District Case Study

Pittsburgh Public Schools

District Overview

The Pittsburgh Public School district is an urban district serving 25,000 PK-12 students in 54 schools. The district is a minority-majority district with two-thirds of its students minorities. More than 70% of its students qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program. The district employs just under 1,900 teachers. In 2006 the district launched its Excellence for All improvement agenda consisting of a new, more rigorous curriculum; expanded early childhood education programming, new formative and summative assessments; the Pittsburgh Urban Leadership System of Excellence (PULSE) for attracting and developing high quality school leaders, and the Empowering Effective Teachers plan for increasing the number of highly effective teachers teaching in its schools.

The Empowering Effective Teachers plan is supported by significant funding from the federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant program and the Gates Foundation. Under the plan, teachers are evaluated according to multiple measures including the RISE (Research-based Inclusive System of Evaluation) assessment of professional practice, student growth and student surveys. Under RISE teachers are assessed on 24 components within the four domains of Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Teaching and Learning, and Professional Responsibility. A new performance-based compensation system is also under development. The system includes a new career ladder salary schedule for teachers hired after July 1, 2010 and various forms of variable pay. Pittsburgh’s new schedule:

- Provides opportunity for accelerated earnings for teachers, with potential earnings exceeding $100,000 per year.
- Recognizes and rewards differences in teacher practice based on multiple measures accumulated across years and grounded in student growth.
- Enables teachers at Professional Growth levels 3 and 4 to assume roles, via Career Ladders, that reward them for working with the highest need students and taking on additional responsibilities.

Elements of the compensation plan have been piloted or implemented district-wide. However, the district has encountered some issues with the plan and has slowed implementation down in some areas.
The Model
Empowering Effective Teachers

Levels
The salary schedule for teachers paid under the Empowering Effective Teachers performance pay plan consists of 4 performance levels that correspond with Novice or Apprentice, Basic, Proficient, and Distinguished.

Steps
Traditional steps and lanes based solely on years of experience and educational attainment are eliminated for teachers under the new salary schedule. The performance pay schedule consists of 10 annual experience steps. Teachers who earn an "Unsatisfactory" performance evaluation rating are not permitted to advance a step (see salary schedule below).

Pittsburgh New Teacher Salary Schedule 2010 (Teachers hired on or after July 1, 2010)

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<th>Academy</th>
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<td>Step 10</td>
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Additional $10,000 to $14,000

Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4

Professional Growth Level | Career Ladders and Extra Teaching Opportunities

Movement Between Levels
Teachers move across performance levels according to one of two methods (the method that moves the most teachers to the highest level is used):

- Method 1: Must meet benchmarks for both performance on their evaluation of teaching practice and for student growth.
- Method 2: Teacher who fall within the top 20% of student growth for their level and step cohort and who are at the same step range for changing levels (see below).
- Teachers cannot advance across performance levels unless they meet their student growth standard.
- Teachers may only change levels between Steps 4-5, Steps 7-8, after Step 10, and every three years thereafter.
Variable Pay

The district’s new compensation system includes the STAR School-Based Performance Plan which rewards schools that fall within the top 15% of district schools ranked by growth. The awards equal $6,000 for each full-time professional staff, with amounts prorated for those working in the school less than full-time, and $2,000 for paraprofessionals and clerical staff.

Stipends (Market Incentives)

The compensation plan includes a number of incentives for teachers taking on additional roles.

- It is piloting a Voluntary Incentives Earnings at Work (VIEW) pay program that allows proven effective teachers to take on additional leadership roles and earn a $10,000-$14,000 pay differential. This program has been delayed except for small voluntary pilot until 2014.
- Multiple Career Ladder provisions:
  - $13,300 Clinical Resident Instructors who serve as mentors and coaches.
  - $12,200 Turnaround Teachers who serve on special assignment to low performing classrooms.
  - $11,300 ITL2s – Instructional Teacher Leader 2 who work as subject specialists.
  - $9,300 Learning Environment Specialists who support classroom management.
  - $9,300 Promise Readiness Corps, teachers who work as special support teachers for students in grades 9-12. These teachers may also receive a cohort bonus based on growth, although the amount was not specified.

Transition and Communication

Partnerships with Teachers and their Union

During the 2008-2009 school year, Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) and the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT) have worked together to create an evaluation rubric and value-added model that accurately and fairly assesses teacher performance. In 2010-2011, over 70 teachers, principals and PFT staff collaborated to put together Rewards and Recognition opportunities that built on the evaluation system that these parties had designed together.

Initial Placement

Rules for placing experienced teachers hired into the district:

- Their step placement is determined by a Salary Schedule Placement Rubric (no further information is available).
- Initial performance level placement is determined when the teacher is hired. Newly hired teachers are not eligible to move across levels until they have demonstrated three years of adequate student growth, either in Pittsburgh Public Schools or from another district.

Additional Resources

http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/Page/35 (Empowering Effective Teachers website)

http://www.pft400.org/ (Current teachers’ master contract)