

## Pay for Performance in Fairfax County, Virginia

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A Pay for Performance program in Fairfax County, Virginia, has gained strong support from teachers, administrators, school board members, and community during its eight-school pilot during this year. Through professional growth and development, the plan is able to make improved teaching its primary goal.

Saphier and Gower's *The Skillful Teacher*, which provides the program's instructional improvement model, is designed to increase teachers' and principals' awareness and use of 16 observable parameters. In voluntary building-level staff-development courses co-taught by the principal and a staff development specialist, teachers learn to develop a wide repertoire of teaching strategies and to match their teaching to the situation, class, and individual student. As part of the course, teachers visit each other's classes, develop a shared teaching language with administrators, and learn to offer objective feedback.

In the Fairfax model, appraisal has moved from an individual decision to a team process. Peer-teacher observers and curriculum specialists visit teachers' classrooms, conducting a pre-observation conference, observation, and post-observation conference. They forward their observations in a report to the principal, who considers the information with his own data from classroom visits before making an evaluation decision. While the evaluation process holds teachers accountable to county goals, it also supports the staff development and coaching.

The program calls for teachers to progress along a three-step career ladder with each advance tied to professional growth. Most important, teachers are involved in all aspects of the plan through their new roles as peer observers, consulting teachers, and staff development instructors.

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who wanted to excel spent endless hours on their portfolios—an expenditure that did little to enhance classroom instruction!

Interviews also required extensive documentation. Evaluators documented teachers' answers to each of their questions. The interviews, structured and controlled by the evaluator, lasted several hours and proved to be a time-consuming ordeal for the evaluator and a stressful and exhaustive experience for the teacher.

We eliminated the teacher portfolio in the second year, except for the candidate's report of professional development and leadership activities. We replaced the interview with three one-hour dialogues with the candidate. Each of the three evaluators spends an hour with each teacher in an informal discussion of one of three major areas: planning, teaching strategies, or evaluation. During this time, 30 minutes is devoted to structured questions, and 30 minutes is unstructured time in which the teacher shares information informally with the evaluator. Thus, by identifying important and relevant information, the teacher becomes an active participant in the

discussion. Moreover, rather than creating material for the dialogue, the teacher refers to previously used classroom material.

*Advice:* No evaluation system should create a paperwork burden for teachers. Interviews should require no special preparation, but should refer to materials the teacher is currently using. By asking the teacher to respond to structured questions as well as to initiate topics for discussion, the evaluator encourages the teacher to include all information pertinent to the discussion. All measures should focus on performance, not on ability to create convincing paperwork.

### Scoring

*Issue:* We faced several complex measurement issues in Tennessee's Career Ladder. One was combining and weighting the indicators from various instruments to obtain a score for each major area. Another was keeping the statewide system fair and equitable for all teachers. So many teachers applied for evaluation the first year that we could not schedule and evaluate everyone. To be fair to the first year's candidates and to those in subsequent

years, we needed to ensure a consistent level of difficulty.

The scoring issue came to teachers' attention because some major changes were made to the evaluation process in the first year. Thus, the systems for the next two years (1984-85 and 1985-86) had to be equated to ensure the same level of difficulty. Technically, we could do this only after the evaluation data were collected. As a result of the delay, however, teachers became mistakenly concerned that data were being manipulated and that quotas existed. Prior to initiating the evaluation system, standards had been set, and anyone who had a qualifying score received Career Level II or III status. Under the current system, candidates know the range of scores made by Career Level II and III candidates in the previous year and, consequently, the level of competence that will be expected of them.

*Advice:* Keep scoring and standard setting simple. Do not let the evaluation system get bogged down in technical measurement issues. Prior to implementation, decide how necessary changes will be made in the system and explain these procedures to teachers. Allow a year to field-test new items or changes, and then set standards from field-test data rather than from a technical equating process after the fact.

### Career Development

*Issue:* As part of the Career Ladder Program was instituted, we created the Tennessee Instructional Model (T.I.M.) to match staff development training modules to major areas of the evaluation process. Twenty-two thousand teachers participated in T.I.M. training during the program's first year. To meet the increasing demand for career development, during the program's second summer, we offered skills enhancement workshops to teachers entering the evaluation cycle in the forthcoming school year and to those who had been unsuccessful in one or more areas in their first attempt.

Career development is also vital for more experienced teachers. Mentorship training gives Career Level II and III teachers strategies for assisting beginning teachers. Experienced teachers from around the state also want opportunities to meet by grade level

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