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Pay-For-Performance for Missouri Public Schools: Are We Ready Yet?

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**Pay-For-Performance for Missouri Public Schools:
Are We Ready Yet?**

Dustin K. Procter

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the Practicum Paper of

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For the practicum requirement for the Master of Public Administration

Professional Exercise in the Department of Political Science and International Affairs

At the May 2011 graduation

Practicum Director:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Ewoh", written in a cursive style.

Andrew I.E. Ewoh, PhD

Pay-For-Performance for Missouri Public Schools: Are We Ready Yet?

Executive Summary

Reform strategies in education have been administered far and wide all throughout history. Ideas such as longer school days, school choice, standardized testing, and changes to teachers' salaries have all been studied and incorporated. Reform directives in education have been implemented from the national level all the way down to the individual teacher. The goal of these actions has been to improve the success of children in public education by way of increasing student test scores on standardized tests. However, these measures have all exhibited inconsistent results.

This paper focuses on the public education system of the State of Missouri and analyzes the preparedness for the reform measure, pay-for-performance for public school teachers. The study provides research and new data which discloses how the State of Missouri is not yet ready for the implementation of an incentive-based pay system of any type. An exploratory case study and a statistical survey provide data that helps portray a few of the many problems which have been neglected over the years through countless reform actions. Recommendations are developed by incorporating the four pillars of public administration—efficiency, effectiveness, economy, and social equity. Redesigned and never-before-seen ideas have been formulated, which provide new solutions, with the intent to increase teacher morale and motivation, increase teacher efficiency and effectiveness, and promote educational equity throughout the entire State of Missouri; hopefully transcending throughout the entire country with time.

Pay-For-Performance for Missouri Public Schools: Are We Ready Yet?

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Finally, I must also give my gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Diane Ravitch and her enlightening book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*. Her writings have made education reform along with all issues of the American public education more manageable and clearer to understand. Her ideas have solidified and, more completely, developed my personal beliefs on education which has provided me with the encouragement and confidence to further pursue and develop my research. For that, I thank her.

Pay-For-Performance for Missouri Public Schools: Are We Ready Yet?

Introduction

In 1983, a report called *A Nation at Risk* was produced illustrating the United States' inferior educational system as compared to those of other countries, which quickly gained widespread media attention. The report focused on the declining academic achievement of United States students by expressing specific attention to their failing scores on mathematics and English. It was the inauguration for a new era in education reform. The goal of the era was, and still is, to find the most effective means for improving the delivery and attainment of knowledge for United States children in order to produce first-rate students, and the most globally competitive workers. Due to the belief that students' scores in mathematics and English best reflect the overall achievements of the students, reform measures have centered on raising those scores.

In the attempt to increase test scores, there has been one highly debated reform strategy that has gained much popularity and support from the business sector. This strategy is pay-for-performance, also known as merit pay or incentive pay. Recent trends have given increased attention to the use of performance-based pay for teachers by tying their salaries to standardized test scores of their students (Ellerson, 2009, 4). In this following research, the factors involved in the implementation of a pay-for-performance plan in the public education system are assessed. Critical definitions of key terms are discussed followed by a brief examination of a few of the latest and most influential public education district reform actions in the United States. After the analytical review of secondary data, a survey completed by Missouri public school teachers was used in the examination of Missouri's education system.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the complexities involved with implementing reform measures without properly defining key criteria and terms. The research is also intended to shed light on other key issues that first need to be corrected before the authorization and implementation of a pay-for-performance plan. The paper begins with a literature review addressing issues associated with the United States and Missouri public education systems including a discussion on the benefits and problems associated with the implementation of a pay-for-performance plan in the education field. This is followed by a brief description of the framework used in the collection of data and information of this research. Next, the findings section provides the results collected from the survey conducted on Missouri public school teachers. The study concludes with recommendations of actions that need to be taken and policies that may be created in order to ensure that United States and Missouri public education provide the most effective, efficient, responsive and equitable means feasible.

Literature Review

First introduced in private business, pay-for-performance has proven its success for many different organizations. President Barack Obama has expressed his support for pay-for-performance and merit pay programs by the standards outlined in his education economic stimulus legislation titled “Race to the Top.” The plan of pay-for-performance is simple, reward employees, or teachers, who meet a higher set of standards or reach a particular goal, in this case, increasing student test scores. Proponents argue that if schools are managed as if they were business firms by rewarding and punishing teachers on the basis of how much students learned, then teachers would do better and students would learn more (see Adams, Heywood and

Rothstein 2009, 1). This strategy has worked in business organizations partly due to their identifiable goals and standards. Goals delivered to business employees are usually clearly defined and congruently associated with the overall goal of the company. That goal is profit. Through a pay-for-performance incentive or plan, the achievement of established goals by the employees equals an increased profit for the company. Rewards are distributed to employees by a share or percentage of the profit attained. Rewards can also be given by a preset monetary figure in the form of a bonus check or stipend. Studies have shown that rewards can substantially increase motivation levels of employees thereby increasing the quality and quantity of work. Many scholars believe that, just like in the business sector, this approach will have equal success in the United States public education system. Lewis Solmon's study illustrated a 50 percent performance improvement of schools utilizing a pay-for-performance plan over its control schools (2006, 110). The difference between pay-for-performance in the business sector and public education is that teachers lack clear goals, accurate measures of performance, and there is no profit to be attained or earned. There are many teachers, school administrators and others who disagree with the use of incentive or reward pay and believe that business strategies need to be left within the business community.

The first major issue that surfaces when debating on a pay-for-performance plan in public education is the clarity of a few vital terms—student and teacher performance. Unlike the education field, performance in the business sector is easily definable. In the United States education public system, student performance is measured based on scores from standardized tests on mathematics and English. These scores are used to portray the district, school, and faculty overall performance. This standard of measurement has its problems. Other standards of performance measurement exist; however, the use of standardized test scores is the only method

that the United States government deploys in holding states and their districts accountable for their effectiveness. The following information illustrates those problems facing the United States education system in measuring the performance level of their students, teachers, schools and districts—beginning with those from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

The No Child Left Behind Act was approved by Congress, and signed by George W. Bush. It ensures that performance measures and accountability are maintained and conducted throughout every school in the United States. Every school and district in each state must meet the United States mandate of 100 percent proficiency by the year 2014. If these standards are not met, then the NCLB policy imposes strict punishments and severe consequences. Failing to reach the 100 percent proficiency standard will cause schools to be closed, teachers to be fired, principals to lose their jobs, and some—perhaps many—public schools to be privatized, all because they are not able to achieve the impossible (Ravitch 2010, 103).

As noted earlier, the Obama Administration has passed its own legislation, Race to the Top. This legislation, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), provides \$4.35 billion to be rewarded to states that create conditions for education innovation and reform (United States Department of Education 2009). Rewards are based upon criteria established by the Obama Administration that include reform measures supporting ideas tying student performance to teacher performance. Due to the current financial crisis, many states are finding it hard to compete for the extra funding. In effect, 34 states have changed laws or policies by incorporating new programs, such as performance-pay for teachers, in order to qualify and receive the funding reward (United States Department of Education 2010). However, a few states, including Texas, refuse to take part in the initiative. According to Governor Rick Perry, “Texas is on the right path toward improved education, and we would be foolish and

irresponsible to place our children's future in the hands of unelected bureaucrats and special interest groups thousands of miles away in Washington, virtually eliminating parents' participation in their children's education" (Office of the Governor Rick Perry 2010).

Before Obama's Race to the Top and Bush's NCLB Act, the State of Missouri adopted its own set of standards called the Show-Me Standards (1996):

The Show-Me Standards provide a consistent and clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy (Missouri Department of Education 2010).

Although states like Missouri already had in place standards for accountability gaining positive results and outcomes, the NCLB Act caused the complete revision of state standards to be composed. Now, students in the State of Missouri are just average based upon the state's ranking on a variety of academic benchmarks—from reading proficiency to college readiness. Education Commissioner Chris Nicastro demands improvement on student achievement to the top 10 nationally by 2020 (Riley 2011).

Missouri uses the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) to measure the performance level of its students. This program supplies results used in determining whether or not Missouri has made its adequate yearly progress (AYP) as dictated by the NCLB policy. Due to the reform measures and mandates, standardized testing has become Missouri's sole measure of performance for schools and districts within its state.

In her 2010 book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, Diane Ravitch believes that in the new world of accountability, students' acquisition of the skills and knowledge they need for further education and for the workplace is secondary. What matters most is for the school, the district, and the state to be able to say that more students have reached "proficiency" (Ravitch 2010, 159). This failure to attain the knowledge needed for the workplace and university learning drastically goes against the strategy of developing globally competitive workers. Ravitch (2010), a once strong supporter of accountability and testing, now believes that NCLB corrupts by causing teachers and administrators to focus on the measure rather than on the goals of education (160).

In his 2009 book, *The Peril and Promise of Performance Pay*, Donald B. Gratz believes that public education is too bogged down by bureaucracy and testing (2009, 168-169). Students in United States schools are among the most heavily tested in the world today, with each student completing at least six standardized tests per year (Neuman 2006). In addition to adjusting curriculum to correspond with the mandatory tests, schools often prepare weeks in advance for each individual test. By devoting just two weeks per test, the average school will have allocated 60 school days toward test preparation. With an average school year consisting of 180 days, many schools are spending 1/3 of the school year preparing and administering examinations.

Linda Valli, Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland, indicates that her research has shown that the pressures teachers face by having their students excel on the standardized tests lead to teachers "teaching to the test" (Ottalini 2008). Teaching to the test is Campbell's Law at work, which underscores how organizations in every field change their behavior to meet external measures (Ravitch 2010, 160). By teaching to the test and spending excess hours on test preparation, the complete purpose of the testing is lost. This leads schools into losing sight on the

development of the student and attainment of diverse knowledge to focus more on achieving high scores in order to avoid being punished. Edward Roeber, Professor of Education at the University of Michigan, believes that the goal of using tests is not just to measure performance, but instead to drive changes in alternative instructional materials, learning models, and staff development that can make the shifts in the desired teaching and learning (Roeber 1995, 284). But should limits be imposed on the number of tests that students have to take due to their adverse effects on time and curriculum?

In March of 2011, the American University Radio published an article describing an example of the failings of the performance measures of the NCLB Act and its standardized testing. It stated,

The Northern Virginia school district has failed to meet the NCLB standard of AYP ever since the law was first enacted in 2002. In recent science competitions with neighboring districts not underperforming based upon the standards of NCLB, T.C. Williams High School of the Northern Virginia school district topped its counterparts including the number one high school within the state. The school is also known for having the number two science scholar in the country. However, science, social studies, and physical fitness are not components that are measured by NCLB standardized testing. Therefore the school is failing based upon the law's guidelines (Wilson 2011).

Since certain subjects are left unmeasured by the NCLB Act, schools' curriculums become narrowed. Time is taken away from activities, lessons, and classes pertaining to subjects beyond mathematics and English. In its place, students spend more time focusing on math and English while also learning about different types of multiple choice questions, how to scan

paragraphs looking for particular answers to questions, and how to make accurate guesses. Alfie Kohn, a leading figure in progressive education, also speaks out against standardized testing by stating, “Efficient tests tend to drive out less efficient tests, leaving many important abilities untested--and untaught” (2000, 315).

Besides the problems revolving around areas such as test preparation and teaching to the tests, a multitude of other problems also exist. One problem with using tests to make important decisions about people’s lives is that standardized tests are not precise instruments (Ravitch 2010, 152). Problems existing with standardized testing include: measurement error, statistical error, random variation, student attributes, and environmental factors. These problems have always plagued the ability of tests and the accuracy of their results. The issue of the environment that students spend most of their time in plays a huge role in a child’s development. It greatly impacts measuring students’ performance by testing. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, “the home environment is responsible for 49 percent of the factors influencing student achievement” (Gratz 2009, 87). In view of this, the number of students coming from a bad home life as compared to a good one has tremendous effects on the performance level of a school and its teachers. How can a school with a majority of its students coming from a poverty stricken community with bad home lives be held to the same standards as a school serving a middle class community with the majority of students coming from good home lives? How can an individual teacher compete against other teachers when he/she has twice the amount of students in his/her class coming from a bad home life? Students from different home lives and different backgrounds cannot be held to the same standards and will not produce comparable results as students with drastically better or worse home lives. Environmental factors for which testing cannot measure play a major role in determining the

success of the student. Testing companies have publicly stated that the results of their exams should never be used as the sole metric by which important decisions are made (Ravitch 2010, 153).

The NCLB Act's standardized testing allows too many options of "gaming" the system (Ravitch 2010, 159). Tests are too easily manipulated by administrators allowing them to send home low performing students on the day of the testing. Administrators have also been caught manipulating the scoring of the tests by improperly categorizing children in order to show an increased population of lower achieving students than actually enrolled. Because there are so many variables that cannot be measured, such as student motivation and parental engagement, any attempts to match schools by demographic profile of their student body do not suffice to eliminate random variation (Ravitch 2010, 154).

Benjamin Canada's contention is that testing is not a substitute for curriculum and instruction and that test scores are just one assessment and should not be the only indicator of achievement (2000). Ravitch (2010) agrees and stated that good education cannot be achieved by a strategy of testing children, shaming educators, and closing down schools. If standardized testing does not produce the valid and reliable results as intended, then another more formidable means must be introduced. Many other assessment methods have been used by educators for measuring their students' performance. These methods include calculating graduation rates and drop-out rates, keeping an academic portfolio, grading projects, or plans implementing multiple measures. After distinguishing what represents an accurate portrayal of students' performance, or by believing that the current United States performance measure is achieving its intended results, then the next question is, can the teachers' and schools' performances be based on the performance of their students?

Just like any career field, all employees including teachers want to have a fair and balanced system of evaluation for which their performance is based upon. Without a reliable means of measurement, it is impossible to distinguish effective teachers from the ineffective ones. Lack of proper measurement allows lesser quality teachers to be rewarded for the successes of their more elite counterparts. A study conducted by economist Dan Goldhaber, which measured teacher performance by student test scores, showed that teachers often fluctuate from effective teachers in one year to ineffective the next year (Ravitch 2010, 186). Donald Gratz's (2009) study illustrated similar results whereby higher paid teachers did not achieve higher student test scores than lower paid teachers (61). These errors result from one or two possible reasons. Either the teachers fluctuate in their means of teaching strategies, curriculum, or motivation levels from year to year, or too many outside variables affect students' achievement such as housing, poverty, unemployment, and health needs to name a few, that are outside the teachers' control. Therefore, the problems of basing teachers' performance on their students' test scores can lead to less effective teachers getting paid more than effective ones.

Other assessment methods have been used to measure teacher performance rather than the sole use of the standardized test results of their students. These other measures include; conducting evaluations on teachers by administration or from fellow peers, documenting the attainment of further education and completion of courses, and recording the time spent on extra duties and responsibilities. All these factors have been recognized as helping to distinguish effective teachers from ineffective ones. After a clear and concise method is formulated for properly measuring student and teacher performance then the question remains, will teachers be motivated by a reward or incentive to teach better—assuming that teachers are able to work harder than they already are?

Incentives can range from many things but the most popular tend to be monetary rewards and time off. When deciding which incentive to choose, both the districts and school administrators must analyze which type will be most beneficial to their organizations as well as which is within their budget. Will teachers work harder for more pay, a chance for a bonus, paid time off, or an extra hour a day for personal time? Each choice entails different pros and cons.

It is widely known that the United States public school teaching career field is not a very monetary rewarding career. Since it is apparent that teachers do not enter their career field because of the prospect of high pay, is it feasible to believe that a monetary type reward will increase their effectiveness to produce greater results? Research indicates that money is usually not the primary motivator (Gratz 2009, 156). However, the issue of pay still has its concerns.

Ideas on increasing teacher salaries and allowing for the opportunity of monetary rewards have led to a few highly debated issues; retention and the hiring of quality college graduates. According to the National Education Association, “half of teachers quit in the first five years due to low salaries and poor working conditions” (Gratz 2009, 40). Gratz states that teaching is one of the only jobs where entry level workers immediately take on the responsibilities of other teachers and are required to immediately adhere to the same standards (2009, 217). Gratz also believes that teachers’ pay needs to be increased because good college graduates are going into higher paying career fields and he feels that the salary of a teacher will not benefit him/her enough to live a happy life (2009, 40). Is the quote “you get what you pay for” an issue here?

On top of problems with pay, other dilemmas have been noted to plague teachers. Problems such as feeling overwhelmed, lack of support, and bad working conditions. Obstacles like these cannot be solved by increasing the quantity and quality of work in lieu of a reward. Studies have shown that teachers do not always want more pay, but instead more time and less

duties (Gratz 2009, 42). Teachers are constantly gaining more responsibilities, however their salaries remain stagnant. The time devoted towards added responsibilities infringes upon the teachers' time for personal development and more importantly, the time spent in planning effective lesson plans for their students.

Yet another problem with the teaching field is the lack of career growth. In the business sector, employees are often provided a plethora of advancement opportunities; however public school teachers are limited in their positions for advancement. Often the only way they move up in the chain is by leaving the teaching field and entering into administrative positions. This action therefore removes the highest quality teachers, thus crippling the overall teacher quality.

Besides rewarding only the individual teacher, some have raised the option of rewarding the entire teaching staff and administration together. It has been noted that too many variables exist that skew performance results, making it difficult to determine which teacher was responsible for which students' successes. Unlike the business sector, public school teachers lack concise goals and easily recognizable standards. However, as a group, teachers and/or administrators have more clear measurable goals to include: graduation rates, competitions, and student growth between grade levels. Therefore, group incentives might be more sound.

With the introduction of an individual reward system, a sense of competitiveness is introduced between teachers in a school. Individual competition within an organization can lead to many problems. Although the strife for personal incentive might increase an individual teacher's effectiveness and efficiency, it also may reduce the level of communication and teamwork which are key components for all schools and districts. These problems may negatively affect students by introducing overlaps and gaps in lesson plans. Rewarding based upon the performance of an entire grade level or on the overall school achievement could help

foster a better sense of teamwork. Since students often learn visually by example, and through the observations of communication and teamwork between teachers, they will better understand and realize the importance teamwork plays in their future roles in society—if demonstrated appropriately. Teamwork is essential to the achievement of educational goals; therefore, team members deserve to share in the “wealth” that comes from their efforts (Canada 2000). By rewarding teachers together as a group or team, faculty and administration will build stronger bonds by opening up effective communication networks and more collaboration between workers. It will empower more instructional improvement as well as eliminate competition and its negative pitfalls. New ideas will surface and output will increase.

If a performance-based pay reform strategy is appropriate and key terms are clearly defined, it must also gain support from all stakeholders involved. Stakeholders must agree upon the definitions of teacher and student performance, type of incentive to be rewarded, group or individual incentives, and also on the type of plan to be implemented. Stakeholders include government officials, politicians, school administration, parents, the community, teachers, and staff. Educational scholars Laine, Potemski and Rowland (2010, 12) believe that:

Education reform initiatives should happen with teachers, not to teachers.

Engaging stakeholders early on in the process is essential to gaining and sustaining teacher buy-in. When formulating a new plan or policy for a school or district, the administration should develop and implement a process to discuss details with the public. A clear example of not engaging the stakeholders took place in Little Rock, Arkansas in 2006. A teacher pay plan was designed without involvement of the teachers. Consequently, the teachers opposed the plan, believing their feedback was not valued by the district (2010, 12).

In order for a pay-for-performance or other type of educational reform policy to produce positive results, it is important to learn from the successes and failures of past trials. In March of 2004, a pay-for performance plan was approved by the Denver, Colorado school district, which quickly gained attention. The plan, named ProComp, was created to bestow monetary incentives or bonuses to faculty on top of their regular salary. Incentives were rewarded based on the improvement of student achievements on tests, acquirement and demonstration of new knowledge and skills, choice to work in hard-to-staff schools and positions, and/or by receiving satisfactory evaluations (Gonring, Teske, and Jupp 2007). The plan defined and recognized teachers' performance by a multitude of factors instead of the sole use of student test scores. An important and highly critical component administrators of the program employed was the use of a pilot program. By first using a pilot program, changes were able to be easily applied. The inputs and suggestions from teachers, parents, politicians, and administrators were all taken into consideration. Allowing stakeholders to take a part in the design and make changes to the program, helped ensure that the reform was highly supported. The citizens of Denver were on board with the program as well, and they quickly voted and approved for increased funding for the school district. Denver's ProComp Plan is still in use today and is constantly undergoing new changes and improvement. Although the plan has seen its problems, much has been learned from its successes and failures. Denver's actions will always provide important data and insight to be studied and used for the design and improvement of future pay-for-performance programs.

In contrast to Denver's ProComp Plan, education reformer Anthony Alvarado implemented a different style and approach to reform. His approach focused on punishment instead of rewards or incentives. Alvarado was hired as the superintendent and school administrator first for Community District 2 of New York City in the 1990s, and later for San

Diego's school district. In each district, Alvarado quickly initiated new reforms whereby new curriculum was introduced focusing more time on mathematics and reading. Besides the dramatic change in curriculum, Alvarado's reform strategy also focused on quick changes without consultation from or deliberation with any of its stakeholders. His reform strategy left no topics up for debate and quickly created dissent and the loss of motivation within the school system and its teachers. Alvarado, along with San Diego's superintendent Alan Bersin replaced over 1/3 of the district's teachers and an astounding 90 percent of the district's principals (Ravitch 2010, 53-54). At the time of Alvarado's tenure in San Diego, research illustrated a substantial rise of success on state tests for reading and mathematics. However, upon further review by the American Institute of Research, it was found that these districts made no more achievement growth of their students than neighboring districts, and sometimes even less (Ravitch 2010, 59). This bias in results stems from the high number of variables allowing numbers and data to be easily manipulated and misinterpreted. This illustrates a clear example on how government officials, school administrators, and other decision makers need to use discretion and multiple resources in order to make the most rational and informed decisions.

The American Institute of Research explained that Alvarado's reform strategy was not a success for three main reasons: teacher buy-in was completely overlooked, teachers resisted the top-down management approach, and teachers felt fearful of losing their jobs. Also noted in almost every study conducted by other researchers was that a majority of the teachers were angry and disaffected (Ravitch 2010, 66). Excluding teachers, parents, and the public from important decisions about education policy does not help to solve many problems (Ravitch 2010, 90). Carl Cohn, replacement superintendent for Alvarado, argued that high quality leadership, staff collaboration, committed teachers, and a clean and safe environment has the best chance of

success (Ravitch 2010, 66). Studies of Alvarado and Bersin's reform actions have taught educational leaders and reformers two very important lessons: (1) rewards illicit better results than punishments, and (2) stakeholder involvement is crucial for success.

The Alvarado example also demonstrates the direct effects of the NCLB Act on the entire United States public education system. Much like Alvarado, the United States government enacted new policy and mandates without the collaboration of the stakeholders. Both Alvarado's plan and NCLB emphasize the importance of the subject areas of mathematics and English while limiting and neglecting the study of other important subject areas. Much like how the teachers under Alvarado's plan were subjected to strict and harsh punishment by not adhering to the set standards and guidelines, the NCLB Act also incorporates severe consequences. Will the failures with Alvarado's plan and manipulation of measurements also be experienced with the NCLB Act? Could it be happening already? Is it worthwhile to first deal with the problems of NCLB including its limited curriculum, performance measures, and top-down management, or is pay-for-performance the immediate answer to it all?

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to gather evidence to support or oppose the idea of pay-for-performance in Missouri public schools, and to provide alternatives to be used in place of or preceding the implementation of a pay-for-performance plan. The research uses an exploratory case study method along with a statistical survey.

The statistical survey was designed by the researcher and assesses the attitudes of Missouri public school teachers on ideas surrounding pay-for-performance and other issues of concern. Information is to be utilized in a way most beneficial in increasing student achievement

and teacher performance. Survey questions are used to help identify intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors currently affecting the teaching career field of Missouri public schools. A copy of the survey is available in Appendix A.

The population for the statistical survey is defined as a stratified random sample of Missouri public school teachers selected from the strata of urban, suburban, and rural public school districts. Random sampling was used to select a sufficient number of subjects from each stratum. The collection of data began on January 7, 2011 and ended on March 5, 2011. The total number of respondents was 105. The total number of surveys distributed was 1,215, resulting in an 11.6 percent response rate. The survey was conducted through an electronic mail that included an informed consent form. This method was used due to the limited cost of electronic surveys and the necessity for quick responses due to time constraints of the research. The questionnaire (survey) was electronically mailed to current Missouri public school teachers teaching in urban, suburban, and rural public school districts.

To ensure that the most valid and reliable information was received, only one survey could be completed per computer, or IP address, in order to eliminate multiple responses from the same individual. The use of electronic mail versus regular mail did not misrepresent the population because all Missouri public school teachers are provided with free electronic mail accounts. Other concerns and alternatives to pay-for-performance were also examined through an exploratory analysis of available literature and data.

From the results of the statistical surveys as well as the data collected through exploratory research, the need for pay-for-performance plans in Missouri's current K-12 education system was determined. The author has used the information gathered to help identify and define

problems associated with the current public education system including problems of curriculum, motivation, testing, and other areas affecting student and teacher performance.

Findings

From the analysis of the results taken from the survey, a few expected and some new findings on Missouri's education system have surfaced. The survey focused on four main elements: curriculum, performance measurement, teacher morale, and incentive pay. Results illustrate that teacher morale definitely suffers in all three strata of urban, rural, and suburban school districts. Across the board, all teachers feel undervalued, lack proper mentoring, lack sufficient time needed for personal development and the ability to develop solid lesson plans, and are overburdened with too many duties and responsibilities. Missouri teachers also feel that their students lag behind in learning critical life skills and that standardized testing does not perform as intended. Below, a more in-depth analysis of these findings along with recommendations are presented. In agreement with Diane Ravitch, the most enduring way to improve schools is to improve curriculum and the conditions in which teachers work (Ravitch 2010, 225). In following her lead, the issue of curriculum is discussed first.

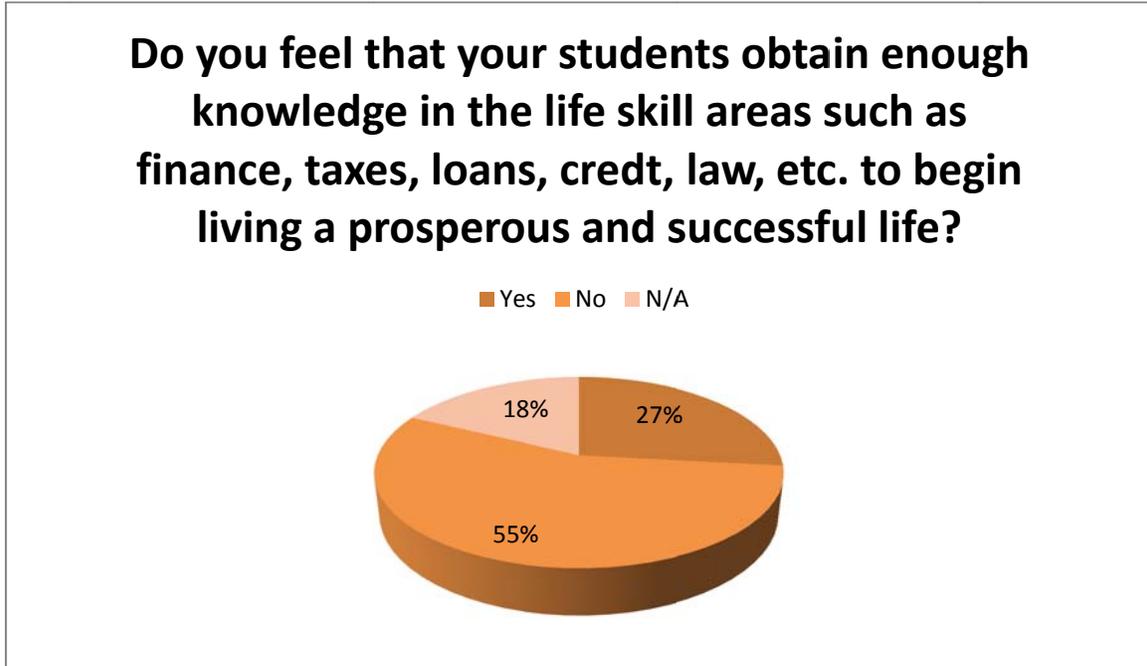
Recommendations

Curriculum

“The curriculum is a starting point for other reforms. It is a roadmap” (Ravitch 2010, 231). For any job that lacks proper guidelines and directions, their goal or task will most likely always fail. Therefore, schools need proper guidelines on what and how to educate their students. Those guidelines must be written with the goal, or end result, of the student in mind. The goal for Missouri and all United States public school system students should not be to score higher on standardized tests than students from other countries or competing states. Instead students should be prepared for the responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy and be able to make sound decisions based on knowledge, thoughtful debate, and reason (Ravitch 2010, 226). Schools must not let curriculum be dictated by textbooks and the private companies producing them, and schools cannot allow curriculum to be driven by standardized tests. As one surveyed teacher stated, “Much of what we teach is dictated by testing, so other curricular goals that are not tested by the state get much less class time, even though they are sometimes more relevant” (Anonymous 2011a). Just as any teacher, professor, or other educator believes, testing is for what has been taught, not teaching for what is to be tested.

The creation of a well-defined and commendable curriculum must be adopted by all schools within the United States. A proper set of standards and guidelines will truly ensure that no children are left behind, along with promoting equity between and within all schools. A collaboration of school administrators, teachers, government officials, and scholars from all areas must be used in determining these curricular directions to be followed. Children must be educated in the full range of liberal arts, sciences, and physical education (Ravitch 2010, 231-232).

Figure 1.



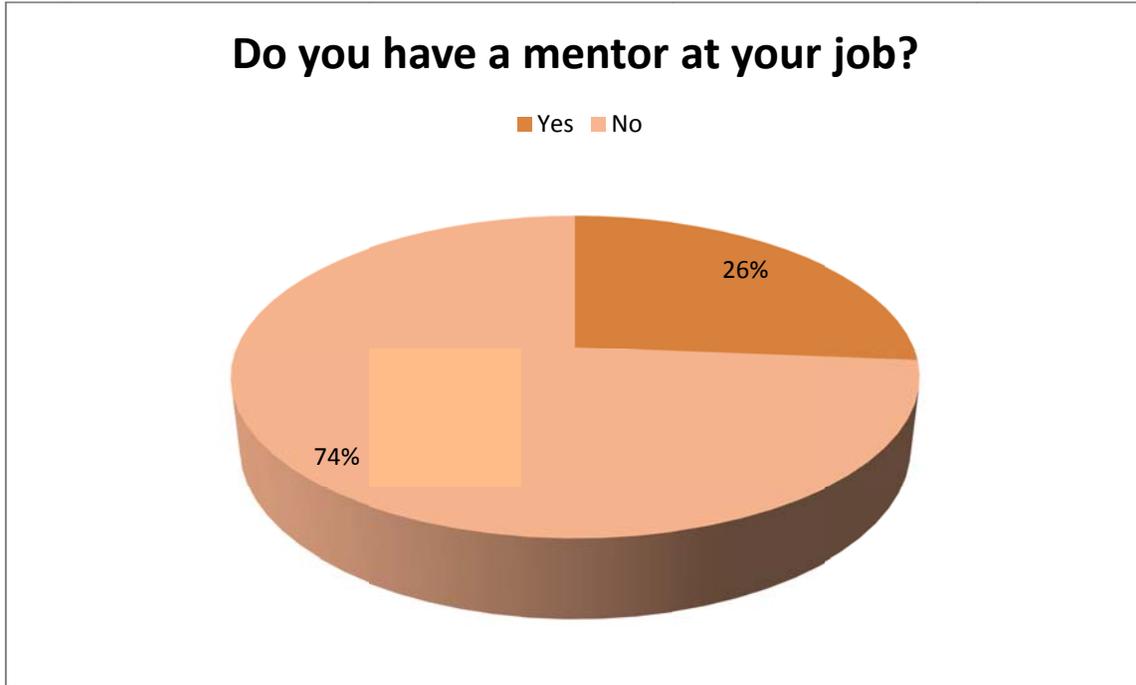
When Missouri teachers were asked if their students received enough education in life skills and other important areas needed for everyday life, about 27 percent stated yes (see Figure 1). Without a proper curriculum, students test scores might still be high, but their knowledge of diverse subject matter and ability to reason will definitely suffer. Children must learn more than just finding the most likely answer or how to properly fill in circles with number two pencils. Our future leaders and followers must learn responsibility, compassion, integrity, perseverance and many other essential aspects of life that cannot be evaluated or taught by learning test taking strategies. To better ensure that all children are prepared for life after graduation, Diane Ravitch suggests an exceptional idea. She believes that students should receive career and technical studies during their last two years of high school for those planning to enter the workforce after high school graduation (Ravitch 2010, 232). This idea would help fight poverty and benefit the economy by giving graduates quality skills that are needed in today's workforce. The unemployment rate would surely avail. Skills taught should be based upon current trends of

needed and hard-to-fill positions within the local labor force. A good curriculum plan must also allow for time and space for school and individual teacher discretion on how lessons are to be taught, studied, and evaluated.

Teacher Morale

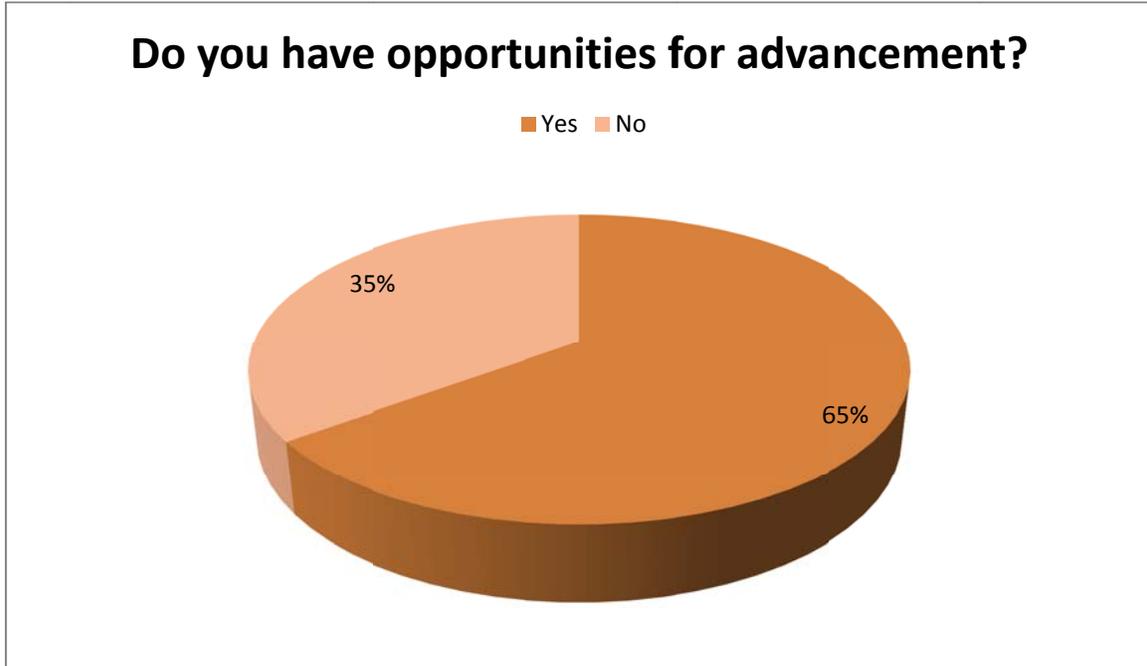
Through the survey conducted, it was found that teacher morale is an issue needing more attention. The components supporting this finding include: about 74 percent of the teachers surveyed do not have a mentor (see Figure 2), 65 percent lack in having available opportunities for advancement (see Figure 3), 70 percent lack in time needed to develop the best possible lesson plans for their class (see Figure 4), 54 percent feel overburdened with too many duties and responsibilities (see Figure 5), 50 percent do not have sufficient time for personal development to become a better teachers (see Figure 6), 89 percent feel their salary is not competitive with those in the private workforce (see Figure 7), and 73 percent of the teachers feel undervalued and unappreciated as a teacher (see Figure 8). These numbers clearly portray the problems existing within the public education system, especially in the State of Missouri. With low motivated teachers, how can we expect them to achieve high quality results and goals?

Figure 2.



The fact that teachers suffer from not being properly mentored is a problem not necessarily resulting from federal or state mandates. Instead, this problem is associated with the lack of proper organization from within the school and district administration. It does not require any extra funding to assign a low or mid-level teacher an experienced mentor. Mentoring is an important component of any job. Entry-level workers cannot be expected to properly learn the job and succeed without an experienced person guiding them in their ways. Mentoring alone could possibly result in decreasing all other negative factors affecting teacher motivation. This should be the first and yet the easiest step towards increasing the morale level and effectiveness of the teaching staff.

Figure 3.



The lack of opportunities for advancement has always been a factor in the teaching field. Teachers are only able to move up in position by going into an administrative position. In effect, if the best teachers are allowed to enter into administrative positions such as principals and superintendents, then the teaching staff suffers by losing their top teachers. This progressively decreases the quality of teaching as teachers move up into administrative positions. Top performing teachers need to be kept in teaching. This can only be achieved by establishing levels or grades for teachers based upon their performance. These levels should be differentiated by separate pay scales with separate duties and responsibilities. When a top performing teacher is selected to move into a higher teaching level or grade, that teacher should receive more pay based upon his/her performance. Also, the knowledge, skills, and abilities from the top performing teachers should be passed on to other teachers as well. This would be accomplished by eliminating duties and responsibilities associated with the lower grade or level and replacing them with mentoring responsibilities. The top performing, higher level teachers would be given

extra time to help instill their knowledge and mentor those who are new or having trouble in the field of teaching. Advancement opportunities could even peak into a position whereby the top teacher of a school devotes all his or her time into the development of new and/or struggling teachers. This would eliminate new teachers from having to fend for themselves as well as provide a support system both motivationally and scholarly in order to help them stay motivated. Teacher retention is a major problem facing the teaching field and must be addressed.

Figure 4.

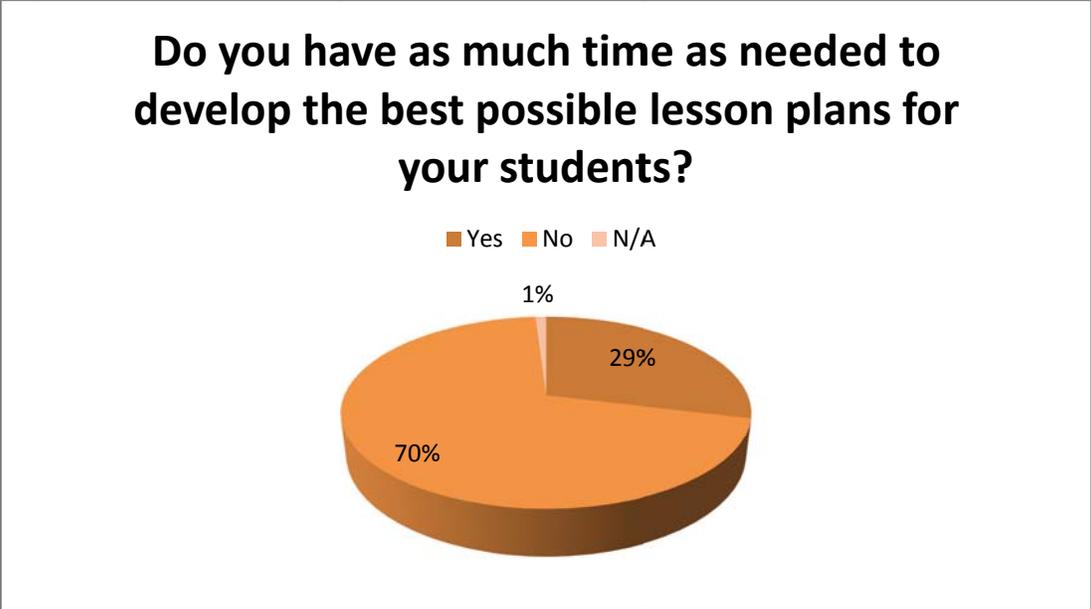


Figure 5.

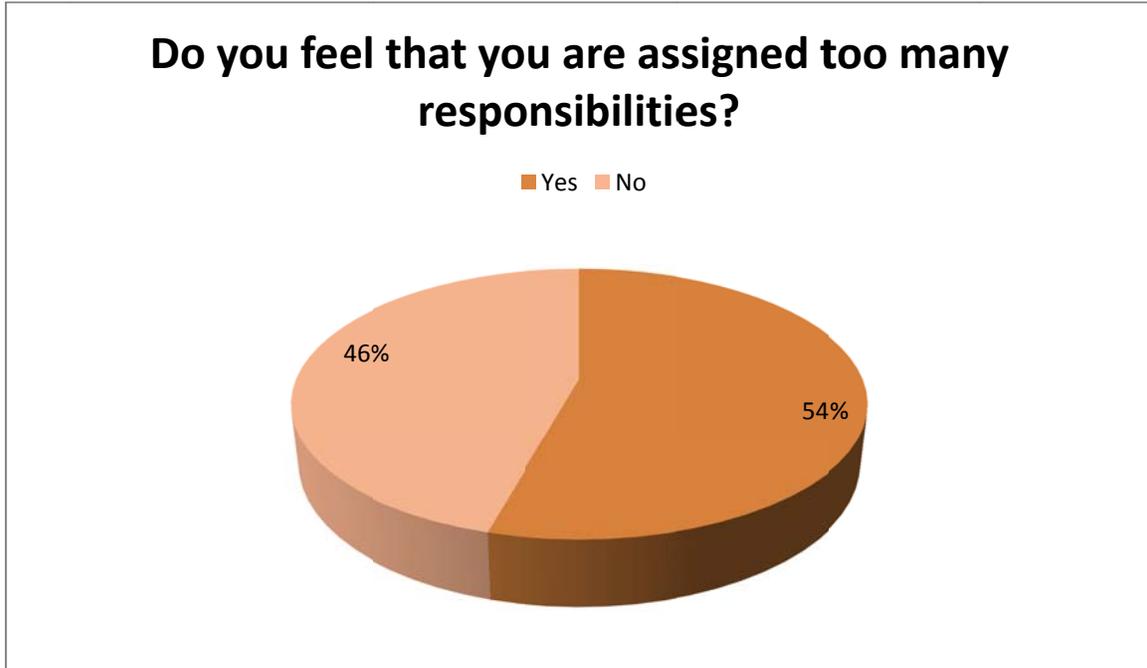


Figure 6:



Aside from the lack of mentoring and advancement opportunities, more than half of teachers feel overburdened with too many responsibilities and tasks (see Figure 5). This is a serious problem negatively affecting teacher quality and effectiveness. Results indicate that

teachers lack in both time needed for developing solid lesson plans (as reported in Figure 4) as well as time needed for personal development and growth (as shown in Figure 6). Having a good lesson plan is probably the most important aspect in classroom instruction for teachers. Without it, student achievement is adversely affected due to improper organization of learning objectives, inadequate pertinent information towards the subject goal, and inefficient use of time. By failing to give teachers adequate time for the development of the best possible lesson plans, students are being neglected and student achievement will suffer.

Personal growth is something all employees in every field must be allotted to ensure adequate professional development. Personal growth and professional development allow employees to learn new aspects of their trade and become more efficient and effective in their work. By neglecting to provide teachers with time for personal growth, teachers are prevented from being the best that they can be. Adequate personal growth for teachers allows them to attain further education and knowledge towards the instruction of their students. With continual education on teaching strategies and ideas, better quality teachers are developed which in turn may lead to higher quality and higher achieving students. School administrations and policymakers must recognize the importance of further education and development for all public school teachers. Even with the experience gained from teaching year after year, there are still many other approaches, ideas, and concepts that will never be learned except by means of proper personal growth and appropriate professional development.

Figure 7.

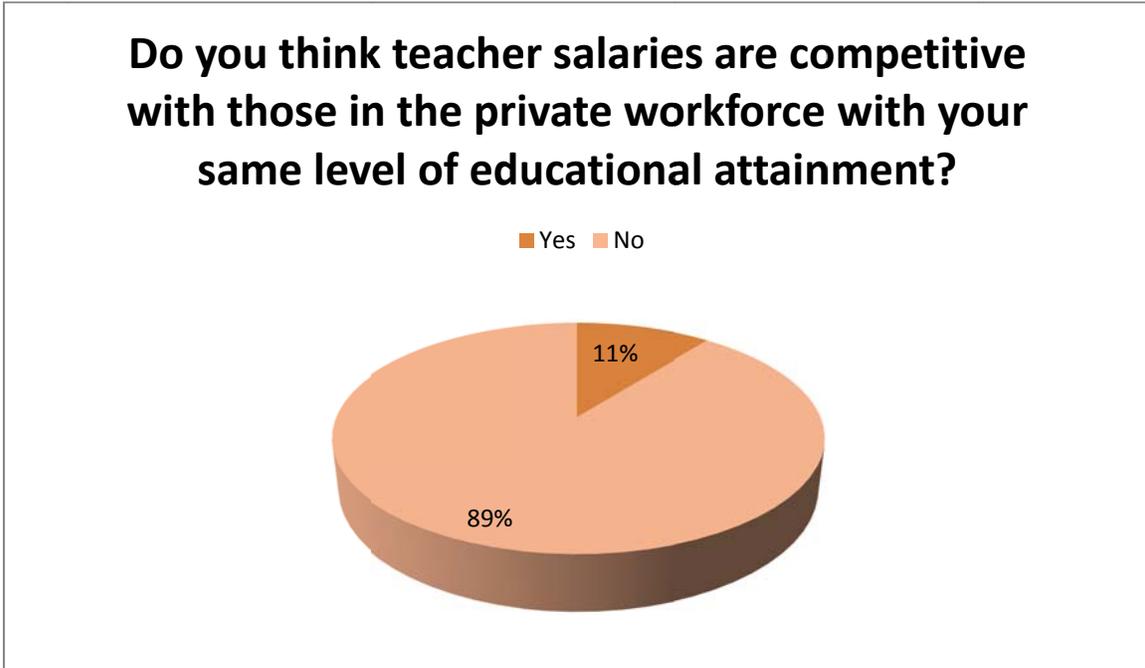
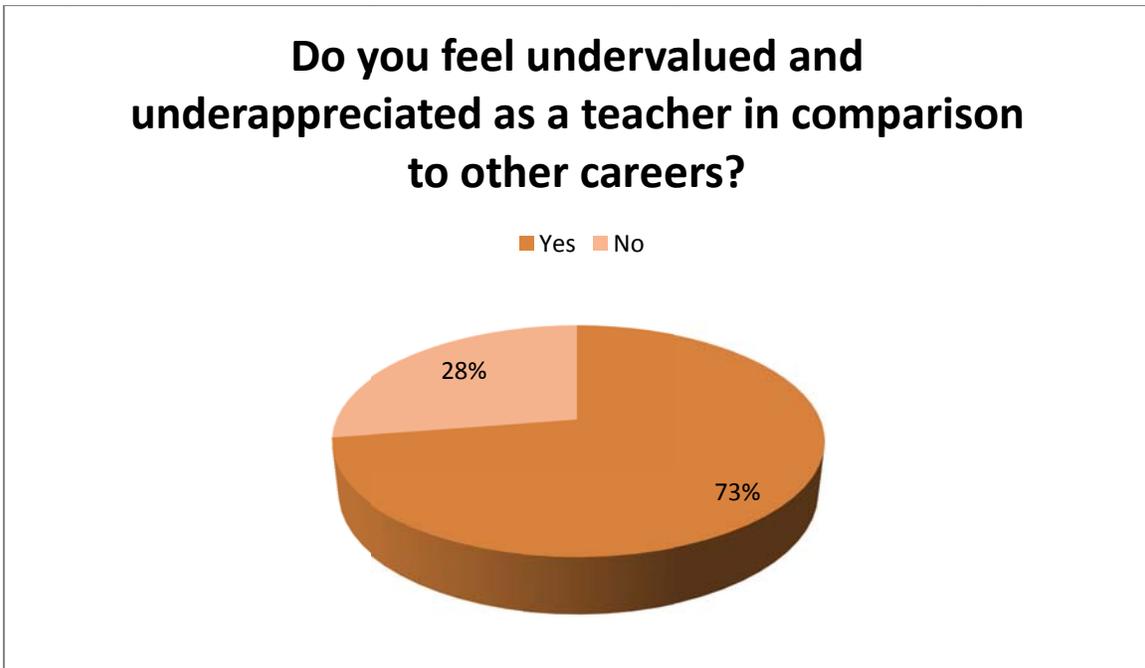


Figure 8.



“When I became a teacher, I knew I would never be rich,” (Anonymous 2011b) quote from a surveyed Missouri public school teacher. The topic of teacher salary is an area that has

been under constant attention by school administrators, teachers, communities, and all levels of government since the establishment of the first public schools. It is widely known that a teacher's salary is sometimes too low for personal enrichment. Low salary for teachers is the root to a variety of problems, which mainly include teacher retention and recruitment, quality of life, and motivation. These factors all influence the quality of teaching which adversely affects the students as well. By raising the salaries of public school teachers, teacher retention and recruitment will be positively affected. When college students are deciding on which discipline to major, they try to match what subject areas will best benefit them toward their desired career paths or goals. Career paths are chosen by a variety of reasons from either, "it's what my parents did, I've always wanted to do that, I want to help people, or because it pays a lot." By raising teacher salaries, more college students will be prone to major in the education field and go on to apply for teaching positions. The increased pay would cause an influx of teachers into the field thereby increasing the value and appreciation towards the teaching field. The increased number of applicants would help to ensure that high quality teachers are selected. Retention will also be positively affected by obtaining a more sought after career and by being competitive with jobs requiring the same education level.

With an increase in salary, teacher's quality of life would prosper and consequently decrease the overall amount of stress a teacher faces. Teachers would have the ability to be more financially secure, which would lessen the amount of home-life worries brought into the classroom. With increased salaries, more time and thought could be devoted toward more comprehensive lesson plans. Lesson plans would become more detailed and properly geared toward their multi-developmental inclusive audience. Also, teachers would be able to afford programs and courses needed for personal development and professional growth. Beneficial

impacts would be seen across the board and more respect would be given, in comparison to other highly respected careers such as the medical and legal fields.

The effects on student performance caused by low teacher morale and high stress could quickly be derailed by paying special attention towards the issues listed above. While some of the issues, such as teacher salaries, require drastic increases in funding, others such as mentors, better organization of responsibilities, and the availability of advancement opportunities do not. Besides teacher morale, another component needing special attention by United States and Missouri departments of education is that of performance measurement.

Performance Measurement

When an automotive parts company wants to know how well its new suspension system works for heavy duty construction trucks, it usually asks the workers who drive the trucks. However, when asked if teacher performance can be linked to student performance, governmental officials feel their input and opinions on the subject are more important and valid than those actually conducting the teaching. When Missouri teachers were asked if they felt standardized tests accurately reflect students' performance, 81 percent disagreed (see Figure 9). When Missouri teachers were asked if they felt students' scores on those tests reflect their teacher's performance, an astounding 89 percent disagreed (see Figure 10). These opinions come from those closest to the debate, and whose opinions need much more respect, the teachers.

Figure 9.

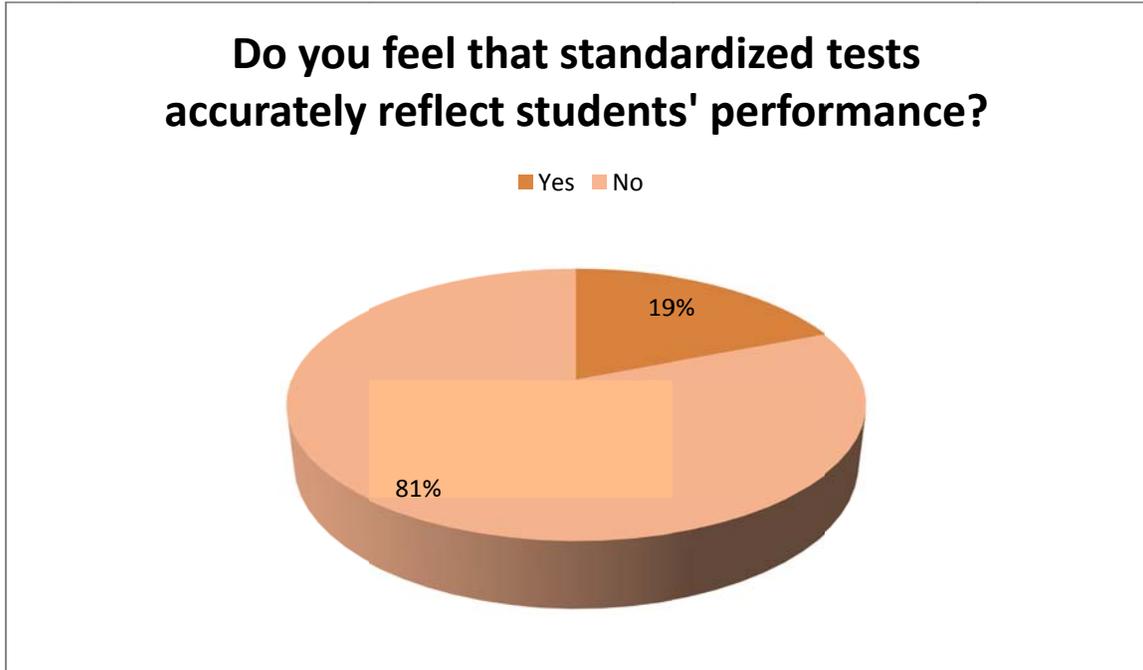
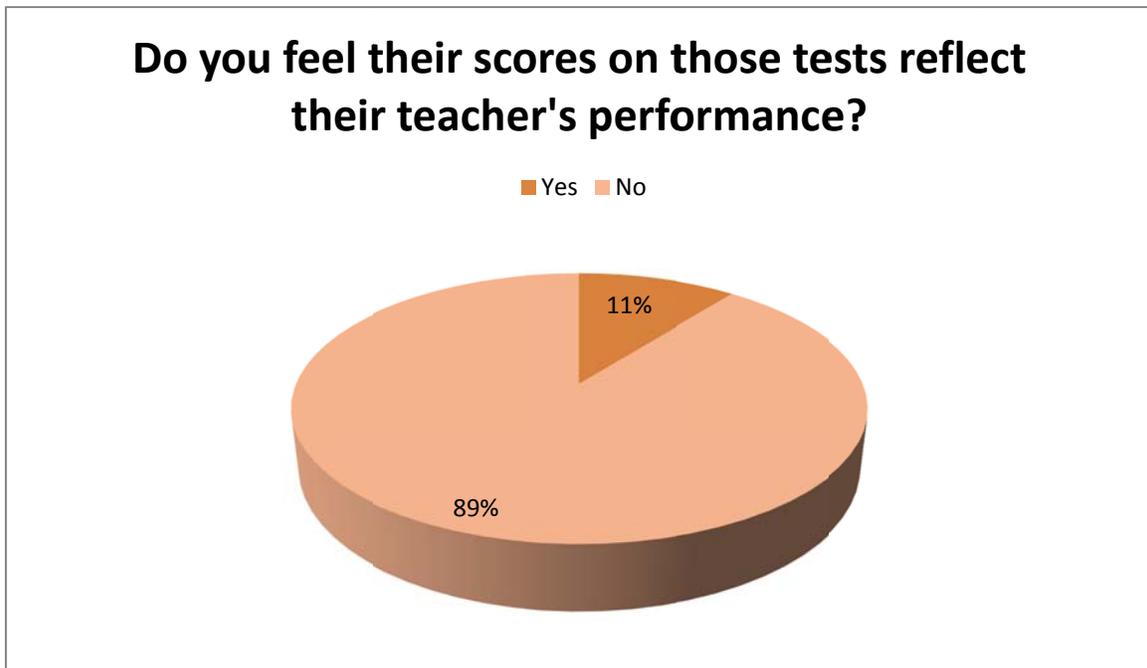


Figure 10.



Linking student test scores to student performance as well as teacher performance is utterly wrong. As discussed earlier, too many variables exist that destroy the validity and

reliability of standardized tests. These variables include: teaching to the test, test preparation overkill, gaming of the tests, test quality, and most importantly environmental factors outside the teachers' control. These variables negatively affect the use of standardized tests for measuring performance.

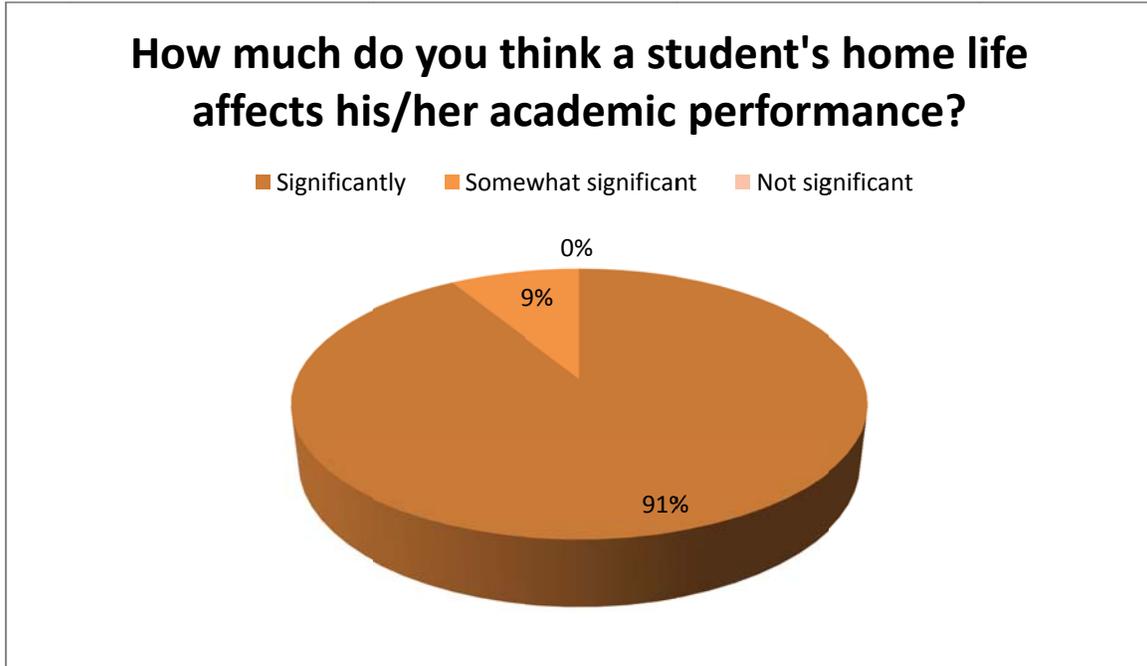
The first problem of utilizing standardized tests can be corrected by simply withholding knowledge about the test content in order to stop excessive test preparation from occurring. If teachers are provided insight into the material to be tested, it is human nature that they will begin preparing and paying special attention to the identified subject material. Eliminating test content knowledge from administration and faculty will help prevent the narrowing of curriculum as well as give students a broader range of knowledge and skills. To further prevent the narrowing of curriculum, tests must measure more than just mathematics and English. Tests must reflect all subject areas to include physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts.

If standardized testing is to be used, then its method of measurement must be changed. Currently, students are measured based on their test scores taken from an annual standardized test. Their scores are used as a reflection of individual teacher's and school's performance. This method creates a major problem. If teachers are to be rated based upon their students' scores on standardized tests, then a more detailed system needs to be put into place. By only measuring students' performance based upon one test, how can the teachers' performance be linked to their students? What if an ineffective teacher had a class with a majority of gifted students, or what if an effective teacher had a class full of low-performing students? The scores of their students would not accurately reflect the teachers' effectiveness in the classroom. If schools are to use standardized tests to measure teacher performance, then they need to measure the students' performance at the beginning of the year and compare those findings to the students' scores near

or at the end of the year. This would allow for individual student growth to be measured as well as the effectiveness of the individual teacher. This would also eliminate many problems and help garner more respect for the tests from the faculty. Teachers would feel more comfortable that their successes as teachers are not based upon the luck of having a large amount of high-performing students over low-performing students. Instead, teachers could be rated based upon the amount of growth and knowledge in which they were able to instill in each of their students. Testing at the beginning and at the end of the year is the only way to properly measure the effectiveness of a school's teaching staff. Diane Ravitch suggests more valuable ideas on performance measurement. In her words;

To lift the quality of education, we must encourage schools to use measures of educational accomplishment that are appropriate to the subjects studied, such as research papers in history, essays and stories in literature, research projects in science, demonstrations of mathematical competence, videotaped or recorded conversations in a foreign language, performances in the arts, and other exhibitions of learning. Nor should test scores be the sole measure of the quality of a school. Every state should establish inspection teams to evaluate the physical and educational conditions of its schools, to ensure that a full curriculum is taught, and to review the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors should judge teaching and learning by observation, not by using checklists... The goal of evaluation should not be used to identify schools that must be closed, but instead to identify schools that need help (Ravitch 2010, 238).

Figure 11.



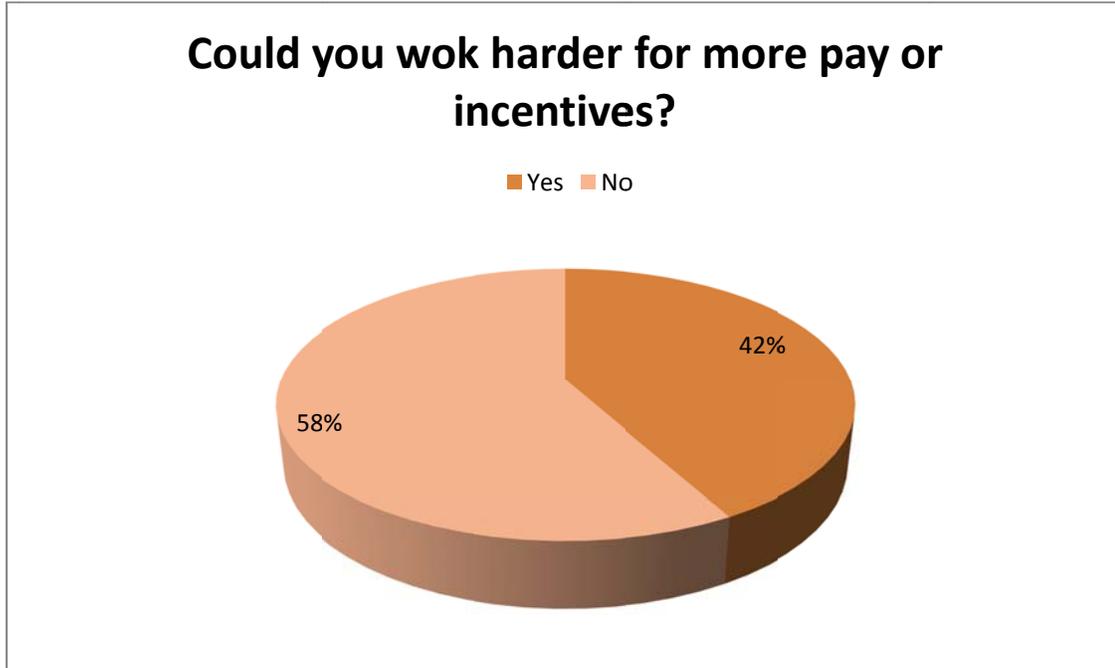
When Missouri teachers were asked how much they thought their students' home lives affected their academic performance, the answer was clear. About 91 percent believed that life and activities outside the classroom played a significant role in the achievement of the student (see Figure 11). This consensus completely erodes away the belief that student test scores can be linked to teacher performance. Even if a student from a bad home life with a single parent in poverty has a highly effective teacher, that student's test scores will usually be below average or failing. It does not matter if students are being taught by the most effective means or by the most efficient teachers using the latest and greatest technology, having someone to go home and study with makes a dramatic difference. If a student's home-life is not in support of education, his/her education will most likely always fail. By neglecting to address the issues of poverty first, educational reform measures will not be able to succeed.

Instead of trying to measure individual teacher performance, schools need to focus on their overall performance. By encouraging competition between teachers, low morale and a loss

of team unity is often a concern. As stated earlier, teachers need to have open relationships with one another that allows for the sharing of knowledge and ideas. Moreover, teachers need to be held accountable for not just their individual actions, but for the actions of their schools or districts as well. When parents enroll their students into an educational system, they are not selecting a teacher, but instead they are selecting a school. It is not the sole responsibility of a single teacher to educate a child. A collaborative effort between all teachers, and parents, must be utilized in order to attain the maximum results from their students. Therefore, measures of performance need to focus on areas such as the graduation rate and the number of students that promptly enter post-secondary education or the work-force. However, these measures would be dependent on factors such as the unemployment rate, the amount of jobs in the area or state, and the financial ability of students being able to enter into post-secondary education.

Too many variables exist that impair the usefulness of standardized testing in measuring student and teacher performance. By not recognizing these variables, local, state, and national policies will lack in promoting the most effective and efficient measures of education reform thereby never accomplishing reform's desired results.

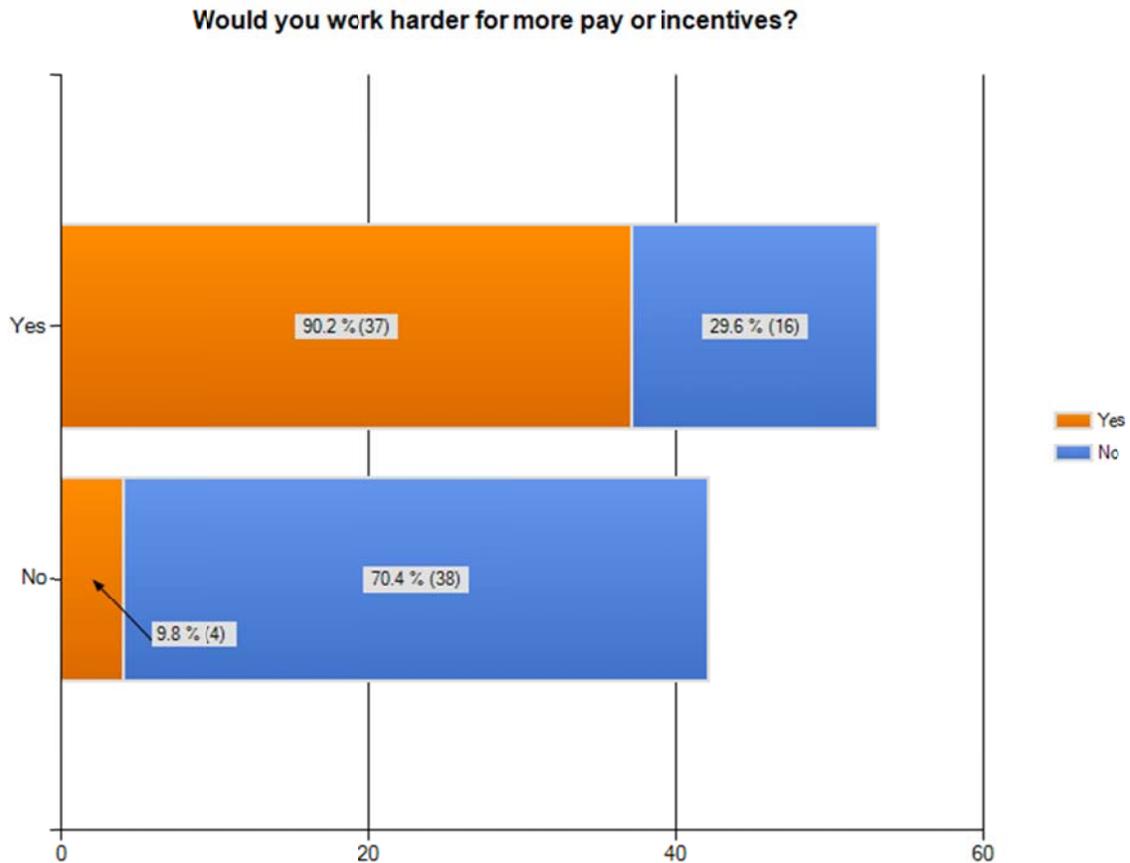
Figure 12. *Incentive Pay*



When it came to the question based on incentive pay, the results were split, however the beliefs were similar. About 58 percent of teachers stated that they were unable to work any harder than they already work (see Figure 12). These teachers agreed that they work at their fullest potential by taking work home and never adhering to a proper break. They also admitted that pay was not an issue. One surveyed teacher stated that, “Pay has nothing to do with helping students reach their potential—most of us didn't take on the role as a teacher for the pay, but it would be nice to be out of poverty” (Anonymous 2011b). Another teacher wrote, “I already work very hard. I would do this job with no pay or incentives if I got the recognition and appreciation that I deserve” (Anonymous 2011c). Of the 42 percent of the teachers that stated they could work harder for more pay or incentives, most wrote that extra pay would be nice, however, the incentive of having extra time and less responsibilities was most important. The responses further help support the belief that teacher morale and effectiveness can be increased by limiting

teacher responsibilities and allowing more time for adequate teacher preparation and personal development.

Figure 13.



Of the 42 percent of the teachers surveyed who stated they could work harder for an incentive, 90 percent of those actually would (see Figure 13). Therefore, some type of incentive system, if properly implemented based upon an accurate method of performance measure, would positively affect the level of work accomplished by approximately 39 percent of Missouri’s public school teaching staff that responded to the survey. However, the majority of the teachers surveyed, claim they are already working to their fullest potential.

The data suggest that an incentive based system has the capability to produce significantly beneficial results if properly designed and implemented. Despite its possible success, there are currently too many variables such as teacher and student performance as well as unclear goals of what students are to accomplish from school that have been neglected.

Conclusion

The research and evidence that has been provided clearly displays how the Missouri public education system, along with other states in the Union, are not yet ready for the implementation of a pay-for-performance or incentive based pay program. Without accurate definitions of the key terms, teacher and student performance, incentive based programs utilizing standardized testing as the sole measure of performance will never produce valid and accurate results. Issues including curriculum, teacher morale and performance measures are all in dire need of attention. These areas have been neglected or have been improperly conducted for far too long.

The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) has adopted four pillars of public administration to help administrators and those representing the citizens of the United States to promote efficiency, effectiveness, economy and social equity. In order to best advocate NAPA's two most crucial pillars, efficiency and effectiveness, administrators and public education stakeholders must put national and state curriculums at the forefront of the debate. A consensus must be made in determining the true goal of our education system and what it is that the United States children are to learn. Only then, can testing be created to measure the effectiveness of teachers in delivering the desired knowledge to their students.

The United States needs to support public school teachers and grant them the respect they deserve. Teachers work difficult jobs and are held to impossible standards. They need to feel more valued and appreciated as well as receive all means necessary for improving their effectiveness as teachers.

NAPA's third pillar of public administration, economy, needs significant attention as well. The reduction or the idea of cutting education budgets must end. Public education funds, Pell grants, and all other funds that help to better educate children of lower and middle-class families must be spared and more valued. Government representatives must forget that their children are in private schools and are able to afford any university of their choosing. Instead they must learn to reason and rationalize like the ordinary or common man for which they represent.

As Diane Ravitch has stated throughout many of her public presentations, a student's performance is not nearly affected by the quality of teaching or advanced measures in use by their school as it is by which zip code in which they live. Poverty is a huge determinant of a student's performance and needs sufficient attention. Neglecting to confront the effect of poverty on the success of students, teachers, and schools is like neglecting to ever service one's vehicle. It might run well for a while, but sooner or later the engine will fail and serious repairs will be needed. Reform actions must take in consideration all aspects and components of learning including the environment in which the students live and other vital areas. To ensure that all facets are properly regarded, the incorporation of all stakeholders must be made. By listening to all opinions and perspectives, only then can rational and effective decisions be made.

Future hopes are that this research has provided enough information to warrant further and more detailed studies into the development of improved curriculums, better and more

accurate measures of both student and teacher performance, as well as measures to help improve teacher morale. Proper representation of the people by government officials and school administrators must be reflected throughout all decisions, policies, and laws of the United States. Problems of misrepresentation are plagues that need extinguishing in order to promote equity for which the United States was founded upon. Social equity is NAPA's fourth pillar of public administration and by adhering to this value, problems such as the demise of our current education system can be thwarted. The promotion of social equity will help ensure that every man, woman, and child in any area of the United States is offered a high quality, attainable, and meaningful education.

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Appendix A.

1.

1. What type of school district do you teach in?

Urban Suburban Rural

2. Do you have a mentor at your job?

Yes No

3. Do you have opportunities for advancement?

Yes No

4. Are you given the freedom needed to effectively educate your students?

N/A Yes No

Comment (Other)

5. Do you feel that standardized tests accurately reflect students' performance?

Yes No

Comment (Other)

6. Do you feel their scores on those tests reflect their teacher's performance?

Yes No

Comment (Other)

7. Do you feel that you are assigned too many responsibilities?

Yes No

8. Do you have as much time as needed to develop the best possible lesson plans for your students?

N/A

Yes

No

Comment (Other)

9. Do you have enough time for personal development in order to help yourself become a better teacher?

- Yes No

Comment (Other)

10. Do you feel that your students obtain enough knowledge in the life skill areas such as finance, taxes, loans, credit, law, etc. to begin living a prosperous and successful life?

- N/A Yes No

Comment (Other)

11. How much do you think a student's home life affects his/her academic performance?

- Significantly Somewhat significant Not significant

Comment (Other)

12. Do you think teacher salaries are competitive with those in the private workforce with your same level of educational attainment?

- Yes No

13. Do you feel undervalued and underappreciated as a teacher in comparison to other careers?

- Yes No

14. Could you work harder for more pay or incentives?

- Yes No

Comment (Other)

15. Would you work harder for more pay or incentives?

- Yes No

Comment (Other)