliation. Maryknoll is a college preparatory school with nearly 100 percent of its students attending college, and attracts students from varied ethnic, socio-economic, and religious groups. At the present time, 68 percent of the students are Asian-Americans.

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Charlotte Danielson, an acknowledged educational leader and consultant, has taught at all age levels, and worked as an educational administrator, curriculum planner, and professional developer. The ideas cited in this article are primarily adapted from two of her books, *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice* (2000) and *Teacher Leadership that Strengthens Professional Practice* (2006). The former was an invaluable source of information on teacher career stages and important qualities to consider as we constructed our framework consistent with her four domains (planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities). Danielson's work helped us answer the questions, "What constitutes good teacher practice?" and "How do we make teacher evaluation a beneficial experience?" In the later book, she expands upon themes of the earlier work, but acknowledges that the teacher leader is what we most need to develop in our schools, and that teacher leadership can be a powerful force both in bringing change about and sustaining it. This book was extremely useful in creating the criteria in our rubric and weighting it toward the leadership and professional development domain.

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### More resources online!

Visit the CES National website for Maryknoll School's faculty evaluation rubric, which demonstrates the community's expectations of what a teachers should know and be able to do, and provides a guide for translating teachers' achievements into compensation.

Where to go: [www.essentialschools.org/horace](http://www.essentialschools.org/horace)

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