

# Making a Difference in Education Reform: ProComp External Evaluation Report 2006-2010

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## Executive Summary

ProComp is an ambitious alternative teacher compensation system developed by Denver Public Schools (DPS) in cooperation with the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA). This report summarizes a summative evaluation of ProComp conducted collaboratively by The Evaluation Center and the Buechner Institute for Governance at the University of Colorado Denver and the Center for Education Data and Research at the University of Washington. This report describes the implementation of various elements of ProComp and results of the analyses of the association of ProComp with student achievement and changes in the composition of the DPS workforce. The evaluation examined ProComp from implementation beginning in January 2006 through the 2009-10 school year.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods design that incorporated data from interviews, focus groups, surveys, document reviews, and analyses of existing district data (e.g., human resources data and assessment results). The available data, and hence evaluation design, did not allow for a definitive distinction between ProComp effects and the impacts of other factors (e.g., concurrent reform efforts, economic changes, demographic shifts) on workforce recruitment and retention and student achievement. However, use of available statistical controls strengthened findings of effects associated with ProComp. The evaluation also incorporated a theory of change, which was used as a guide to examining a logical causal chain between ProComp elements and potential impacts.

### Background

DPS is an urban school district enrolling 74,000 students in 142 schools in 2008-09.<sup>1</sup> That year, it was the second largest school district in Colorado and 45<sup>th</sup> largest in the nation (Sable, Plotts, & Mitchell, 2011). Students in DPS historically have tended to score lower than students in the rest of the state on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) tests. Achievement, however, has been on an upward trend relative to the rest of the state for the past five years (Bray & Medler, 2009; DPS Office of Accountability, Research & Evaluation, 2010).

Developing ProComp was a lengthy endeavor that included a collaborative development process by a team of DCTA and administrative representatives, a four-year Pay for Performance Pilot in 12 DPS schools, as well as both encouragement and financial support from the community and foundations for this reform effort. The current system was envisioned by 1999 and was implemented in 2006 after being approved by the DPS school board and the DCTA membership and funded by a \$25 million voter-approved tax increase. ProComp was presented to teachers as a way to increase salaries of both new and veteran teachers and to the public as a way to increase student achievement and reward good teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> The most recent data available for national comparisons on enrollment were from 2008-09.

ProComp is available to a professional workforce of about 5,000 people, the large majority of whom are teachers, but also includes other educators such as librarians, counselors, therapists, and facilitators. (This report uses *teachers* as shorthand for this extended group of educators.) All new DPS hires after January 1, 2006, were automatically placed into the ProComp program, and existing teachers had the opportunity to enroll in ProComp during numerous opt-in periods from 2005 through June of 2011. As expected, participation in ProComp has grown over the past five years, from 30% in 2005-06 to 74% of the ProComp eligible participants in 2009-10.

Data showed that financial considerations were the primary reason teachers chose to join ProComp or remain in the traditional salary system. When a teacher joins ProComp, he or she is assigned an initial salary based on the traditional salary schedule, and then he or she receives awards based on nine elements in the four component areas: Knowledge and Skills, Comprehensive Professional Evaluation, Market Incentives, and Student Growth. Each of the elements is designated either as base building or non-base building. Base building incentives are added onto the base salary each year, thus increasing the base starting salary for the next year. Non-base building incentives are essentially bonuses given on a yearly basis on top of base salary.

The incentive amounts associated with each element are displayed in the table below. The amount of each incentive ranged from a low of \$376 for meeting a Student Growth Objective (SGO) or receiving a satisfactory rating on the Comprehensive Professional Evaluation (CPE) for probationary teachers to a high of \$3,379 for earning an Advanced Degree/License. ProComp has evolved over the past five years (including the incentives associated with different components), with the most significant reforms occurring in 2008. Overall, the average number of ProComp incentives earned annually by teachers grew from 1.5 in 2005-06 to 4.3 in 2008-09, then declined slightly to 3.8 in 2009-10.

#### Amount of ProComp Incentives for 2009-10

Component	Element	2009-10 Amount
Knowledge and Skills	Professional Development Unit (PDU)	\$751**
	Advanced Degree/License	\$3,379**
	Tuition Reimbursement	\$1,000/year; \$4,000 lifetime
Comprehensive Professional Evaluation (CPE)	Probationary (once a year)	\$376*
	Non-Probationary (once every three years)	\$1,126*
Market Incentives	Hard to Serve School (HTSS)	\$2,403
	Hard to Staff Assignment (HTSA)	\$2,403
Student Growth	Student Growth Objectives (SGO)	\$376**
	Exceeds CSAP Expectations	\$2,403
	Top Performing Schools	\$2,403
	High Growth School	\$2,403

\* Base building

\*\* Base building for the first 14 years of experience

**ProComp represents a multifaceted approach to alternative teacher compensation.** ProComp includes incentives specifically targeted at both the individual teacher level and the school level. Individually based incentives include those for Advanced Degrees/Licenses, Tuition/Student Loan Reimbursement, Professional Development Units (PDUs), Comprehensive Professional Evaluation (CPE), SGOs, and Exceeds CSAP Expectations. ProComp also incorporates two bonuses that are based on school-wide accomplishments and paid to all ProComp participants in schools that achieve one or both of these distinctions: Top Performing Schools and High Growth School. The third facet of ProComp uses Market Incentive bonuses to attract and retain teachers in Hard to Staff Assignments (HTSA) and Hard to Serve Schools (HTSS). These incentives are intended to work together as a total compensation system to accomplish all of the intended results.

ProComp represents a holistic approach to alternative compensation by targeting multiple leverage points that may affect student achievement. Additionally, ProComp has continued to evolve. In 2010-11, the district implemented a new Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) initiative to improve the PDU system. In 2010-11 the Leading Effective Academic Practice (LEAP) initiative was being piloted almost district wide as a potential replacement for the current CPE system.

## **Implementation and Views on ProComp**

**ProComp is the result of a productive collaboration between DPS and DCTA.** Stakeholders generally viewed ProComp as being aligned with the DPS mission and goals, the ballot initiative, and the purpose and goals established in the ProComp Agreement. The original development of ProComp was accomplished through collaboration between DPS and DCTA; however, the ideological differences between these groups strained this collaborative relationship during the negotiation of the changes to ProComp incorporated in the 2008 Agreement. These changes reduced the base-building incentives available to teachers with 14 or more years of experience and substantially increased the amount of the Market Incentives and Student Growth elements related to student achievement on the CSAP.

**Participating teachers and principals were comfortable with ProComp as a compensation system.** ProComp represents a fundamental change from the single salary schedule, which is the predominant method of determining teacher salaries in most U.S. school systems and the compensation system used exclusively in DPS prior to ProComp's implementation (Springer, 2009). Although deviating from this compensation norm, participating teachers as a group appeared to accept ProComp and also considered ProComp to be at least as fair as the traditional salary system. Teachers who voluntarily enrolled in ProComp, new hires who were automatically enrolled in ProComp, and school administrators were generally more accepting of this alternative compensation system than were those who did not choose to participate in ProComp.

**There was a general sense that ProComp could have the potential to motivate teachers to improve their instructional practice and achieve professional growth.** Teachers and principals reported they believed the incentives related to improving teacher knowledge or skills (such as PDUs and Advanced Degrees/Licenses) were more likely to impact practice and student achievement than bonuses related to student test scores (such as Exceeds CSAP Expectations and High Growth or Top Performing Schools). Importantly, the student achievement analysis indicated the opposite: PDUs and Advanced Degrees/Licenses were not correlated with higher value-added student achievement, while Exceeds CSAP Expectations was correlated.

**Many teachers and principals lacked critical information about ProComp, including an understanding of how they could earn the incentives.** Many teachers and principals participating in the evaluation reported they did not satisfactorily know and understand all ProComp incentives. Teachers considered their colleagues to be the most effective source of information about ProComp, yet school visits revealed much misinformation and numerous questions among staff. Lack of understanding of the incentives reduces the likelihood that teachers will be motivated by them.

**ProComp did not seem to impact school environments or school staff workload. Survey and interview data indicated ProComp did not have a substantial impact on the school environment or the workload of teachers and administrators.** Most principals and teachers felt ProComp had not increased competition among teachers or had a negative impact on collaboration.

**ProComp has had an important impact on the DPS system as a whole.** Operationally, ProComp necessitated significant improvements in human resources, payroll, student data systems, interdepartmental communication, and workflow. ProComp also necessitated the development of human and instructional resource capacity to support this new system. New assessments, the DPS achievement growth model, and the DPS School Performance Framework are among the products of these endeavors.

## **Professional Development Units**

As part of ProComp, DPS sought to redesign its professional development based on research-based practices. The result was the creation of the Professional Development Unit (PDU) element. This element was introduced as individual and small-group self-directed PDU studies. Over time, PDU learning experiences were expanded to include district-sponsored and school-based PDU offerings. The PDU courses taken most frequently were those sponsored by central departments and schools.

Participation in PDU learning experiences is not unique to ProComp teachers, as they are also available to Non-ProComp teachers. Nor is the PDU learning experience the only form of on-going professional development in the district; DPS and individual schools offer and, in some instances, require teachers to participate in professional development not associated with the PDU incentive.

**Teachers saw more value in PDU courses that are most closely related to their personal context.** PDU courses that have this characteristic are those where participants are connected by a similar content (e.g., art, new math curriculum), employee group membership (e.g., Teacher for America (TFA), Teacher in Residence (TIR)), or their school.

**PDU courses were generally considered motivating by teachers, though teachers and principals felt they varied considerably in both quality and rigor and receiving the bonus was not correlated with higher teacher effectiveness in terms of value-added on student assessments.**<sup>2</sup> PDU incentives were considered motivating by approximately three fourths of the ProComp teachers. **Teachers also reported changes in instructional practices as a result of PDU learning. However, the student achievement analysis found PDUs were not significant predictors of CSAP student achievement in either math or reading.**

### **Advanced Degrees and Licenses**

Another element in the Knowledge and Skills component is the Advanced Degrees/Licenses element. This incentive is most similar to the traditional salary schedule and provides salary increases for earning a master's or doctorate degree and/or for receiving an advanced license such as National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and School Nurse Practitioner Certification. The Tuition/Student Loan Reimbursement element reimburses teachers for expenditures for past education or professional training.

**Teachers liked receiving these incentives, but there is limited evidence that they led to changes in instructional practice or improved student CSAP achievement.** A majority of teachers and principals tended to believe these incentives provide motivation to pursue additional qualifications and expressed the belief that the additional education would help teachers improve instructional practice. However, there was limited evidence that these incentives led to improved instructional practice or improved student CSAP achievement. It may be that the small number of teachers included in the value-added analyses of these incentives and the diverse nature of advanced degree programs made it difficult to detect effects through analysis of student test achievement.

### **Comprehensive Professional Evaluation**

ProComp provides a base-building incentive for teachers with one to 14 years of experience who achieve a satisfactory rating on their Comprehensive Professional Evaluation (CPE). This evaluation system was adopted and used in DPS from the 2006-07 school year through the 2010-11 school year (Denver Public Schools, 2011). Teachers in their first three years of experience are formally evaluated on a yearly basis, while experienced teachers are evaluated every three years and given a satisfactory or unsatisfactory rating.

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<sup>2</sup> In this report, *teacher effectiveness* is defined in terms of value-added models. Value-added models are designed to estimate teacher contributions to student achievement on tests, specifically student learning growth as measured by CSAP scores. As such, value-added measures of teacher effectiveness will not account for teacher contributions to student outcomes that are not captured by the state assessments.

**A change that resulted from ProComp’s implementation was a new teacher evaluation system. The development of the CPE system was required by the original ProComp Agreement.** Those involved in the early thinking and development of this evaluation system viewed these changes positively.

**Principals and teachers only moderately understood the CPE element, and implementation varied in quality.** In general, the majority of teachers and principals said they understood CPEs. However, there were some misunderstandings of the CPE element, reflecting larger issues of staff communication about the specifics of ProComp.

**It is not clear if teachers were motivated by the CPE-related incentive; additionally, there is limited evidence that the CPE reward was associated with teacher effectiveness.** Comments by teachers suggested that the motivating effect of the incentive may be diminished because teachers regard the CPE incentive as small and the incentive is not available to teachers with more than 14 years of experience. The value-added analysis of CSAP achievement indicated the CPE element was marginally, yet significantly, associated with teacher effectiveness in math but showed no relationship in reading.

## **Student Growth Objectives**

The development of Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) by classroom teachers was a cornerstone of the initial DPS Pay for Performance Pilot. Teachers and principals collaboratively develop SGOs. All DPS teachers write two SGOs each fall and may revise them up until the Friday prior to Spring Break.

**Implementation of SGOs was impacted by a lack of support and standardization.** Teachers had numerous concerns about the way SGOs are implemented in schools. Issues centered on the inconsistencies of SGOs among teachers and schools sites and the level of expectations reflected in SGOs. The data on implementation suggested a substantial need for more support and standardization of the SGO process and criteria for rigorous SGOs. During the ProComp pilot and the initial two years of district-wide implementation, there were school support teams and school liaisons. When these were discontinued, school personnel reported they lacked much of the support and training needed to appropriately implement SGOs.

**Teachers had mixed attitudes about whether SGOs changed instructional practice.** Some teachers reported that SGOs helped them focus instruction and that data-driven conversation between teachers and administrators had increased. Other teachers reported no impact on their instruction.

**Most SGOs met expectations for rigor, but some had significant problems that could be remedied with increased standardization of the SGO process and criteria for rigorous SGOs, as well as better oversight and training.** In examining the rigor of SGOs, a majority of SGOs in the sample data set were found to meet or exceed DPS standards. However, a number of significant problems were identified. Evaluators determined some SGOs were unclear, had poorly defined learning objectives, or lacked high expectations for students yet had been approved by principals. These findings suggest a need for increased standardization of the SGO process and



the criteria for rigorous SGOs and better oversight and training for principals, since they are key actors in helping teachers define quality SGOs and are ultimately accountable for the quality of SGOs at their schools.

**Both ProComp and Non-ProComp teachers had equally rigorous SGOs, though ProComp teachers were somewhat more likely to meet their SGOs.** Results did not support the idea that providing an incentive to teachers would cause them to set higher quality expectations than the expectations set by teachers who do not receive an incentive. The rigor of SGOs for ProComp teachers was found to be functionally identical to that of their Non-ProComp peers, though somewhat more ProComp teachers achieved their SGOs.

**At the school level, meeting SGOs did not appear to be related to student growth.** As a body of evidence, results did not indicate a meaningful relationship at the school level between the level of growth in student achievement and the percentage of teachers at that school who met their SGOs.

**Higher achieving schools tended to have more rigorous SGOs and displayed some different behaviors than lower performing schools.** In comparison with lower achieving schools, higher achieving schools tended to have better quality SGOs that teachers regarded as meaningful and achievable and an SGO process that was focused, collaborative, and data based. However, these practices do not appear to be sufficiently widespread to produce differences evident at the school level.

**The student achievement analysis found that SGOs did, on average, reward effective teachers.** In math, the differential between teachers who received SGO bonuses and those who did not was about 35% of a standard deviation in terms of teacher effectiveness (the difference between a teacher at the median and a teacher at the 64<sup>th</sup> percentile). In reading, the differential was 20% of a standard deviation. This difference can be compared to a regression-adjusted estimated effect of receiving free or reduced price lunch of about 5% of a standard deviation of student achievement. In other words, the average differential in teacher effectiveness between SGO recipients and eligible non-recipients was approximately equivalent to the effect of poverty (as measured by free or reduced price lunch status) on student achievement in math and about two thirds of the effect of poverty in reading.

## **Other Student Growth Incentives**

ProComp includes three other Student Growth Elements, Exceeds CSAP Expectations, Top Performing Schools, and High Growth Schools that are awarded based on increased student achievement at the teacher or school level.

**The three CSAP-related ProComp incentives were the least understood.** The most problematic misunderstanding was regarding who is eligible to earn these incentives. Although only the Exceeds CSAP Expectations incentive is restricted to teachers in grades and content areas where CSAP is administered, there were teachers and administrators who wrongly believed these same restrictions apply to the Top Performing Schools and High Growth School bonuses.

**Results were mixed on the extent to which teachers find these incentives motivating.** The data clearly indicated that some teachers feel motivated by one or more of these CSAP-related incentives. However, for some teachers, achieving these distinctions seemed to have less to do with the bonus itself and more to do with the positive recognition that their students performed well. Some principals were leveraging the CSAP-related incentives to motivate teachers and help drive school improvement endeavors.

**Teachers did not strongly believe that their professional effort is directly tied to student achievement.** Teachers were somewhat more likely to believe they can impact increasing student growth than achieving high test scores, and principals were more likely than teachers to believe teacher effort has an effect on student achievement. The theory of change for ProComp argues that for an incentive to motivate change, teachers need to understand the incentive and believe they can earn it. If teachers do not feel efficacious (i.e., if they do not believe their efforts can improve student achievement and thus they cannot earn a bonus), then incentives based on student achievement (such as Top Performing Schools or High Growth School) are unlikely to be strong motivators for change in practice. The efficacy beliefs of ProComp teachers were very similar to those of Non-ProComp teachers, which suggests that participation in ProComp may not be related to participants' sense of teacher efficacy.

**The student achievement analysis found that the teacher-level incentive Exceeds CSAP Expectations is targeted appropriately and rewarded more effective teachers as measured by a value-added analysis of CSAP scores.** Specifically, the differential for the Exceeds CSAP Expectations award was about a full standard deviation in terms of teacher effectiveness in math (the difference between a teacher at the median and a teacher at the 84<sup>th</sup> percentile) and nearly 60% of a standard deviation for reading.

## Recruitment and Retention

A goal of ProComp is to improve the effectiveness of the DPS workforce by recruiting and retaining more effective teachers. Effective teachers are expected to be attracted to work in DPS through competitive salaries, participation in innovative reform, and two market incentives. The Hard to Staff Assignments (HTSA) incentive is paid to teachers who work in shortage areas, and the Hard to Serve Schools (HTSS) incentive is paid to teachers who work in schools with a high proportion of free and reduced lunch-eligible students.

**Results of the analyses of the effect of ProComp on recruitment and retention were mixed.** Over the first four years of ProComp implementation, DPS improved its ability to compete with other districts when recruiting experienced teachers. However, the evaluation design and analysis did not allow a firm conclusion that this change is due to ProComp or that the change was a result of earning either of the Market Incentives (HTSS or HTSA).

**Because of the lack of knowledge about ProComp reported by teacher trainees, a strong effect on recruitment is not expected.** In addition, surveys and interviews with newly hired teachers and teacher trainees provides mixed views on how they value ProComp incentives, which may also moderate ProComp's impact on recruitment.

**During ProComp implementation, DPS improved its ability to retain teachers.** Although this may be due to ProComp or other reforms that occurred in DPS at the same time, statistical models indicated that some degree of the improved retention was likely due to ProComp. The amount of retention that may be attributed to ProComp was between zero and four percentage points, which suggests that at most, 160 teachers per year may have remained in DPS out of a workforce of 3,700. Analysis of the relationship between receiving ProComp incentives and retention within DPS suggests that CPE and Student Growth incentives were associated with retention, while Market Incentives and Knowledge and Skills incentives were not.

## **Student Achievement**

A primary goal of the ProComp system is to increase student achievement in DPS.

**DPS has experienced significant student learning gains across grades and subjects, but it is not clear that this was the result of ProComp.** There was not a consistent pattern across grade levels and subjects in the relationship between ProComp and observed achievement gains. In some cases, the gains appeared primarily among students with ProComp teachers, while in other cases it is Non-ProComp teachers who appeared to be more effective. Though puzzling, these findings are consistent with research on other well-known interventions that include elements similar to ProComp.

Several other results that have potentially far-reaching policy implications are clearer. One finding is that “ProComp effects” were not focused solely among teachers enrolled in ProComp. This suggests that systems associated with the implementation of ProComp, such as a greater emphasis on using data and improvements in the professional evaluation system, may have influenced the professional practices of Non-ProComp teachers as well as ProComp teachers.

**Some ProComp incentives did successfully target teacher effectiveness as measured by student achievement.** There is strong evidence that earning Exceeds Expectations and SGO awards was associated with teacher effectiveness as measured through the value-added analysis of student achievement data in both CSAP math and reading. This is in contrast to the fact that teacher opinions drew into question the ability of these incentives to impact achievement. The finding that SGOs appeared to be a reasonably successful means of rewarding teachers whose students demonstrated larger than expected gains on the CSAP tests provides support for other states and localities (e.g., Race to the Top) looking to reform teacher incentives. Although the gains were smaller, CPEs were also rewarding teachers whose students showed greater than expected CSAP gains in math. There is little evidence that the PDU and Advanced Degree/License incentives were related to teacher effectiveness as measured by student achievement. These awards may be rewarding certain aspects of classroom instruction not strongly associated with students’ CSAP achievement such as content not measured in the CSAP or other valued outcomes such as social skills or civic engagement. Also the small number of teachers in the analyses of the effect of earning an advanced degree incentive may have been a factor in the results.

## Considerations

**The ability to scale up while maintaining quality and achieving balance between school level needs and standardization across a district must be considered in a large reform effort.** There are key components of ProComp that are implemented at the school level: SGOs, PDUs, and CPEs. All three were found to have variable quality across schools. However, these components were valued by teachers and administrators and, in the case of SGOs and to a lesser extent CPEs, did reward effective teachers as measured with value-added analysis. An important question to be considered in a district-wide reform effort such as ProComp is how to maintain a high quality of implementation that will support school reform broadly while still allowing enough autonomy for school principals and teachers to manage the reform in a way that meets their school's instructional improvement needs. It is critical that the district invest energy and resources to monitor and promote the quality of implementation. DPS has already taken steps to create different models for PDU learning opportunities and is piloting a new evaluation system that could replace the CPE element; making adjustments in the SGO process is prudent as well. Examples of areas in which DPS could provide additional guidance are in identifying assessments to use to evaluate student learning related to SGOs; clarifying standards for rigor, quality, and expected growth; and implementing improved quality-control processes such as annually auditing a sample of SGOs for quality and providing principals with feedback.

**There is evidence that in some DPS schools principals were effectively leveraging ProComp incentives to further school-level reform efforts.** These principals were connecting compensation with other mechanisms intended to improve instruction and student achievement, such as school improvement plans and goals, teacher collaboration on individual and team goals aligned with school goals, and professional development. In comparison with lower achieving schools, higher achieving schools tended to have higher quality SGOs that teachers regarded as meaningful and achievable and an SGO process that was focused, collaborative, and data based. It may be possible to promote improved instruction at the school level through good management and use of ProComp incentives.

**Reform efforts need to be nurtured as they evolve, but it is not always easy to maintain and sustain an effort in the midst of other reforms.** Once a reform has begun and the supporting pieces put in place, it is all too easy for a district of any size to move on to other reforms without adequately maintaining and sustaining the current effort. The fact that there was such widespread misunderstanding about ProComp is an indication that some important implementation features have either lost momentum or have been discontinued. The evidence from both teachers and principals indicated that the withdrawal of some supports available during the ProComp pilot and initial district-wide implementation has proven to be detrimental to full implementation.

Providing support at the beginning of a reform is always useful to ensure quality implementation; however, until sustainability is ensured, changes in support structures should be strategic and priorities should be determined using data. The mere fact that teacher and

principal mobility remains high will necessitate ongoing efforts to keep staff informed and the most critical supports in place long enough for them to become systemic.

**The value participants place on certain incentive elements like those found in ProComp may not be related to their actual impact on student achievement. For some elements, such as the Advanced Degree/License and PDU incentives,** a majority of teachers and principals tended to believe these incentives provided motivation to pursue additional qualifications and expressed the belief that additional education would help teachers improve instructional practice. **However, the student achievement analysis did not find a correlation between receiving these bonuses and** teacher effectiveness as measured through the value-added analysis of student achievement data in both CSAP math and reading.

**Teachers also reported changes in instructional practices as a result of PDU learning; however, there is no evidence that these incentives have led to changes in student outcomes.** Teachers and principals also liked the PDU component of ProComp, but statistical analysis found no relationship between earning PDU credits and teacher effectiveness.

**Although there is room to improve SGO implementation, on average the incentives rewarded effective teachers. Improved implementation may improve the effectiveness of this incentive.** The implementation of SGOs was not even: the quality, rigor, and level of expectation varied across schools and sometimes within schools. However, despite these challenges, on average, SGOs did reward teachers who were more effective. At the same time, many teachers who were less effective received SGO bonuses, and some who were effective did not receive bonuses. Improved standardization, rigor, and training on the use of SGOs could potentially improve the effectiveness of this incentive.

**Communication and understanding of compensation reform is key.** There was a considerable lack of understanding, and some active misunderstanding, about the way ProComp works and what teachers need to do to earn a particular incentive. The three CSAP-related ProComp incentives were the least understood, yet they most directly reward improvement of student achievement. The most problematic misunderstanding was confusion regarding eligibility to earn these incentives. Although only the Exceeds CSAP Expectations incentive is restricted to teachers in grades and content areas where CSAP is administered, there were teachers and administrators who wrongly believed these same restrictions apply to the Top Performing Schools and High Growth School bonuses. To the extent that teachers and principals do not understand the details of the compensation system, it is highly unlikely they will be motivated by it or that they will change their behavior to pursue these incentives.

## **Recommendations for Other Districts**

ProComp is a compensation reform that has attracted national attention. Other districts considering this type of alternative compensation system are eager to learn from the experiences of DPS, a preeminent leader in this field and one of the largest school districts in the United States. Key informants involved in the planning, design, development, and early stages of

implementation of ProComp identified several key lessons they believe DPS learned that would benefit other districts. Their top recommendations are:

- Involve teachers from the beginning and collaborate to develop the system. Take the time necessary to build the team so that everyone knows each other and knows clearly what they are working on.
- Research various compensation systems and develop a system customized for your district.
- Determine the goals for the compensation system and align the incentives with the desired goals. As you move through the process, stay focused on the goals and be very clear what behaviors need to occur in order to earn an incentive.
- Consider the entire compensation package (e.g., benefits, retirement), not just salary, and consider the effect of the compensation system on teachers at different career stages.
- Allow sufficient time to design, plan, pilot, and improve the system based on what is learned during the pilot and at various stages of implementation. Secure the financial resources required to sustain the compensation system.
- Build into the system a review and change cycle that provides for evaluation and the use of data to improve the system.

There are several additional lessons that emerged from the evaluation that can be added to the list generated by the key informants. These recommendations include:

- Engage teachers in a significant way in planning, piloting, and implementing the system to ensure their support of the change in pay systems.
- Design data systems at the district level that support the compensation system and provide clear data to the district and to individual teachers regarding incentives earned and paid. If student achievement is part of the incentive system, design systems that will accurately link teachers with the appropriate students, taking into account such things as team teaching, platooning (i.e., multiple teachers serving each student), and other instructional grouping practices.
- Focus knowledge and skill incentives on job-embedded, ongoing professional learning.
- Establish clear and visible links between the behavior that earns the incentive and the payment of the incentive.
- Provide sufficient support for initial implementation, and then continue to provide support to accommodate new informational needs and changes in personnel.
- Use multiple, ongoing forms of communication differentiated for the needs of different audiences (e.g., new teachers, experienced teachers, administrators, potential recruits).

- Provide training for principals to enable them to maximize the incentive system to increase teacher effectiveness and school improvement.
- Provide training, support, guidelines, and monitoring for teachers and principals if an incentive similar to Student Growth Objectives is included in order to ensure that standards for quality and rigor are consistently being met.



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