

# Pay It Forward

**A RATIONAL PROPOSAL FOR  
TEACHER COMPENSATION**

**June 2014**

**“The teacher has to have the energy of the hottest volcano, the memory of an elephant and the diplomacy of an ambassador...a teacher has to have love and knowledge and use this combined passion to be able to accomplish something.”**

**JAIME ESCALANTE, *Los Angeles Teacher***

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# Letter

## TO CALIFORNIA TAXPAYERS

Dear Taxpayers of California,

California, for decades, was seen as the great example of investment in public education. Our state systems of higher education are some of the best universities in the world, and our budget structure promised to put significant resources into K-12 education each year. Unfortunately, with fluctuations in the economy and other structural issues, our investment in public education dropped significantly, and in 2012, California was ranked 47th in per pupil spending.<sup>1</sup>

That's why we are so grateful to the voters of California for passing Proposition 30, which is bringing much-needed revenue to our schools, students and teachers. And we are grateful to our state leaders for passing the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which promises to drive these dollars toward the students and schools that need them most. In return for your confidence in our local districts, we aim to invest these dollars wisely, in strategies that drive student achievement forward.

In public schools, we spend over a third of our budget on teacher salaries,<sup>2</sup> yet we tend to view teacher compensation as a separate issue from raising student achievement. If we want to attract and retain the teachers our children deserve, we need our compensation system to communicate the reality of the classroom: teaching is not a profession for the unambitious or the goal-shy. Anybody can say they believe all children can learn, but it takes immense organization, obsession with goals and data, a heart for collaboration and unbounded creativity to achieve real results for students.

Our current pay system, called “step and lane” or “step and column,” looks at only two factors: years of experience and degrees or credentials earned. Research demonstrates that credentials earned do not have a significant impact on student achievement and the impact of years of experience levels off after the first 5-7 years.<sup>3</sup> Instead, research suggests that the teachers who make the biggest impact on students collaborate with peers,<sup>4</sup> maintain high expectations for all of their students<sup>5</sup> and are experts in their subject matter.<sup>6</sup>

We believe reimagining teacher compensation is one of the ways we can prepare to tackle the changes happening in the teaching sector. Over the coming years, we will need to continue the transition to Common Core standards and assessments, address a wave of teacher retirements and a new generation of teachers with different career expectations and integrate technology into our classrooms and daily practice. We cannot do any of these things without attracting, developing and keeping great teachers.

Given the intensely polarizing rhetoric around teacher compensation and the clear paradigm shifts happening in teaching, we began our process of generating recommendations by examining the clear benefits and shortcomings of the current system. We studied the history of our compensation policies and interviewed our peers. We also examined what was possible. We researched the factors that drive professional motivation, both through academic literature and through field

**What does this policy idea communicate about the teaching profession, and ultimately, what will this policy achieve for our students?**

research. We looked at compensation systems being piloted across Los Angeles and across the nation. We polled hundreds of our colleagues, and we used their perspectives to further inform our thinking and writing. Many of our ideas became stronger and more inclusive because of what we learned from their input. We did not always agree immediately—in a group of first-year teachers, 40-plus-year teachers, district teachers and charter teachers, we each brought unique perspectives and concerns. And so we anchored our discussion in this guiding question: “What does this policy idea communicate about the teaching profession, and ultimately, what will this policy achieve for our students?”

The result is this set of recommendations, a rational plan, for seizing the crossroads at which we currently stand and transitioning to a more robust and meaningful compensation system that enables our schools to attract, develop and retain great educators in Los Angeles.

With great hope,

E4E-Los Angeles Teacher Policy Team on Differentiated Compensation

## MIDDLE GROUND

### SAFE AND STATUS QUO

#### MAINTAIN THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF COMPENSATION BY

Preserving the need for a clear and uniform compensation system based on teacher outputs and years in the system

Avoiding the connection between teacher performance and student performance

#### BUT

Failing to compete with other industry compensation systems used to attract and keep top talent

Failing to connect compensation to student achievement, peer collaboration, teacher leadership and community engagement

Failing to address the changing aspirations of a workforce interested in career growth and advancement

### RATIONAL TRANSITION

#### TRANSITION TO A MULTI-MEASURED SYSTEM OF COMPENSATION BY

Ensuring a fair and transparent transition from old compensation practices to innovative ones

Using research-based methods to align compensation to new models of teacher evaluation and the mindsets and behaviors that drive student achievement

Recognizing the need to build and test accurate measures of student achievement in all subjects to fully integrate these measures in compensation systems

#### WHILE ALSO

Competing with other industry compensation systems used to attract and keep top talent

Connecting compensation to student achievement, peer collaboration, teacher leadership and community engagement

Tapping into changing aspirations while honoring fundamental values of our current compensation system

### COMPLETE OVERHAUL

#### QUICKLY OVERHAUL THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF COMPENSATION BY

Accelerating integration of student achievement data before building out robust and reliable tools for measuring student growth in all subjects

Saving money by only paying for factors that tie directly to student growth in test scores

#### BUT

Failing to engage teachers and secure buy-in for changes to compensation policies

Failing to address concerns around the accuracy and reliability of the measures of student growth

Failing to honor both the need for evolution and the fundamental values of our current compensation



# CREATING A LASTING IMPACT ON STUDENTS

## GETTING GREAT TEACHERS IN THE DOOR

INCENTIVES FOR  
HARD-TO-STAFF POSITIONS

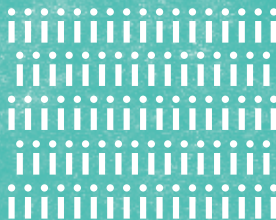
INCENTIVES FOR  
INDIVIDUAL IMPACT ON  
STUDENT GROWTH



## INCENTIVIZING TEACHER GROWTH

INCENTIVES FOR  
MASTERY-BASED  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

INCENTIVES FOR  
EXCELLING IN  
LEADERSHIP ROLES



## KEEPING GREAT TEACHERS LONG TERM

INCENTIVES FOR  
HARD-TO-STAFF  
SCHOOLS

INCENTIVES FOR  
TEAM IMPACT ON  
STUDENT GROWTH



# Getting Great Teachers in the Door

## ATTRACTING TALENT

In the teaching profession, we are facing a dilemma common across sectors: how to inspire our current staff as well as our future generation of career seekers. This new generation wants more career advancement, more opportunity for innovation and more impact on the world.<sup>7,8</sup> The changing career goals of this new generation, together with the coming wave of retirements,<sup>9</sup> brings good news and a good challenge for the teaching profession. The good news is there is nowhere better to make a difference than in our nation's classrooms. And there is nothing more ripe for innovation than the daily challenge of adapting lessons to the strengths and needs of each student. But we will not draw in new teachers by pumping more money into a clearly ineffective compensation system. All the recommendations in this section are incentives that work to draw in and keep top talent in our classrooms.

## WHY SCHOOLS ARE STRUGGLING TO ATTRACT GREAT TEACHERS

- Teaching is not seen as a prestigious career, and a set of clear standards are needed to professionalize the teaching profession.<sup>10</sup>
- Lack of early career supports and investment in career growth leads in part to high turnover, which also lowers the prestige of the profession overall.<sup>11</sup>
- Starting salaries are not high enough to compete with jobs needing similar levels of training, particularly for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) degrees and bilingual certification.<sup>12</sup>

## THE CURRENT PROBLEM

In our public schools, we are not currently attracting and training the right applicants to fill our large, and soon to expand, list of openings. In California, we will need over 33,000 math and science teachers in the next 10 years; we are currently falling woefully short of this goal. The number of teacher credentials issued has fallen by 16% in math and 30% in science.<sup>13</sup> Overall, the number of teacher credentials issued has fallen by 30% in the last five years.<sup>14</sup> This creates a state of emergency in public education, particularly as we consider the impact our impending wave of retirements will have on our ability to staff these critical classrooms with talent.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, this crisis presents an opportunity for us to think creatively about making this profession appealing to a new generation of career seekers.



“The teaching profession is already full of talented individuals I learn from every day. But I also think there are far too many would-be Irreplaceables who do not feel ‘called’ to teaching. They are incredibly passionate about making a positive impact in their work, about pushing themselves to do their very best in challenging circumstances, and are looking for jobs where they could do just that. If teaching didn’t require them to weigh those sorts of passions against a significantly lower lifetime earnings, maybe they would feel ‘called.’”

**Andrew Blumenfeld,**

*Fifth grade teacher, Crown Prep Academy, and member of the La Cañada-Flintridge Unified School Board*

## INCENTIVES FOR HARD-TO-STAFF POSITIONS

### WHAT THIS TOOL DOES

There is an impending overall teacher shortage, but certain subject areas fare worse than others. These include math, science, special education and bilingual education, for which schools have a harder time finding qualified candidates.<sup>16</sup> This challenge is particularly worrisome for our students because the very subjects our schools struggle to staff with qualified and effective teachers are predicted to be the key growth drivers for our workforce and economy both locally and internationally. The district should offer incentives to highly qualified candidates for hard-to-staff positions. More than half of teachers polled identified a signing bonus for hard-to-staff positions as “Absolutely Essential” or “Important,”<sup>17</sup> and 80% identified ongoing salary increases for teachers rated effective or higher in hard-to-staff positions as “Absolutely Essential” or “Important.” The data highlighted a clear need to develop incentives to attract talent to enter hard-to-staff positions but an even greater need to invest in retaining these teachers.

To meet our aim of incentivizing both recruitment and retention, bonuses should be given in two parts. The first should be in the form of an upfront signing bonus, to help put the teaching pay scale on an equal level with other career choices available to STEM majors or to reflect the amount of training necessary for special education or bilingual educators. This would enable the district to attract high-performing professionals and students who otherwise may not have considered careers in the teaching profession. The second allocation should be in the form of a “Retention Investment”: a separate pool of money specifically for the mentorship, professional development and support of these teachers. Research shows that money alone does not keep teachers in hard-to-staff positions long term<sup>18</sup> but that high-quality mentorship, opportunities for collaboration and support from administrators are much more effective retention strategies.<sup>19</sup>

LAUSD could offer this incentive to three different categories of candidates for hard-to-staff teaching positions. First, teachers who currently have a STEM credential and teach in the field would receive the incentive to encourage

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them to stay in the district. Second, a new teacher who gets a single-subject credential in a STEM subject and majored in a relevant field in his or her graduate or undergraduate work would receive the bonus to help entice them to come to the district. Third and finally, a new teacher who gets a single-subject credential in a STEM subject and has relevant career experience in a STEM field would receive the bonus to help entice him or her to enter the field as an LAUSD teacher.

#### MEASURING SUCCESS

Each year, as part of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), the district must publicly submit a plan for how it will spend the money and how those dollars will focus on improving outcomes for English Language Learners and low-income and foster youth. This Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) should also be required of schools that receive discretionary funds to ensure transparency. As part of the LCAP, each school, as well as the district, should annually share an itemized budget for the “Retention Investments” portion of the bonus.

We also recommend that the district share on its performance meter the percentage of teachers receiving these grants who are placed at high-poverty schools. Although we know that shortages in STEM teachers and special education teachers span socioeconomic

levels, it is also true that students living in poverty are disproportionately likely to be assigned to an underqualified teacher.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the goal should not be simply to bring great teachers to the school but to keep them there. To judge the effectiveness of the retention strategies being implemented through the bonus, retention rates for teachers rated effective or higher should be included in administrator evaluations, as well as in the evaluations of the teacher-leaders who are supporting these teachers (*see page 13 for more information on compensation for teacher leadership roles*).

#### CAVEATS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- “Highly qualified” will not always mean “highly effective.” It is imperative that only teachers who are rated as “effective” or higher continue to receive a resigning bonus every three to four years.
- Hiring needs to be conducted at a school level for these positions to allow schools to screen for more specific hiring requirements. Even the brightest, strongest candidate will not succeed if he or she is simply not a culture fit for the school or does not buy into the school’s mission and vision. For more information on what a school-level hiring protocol should look like, see the 2013 E4E-Los Angeles Teacher Policy Team paper, “Building for the Future: Attracting and Retaining Teachers in Hard-to-Staff Schools.”<sup>21</sup>

## INCENTIVES FOR INDIVIDUAL IMPACT ON STUDENT GROWTH

### WHAT THIS TOOL DOES

When Mr. Adams, a high school English teacher, seeks to analyze how his students are progressing academically, it is a complex but thorough process. He looks at their performance on the final exam—that gives him one, quite important, window. But he would be remiss if he did not also consider their performance on larger projects, their participation in class, their homework and their performance on quizzes along the way. This is because education is a complex human endeavor that requires many data points and judgment calls. To rely entirely on a single measure is wrong for students, and it is wrong for teachers.

Of course, as teachers previously argued in E4E recommendations for the evaluation system both in Los Angeles<sup>22</sup> and in New York,<sup>23</sup> we believe teacher evaluations and compensation decisions must include multiple measures, such as teacher practice; contributions to school and community; and input from peers, parents and students, in addition to student growth. But as California makes an important move into a new era of teaching and learning with Common Core, we will have to determine the most impactful and effective methods for assessing student growth. We see this as a prime opportunity to get teachers directly involved in shaping measurement tools and avoiding the virulent, polarized debate around testing. In interviews, teachers throughout Los Angeles reported consistently that they wanted to be rewarded for significant student growth but doubted that current assessment measures were adequate for assessing the higher-rigor Common Core standards for all grade and content areas.<sup>24</sup> Our district should develop a

clear, consistent, high-quality library of assessments to define student mastery and growth for all grade levels and subject areas, including state assessments where appropriate, aligned and available. This move aligns with the district's new evaluation system, which values the inclusion of multiple measures of student growth. The district could then use these growth goals to offer bonuses to teachers who meet and exceed them.

Instead of an immediate full rollout, this should be a multiphase project. First, the district must invest in the underlying infrastructure for such a system. They should then select teachers identified by their administrators as highly effective or teachers with meaningful evidence of high student growth from all subject areas and across the district to develop high-quality end-of-course assessments. To further leverage existing expertise and resources, these teachers can compile their current assessments into a useful bank of benchmarks for teachers to draw from throughout the year.

Eventually, results from California state assessments should be aligned with Common Core and returned early enough to serve as a useful measure of student growth. At that time, growth via standardized state assessments should supplement the growth data from the local assessment bank to constitute a true multiple-measure system.

Using assessment banks to evaluate teacher effectiveness has been done successfully in the District of Columbia Public Schools, where Teacher-Assessed Student Achievement Data (TAS) constitutes 15% of a teacher's overall evaluation.<sup>25</sup> And here in Los Angeles, the 2012 E4E-LA Teacher Policy Team focused on teacher evaluation proposed similar recommendations around leveraging teachers to create high-quality assessment banks. In their polling, they found that 93% of teachers supported this strategy.<sup>26</sup>

## A RATIONAL TRANSITION PLAN THAT

Recognizes the need to build and test accurate measures of student achievement in all subjects to fully integrate these measures in compensation systems

A common concern is that paying for individual impact on student achievement will undermine collaboration. Sadaf Ashraf, a teacher at a PUC school who participated in a program to give bonuses for impact on student outcomes, said quite the opposite, “I think a lot of people were nervous at first. But what ended up happening was that the people who got the bonus felt really honored and like their work was really being recognized, and those who didn’t receive the bonus felt really motivated to try out whatever strategies their higher-performing colleagues were using. Suddenly, we were popping into each other’s rooms far more often to observe, debrief and learn from one another.” This resonates with larger evaluations of differentiated compensation programs in both Tennessee and Texas. An evaluation of the Texas Educator Excellence Grant program found that over 80% of teachers felt they had a duty to support their colleagues in the program.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, an evaluation of the Tennessee POINT (Project on Incentives in Teaching) program found that 80% of respondents did not think the program had a negative impact on collaboration.<sup>28</sup>

As we face impending staffing shortages in LAUSD and beyond, there may be an understandable desire to move hard and fast on compensation reform. We believe that investing first in the undergirding of a fair and reliable library of assessments will ultimately build more buy-in and trust for a new system of compensation overall. Systems like ProComp in Denver and Q-Comp in Minnesota that invested significant dollars in infrastructure and in transparent avenues for teacher participation in system design eventually garnered teacher and union support.<sup>29</sup> The implementation of both of these compensation systems is resulting in significant growth for students.<sup>30,31</sup>

It is important to note that this recommendation aligns to the overall rational approach because it takes into account the valid concerns of Los Angeles teachers, as well as what we are learning from schools and districts that have piloted innovative compensation changes. Only 49% of teachers polled identified receiving bonuses for individual impact on locally created assessments as “absolutely essential” or “important.”<sup>32</sup> However, among teachers at schools in Los Angeles that do currently use student achievement for bonuses, including Green Dot Public Schools, Alliance schools, PUC Schools and ICEF schools, 70% of teachers polled identified it as “absolutely essential or important.”<sup>33</sup>

This data indicates that much of the wariness around this kind of compensation reform might speak to a lack of exposure to and experience with bonus programs that connect student achievement to teacher compensation.

These survey results influenced how we structured this recommendation. Our district must begin by building out clear systems, like those in place in other districts and charter networks. Only once this infrastructure is in place can the district begin using these measures for incentives. Teachers will be able to use this data to inform their professional development, their year-long planning with students and their own opportunities for leadership. For example in D.C., the creation and norming of the Teacher-Assessed Student (TAS) Achievement Data serves as an important conversation starter for teachers and administrators. In the long term, a robust assessment system, built on clear and rigorous standards for student growth, will drive more people into the teaching profession<sup>34</sup> who want to work in a goal-oriented, ambitious profession that incentivizes the continuous analysis and use of data.

We also recognize that Los Angeles Unified is currently working on an evaluation system that includes multiple measures. Ideally, the measures of student growth used in evaluations should also be used for this bonus, to avoid excessive testing and save on time and resources. But currently, the evaluation system in Los Angeles Unified is embroiled in a legal battle on multiple fronts. As previously mentioned, ultimately, we believe every educator deserves a rigorous, multi-measured evaluation that helps them grow as professionals. But as that system makes its way through the courts, LAUSD should not stop putting value on measures that we, as a profession and a community focused on students, determine to be meaningful.

## MEASURING SUCCESS

To hold the district accountable for a timely process for creating the library of assessments, the district can leverage the teacher-leaders participating in creating them to serve as ambassadors to their schools and communities on the district’s progress. Eventually, these teachers could lead professional development for their colleagues in accessing and navigating the library.

To evaluate the impact of the compensation strategy on student achievement and teacher retention, LAUSD should track whether or not teachers receiving the bonus are

staying and if their impact on students continues to grow over time. Administrator evaluations should also include the retention rates for teachers receiving these bonuses.

#### CAVEATS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Monetary incentives for student growth must be used in concert with the other factors to communicate the complexity and art of the teaching profession.
- This system should also be piloted with a small group of schools before full implementation and should be consistently evaluated for ease of use, alignment with standards and reliability.

### **BENEFITS FOR OUR DISTRICT, STUDENTS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES**

#### FOR OUR DISTRICT:

The district is facing clear shortages in critical subjects and an impending wave of retirements in the coming years. These recommendations allow the district to seize

this moment to build out a strong pool of candidates to prevent future shortages in teacher talent.

#### FOR OUR STUDENTS:

As schools face projected teacher vacancies in math, science and special education, combined with the rising demands of future careers in these fields, students will have access to an adequate number of teachers to provide college-ready instruction.

#### FOR OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES:

Families will know that their children are receiving an excellent education in the STEM fields that will fuel most of the job creation in our growing knowledge-based economy.

#### FOR TAXPAYERS:

For California to attract the kind of businesses that our economy needs to thrive, we must develop a local future workforce that is trained in the industries of the future, particularly STEM.

## **EMPOWERING TODAY'S TEACHERS**

LAUSD currently has many teachers who are excited and ready to take on leadership roles. In rolling out these systems, they can and should leverage this wealth of expertise.

- Teachers could sit on the hiring panel for candidates brought in through the Hard-to-Staff position program.
- Teachers could help develop the menu of Retention Investments.
- Teachers who have been highly effective teachers in hard-to-staff areas could help lead virtual "cohorts" of new teachers in these areas, online or in person, to help build community, share common challenges and generate solutions together.
- Teachers could work on communications and media for the new compensation system, to help explain how the dollars being spent benefit students.
- Teachers could lead professional development on navigating and using the library of assessment items and creating aligned lessons.

# Incentivizing Teacher Growth

## DEVELOPING TALENT

Ambitious, goal-oriented teachers focus on continuous growth. They demand it of their students, schools and themselves. Unfortunately, teacher effectiveness too often plateaus after five to seven years,<sup>35</sup> showing a lack of investment in meaningful ongoing professional development. It's imperative that a new system of compensation maximizes the potential of these early and mid-career teachers and leverages master teachers as leaders. The recommendations in this section reimagine teacher growth as the pursuit of greater autonomy, mastery and purpose.

## WHY SCHOOLS ARE STRUGGLING TO UNLEASH THE POTENTIAL OF TALENTED TEACHERS

- Teachers are compensated for professional development based on “seat time” rather than demonstrated growth or mastery.
- The district struggles to balance the “economy of scale” that comes from offering mass-produced professional development with the need for targeted and individualized learning opportunities.
- Leadership roles are often uncompensated and seen as more of a burden for teachers than a growth opportunity.
- Leadership roles are often unstructured and do not come with significant career and compensation growth opportunities or appropriate workloads that enable teachers to lead from their classrooms.

## CURRENT PROBLEM

Like professionals in any field, teachers seek out new ways to grow and learn. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards has found that teachers who pursue rigorous additional certification and improve their effectiveness in the classroom are motivated to seek professional challenges but do not wish to leave their teaching position to obtain them.<sup>36</sup> Professional development should offer teachers opportunities to grow and take on new challenges within the classroom but is often disconnected from actual classroom practice and becomes another checkbox to be marked rather than a meaningful learning experience.<sup>37</sup>

## INCENTIVES FOR MASTERY-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### WHAT THIS TOOL DOES

Professional development (PD) for teachers is often delivered as a one-size-fits-all block of time after or during

**“There are so many phenomenal teachers who have stopped pushing themselves, but only because there is nothing in our system that tells them they should continue to grow. If we unleashed that potential, we would be unstoppable.”**

**Angela Campbell, Chemistry, Polytechnic High School**

school; a standardized PowerPoint is delivered, and the meeting moves on. There is little customization for the needs of the school, let alone each teacher in the room, and teachers may or may not ever talk about the technique they were taught again. It is no wonder, then, that most teachers feel professional development is insufficient and unrelated to their actual practice and content area.<sup>38</sup> Moving the teaching profession into the 21st century also means reimagining our professional development system. The district should replace the current system of professional development salary points with a mastery-based system for professional development. Seventy-two percent of teachers polled identified mastery-based professional development as “Absolutely Essential” or “Important.”<sup>39</sup>

Currently in LAUSD, teachers accrue “points” toward the next salary step increase by participating in a certain number of hours of professional development or graduate coursework. LAUSD spends \$512 million each year on teachers earning graduate credits, which research shows has a negligible impact on student achievement.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, there is not consistent follow-up to ensure these PD and graduate course skills are actually improving instruction. Our approach would leverage our current system of “salary points” to effect meaningful impact for our teachers, students and schools. As teachers and students strive to meet an ever-higher bar for 21st-century learning, effective professional development will prove a crucial tool for training and empowering our teacher-leaders.

Mastery-based PD increases the efficiency of our education dollars because the investment is focused on the mastery and implementation of PD rather than simply on PD participation, which has minimal tie to student growth.<sup>41</sup> This money should be redirected toward developing and demonstrating mastery over

skills and concepts that directly impact students, which may include some graduate coursework but would not be limited to it.

The district would lay out the possible “focus areas,” aligned with the eight state priority areas under the Local Control Funding Formula, which include Common Core implementation and school climate, among others.<sup>42</sup> The district would develop a rubric for how a teacher could “master” each PD focus area. Teachers would achieve PD mastery by teaching the learned skill to others or providing evidence of impact on students or impact on the community. The district would also establish a range of how many salary points a teacher could earn for each PD focus area. The school leadership team would then decide the specific salary point value for each focus area based on

## A RATIONAL TRANSITION PLAN THAT

Uses research-based methods to align compensation to new models of professional growth and connect compensation to the mindsets and behaviors that drive student achievement

## WHAT THIS WOULD LOOK LIKE

Mr. Tiongco is a math teacher in his fifth year at an LAUSD high school. He is particularly interested in technology integration in his classroom. He speaks to his administrator, who informs him that, in the summer, the leadership team had set the value for that focus area at 12 salary points, as they recently received new tablets for every student. The school's needs, combined with Mr. Tiongco's natural interests, motivates him to take on that focus area.

To pursue a Mastery in Technology Integration, he finds the district's set rubric for this focus area and works throughout the year to assemble evidence for each element of the rubric. He includes pieces of student work; video lessons of him using iPads with small groups; and the agenda, sign-in sheet and survey results from the optional professional development session he offered to his colleagues on using iPads.

Later in the year, his portfolio is evaluated by the school's leadership team using the district-created rubric. Seeing that all elements of the rubric have been met, Mr. Tiongco receives his salary points. In the process, he has learned more about his practice, offered his skills to his colleagues and shown impact on the students in his school.

the needs of their school site. For example, if a high school already has five teachers with mastery in Data Analysis, it may only offer five salary points for this particular area because the school need for mastery of Data Analysis is less than the need for others. But if they are in need of a Common Core and Technology expert, they may value that focus area at 12 salary points. This would incentivize teachers to align their professional development goals to the needs of their school.

Flexibility around weighting focus areas enables schools to better align compensation, professional development and school/student needs. This allows schools to make strategic decisions about growth in teacher expertise and training from year to year. If, for example, the same school mentioned above saw four out of five teachers who had achieved mastery of Data Analysis retire, they may decide the next year to increase the value of that focus area.

### MEASURING SUCCESS

The "portfolio" for demonstrating mastery would be evaluated in the short term by administrators and in the long term could present a leadership opportunity for a highly effective teacher. The portfolio should include items

such as evidence of training others through professional development, mentorship and online sharing of ideas; teaching videos or student work samples; evidence of student growth; and reflections on artifacts. The rubric provided by the district should be clear and consistent, but teachers and evaluators should have flexibility to include the items in their portfolio that make the most sense for their school and focus area.

Given the lack of hard, longitudinal data on professional development's impact on student achievement,<sup>43</sup> a new system like this is an opportunity to partner with local research institutions to measure effectiveness.

### CAVEATS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- No teachers should lose money through this transition to a new professional development system. Any accruals toward step increases earned should be grandfathered in to honor previous promises made to teachers.
- If an educator changes schools, they should take their guaranteed salary points with them to the new schools. With school-site hiring protocols, schools will also be able to judge if a teacher's particular constellation of areas of expertise is a good fit for their needs.



- The district can lighten the burden of administrators reviewing and approving portfolios by creating more opportunities for teachers to take on portfolio reviews as part of a leadership role around professional development “coaching.”
- Professional development should not be restricted by time and space. The rubric and guidelines should provide sufficient flexibility for other kinds of activities, such as out-of-district PD, online videos, classroom visits or conferences.

## INCENTIVES FOR EXCELLING IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

### WHAT THIS TOOL DOES

As teachers build greater mastery, they will want, need and deserve opportunities to share that expertise with others. LAUSD is already in the process of thinking through its leadership trajectory for teachers, informed in part by the work of the 2013 E4E-LA Teacher Policy Team on teacher career pathways.<sup>44</sup> As they do so, the district should incentivize teacher leadership positions by offering differentiated pay that rewards the efforts of the teachers in these roles. Seventy-five percent of teachers polled identified rewarding career pathway positions as “Absolutely Essential” or “Important.”<sup>45</sup> This will help provide a transparent and clear trajectory for teachers to grow in their leadership and careers. Schools would be able to select from a menu of position options and then adapt

the job description to their own needs. The job description would have a matching evaluation, and compensation would be based on those metrics.

Requiring a clear job description sets both teachers and students up for success. Teachers would have clarity around the expectations and would be better able to anticipate balancing in-classroom and out-of-classroom responsibilities. More directly, research has shown that distributed leadership with clear roles has a stronger influence on student achievement than a single strong leader.<sup>46</sup> Administrators would also be able to distribute work across leaders more evenly rather than disproportionately piling work on a few.

Tying compensation to evaluation outcomes raises the prestige of the positions. Bestowing the position of “department head” or “grade-level chair” without having a clear job description or evaluation communicates an increase in workload without an increase in responsibility or a focus on building specific leadership skills and competencies required for the role. Instead, these leadership roles can and should serve as opportunities for teachers to keep contributing and growing.

Providing schools the flexibility to customize job descriptions based on a menu of roles allows them to leverage teacher talents and aspirations to meet specific needs. In the Charlotte-Mecklenberg school district, schools participating in Project L.I.F.T. opt in to creating teacher “reach-extension positions” that get talented teachers in front of more students. The “how” of achieving that end goal is decided by the teacher and school—some teachers visit other classrooms, others lead hybrid classrooms.<sup>47</sup> In the second year, these pilot schools saw over 700 applications come in for 19 positions. This kind of enthusiasm is indicative of the hunger for leadership that comes when teachers and leaders are given the opportunity to meet their school and student needs.

### MEASURING SUCCESS

The process for creating and submitting proposals for leadership roles should be transparent and consistent, so that the teacher-administrator relationship does not become the deciding factor in teachers taking on leadership roles. The district should provide a standard evaluation template with defined areas that can be adjusted to meet the needs of the role so that it is consistent across teachers and schools.

# A RATIONAL TRANSITION PLAN THAT

Connects compensation to student achievement, peer collaboration, teacher leadership and community engagement

The evaluation also needs to include relevant data. For some roles, this may be student growth data or teacher survey data; for others it may be school climate measures (see *“The Equity Movement: Implementing the School Climate Bill of Rights” for E4E-Los Angeles teachers’ ideas on how leadership roles can be used to improve school climate*<sup>48</sup>).

#### CAVEATS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- The leadership roles offered need to be a mix of in-classroom, out-of-classroom and hybrid, as suggested in the 2013 E4E-Los Angeles teachers’ recommendations on career pathways, “STEP: Supporting Teachers as Empowered Professionals.”<sup>49</sup>
- “Compensation” can include both additional dollars and additional time.
- These roles should only be offered to teachers who have demonstrated a mastery of the core of their work, which is teaching. Teachers should only keep the role so long as they continue to perform well in their core assignment.

## BENEFITS FOR OUR DISTRICT, STUDENTS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

#### FOR OUR DISTRICT:

Building teacher expertise and leadership capacity at the school site will enable districts to ensure a quicker adoption of education innovations such as Common Core, technology and Linked Learning.

#### FOR OUR STUDENTS:

Students will be led by teachers who are building expertise, whether through professional development or a leadership role, in an area that directly aligns with student needs.

#### FOR OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES:

Families will know that there is significant and strategic investment in keeping our best teachers in communities, particularly areas that have not had consistent access to quality instruction.

#### FOR OUR TAXPAYERS:

Rather than spending over \$500 million each year in LAUSD for salary incentives that are not tied to student achievement, tax dollars will be going toward the research-based professional development practices that drive instructional improvement.

## EMPOWERING TODAY’S TEACHERS

Here are some ways teachers can be leveraged as architects of teacher leadership options:

- The district could survey teachers currently in leadership roles to norm and craft the menu of job descriptions.
- Teachers could participate in the creation of the leadership role evaluation.
- Teachers could coach one another on professional development and leadership opportunities.
- Teachers could work with colleagues across schools to trade ideas and build expertise.

# Keeping Great Teachers Long Term

## RETAINING TALENT

The vast majority of teachers say that they want to stay in the teaching profession for the long term.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, surveys show that teachers who leave California schools cite a lack of collaboration, support and autonomy as causes for leaving the profession. Perhaps more concerning, the same trend was true for early career teachers.<sup>51</sup> Although we cannot address all of these factors, compensation should be used as a lever to keep great teachers in our schools, particularly those schools with the greatest needs. The recommendations in this section are designed to accomplish two critical aims. First, we want to push our master teachers to take on new career challenges that benefit our most struggling students. Second, we want to build a culture of productive collaboration, which we know is one of the most effective retention strategies.<sup>52</sup>

## WHY SCHOOLS HAVE TROUBLE KEEPING TOP TEACHERS

- Great teachers feel unrecognized for their hard work and undistinguished from their less effective colleagues.<sup>53</sup>
- State hiring and lay-off laws often result in hard-to-staff schools hiring must-place teachers rather than screening for fit and effectiveness,<sup>54</sup> which in turn leads to a quicker turnover of those teachers.<sup>55</sup>
- Teachers often do not know about schoolwide growth goals, and so do not feel as invested in them.<sup>56</sup>

## CURRENT PROBLEM

Half of our teachers leave in their first five years, right when they are reaching new levels of classroom effectiveness.<sup>57</sup> Teacher turnover hurts student achievement<sup>58</sup> and has a ripple effect on ongoing teacher retention. Studies have found that both the stability of a school's staff and the perception of a strong culture drive teachers to want to work at a particular school.<sup>59</sup>

The issue of teacher retention is also a civil rights issue—low-income students in Los Angeles are two to three times as likely to have teachers evaluated in the bottom 25% of

their district than their more affluent peers.<sup>60</sup> We can use compensation as one tool to change the perception of these schools and to build a culture of collaboration.

## INCENTIVES FOR HARD-TO-STAFF SCHOOLS

### WHAT THE TOOL DOES

Teaching in hard-to-staff schools should be promoted and compensated as an incredible opportunity to take on truly rigorous and impactful work. The district should offer incentives for effective and highly effective teachers to move to or stay in high-turnover schools. Over half of teachers polled identified a signing bonus for hard-to-staff schools as “Absolutely Essential” or “Important,”<sup>61</sup> and 80% identified ongoing salary increases for teachers rated effective or higher in hard-to-staff schools as “Absolutely Essential” or “Important.” Again, the teacher polling data demonstrated not only a need to incentivize talent to enter tough-to-staff schools but also a larger concern around their ongoing retention. In response, this incentive program, parallel to the attraction program for hard-to-staff positions, would come in two pieces.

“There are many nonfinancial incentives that keep me at my school and would probably keep me at my school even if I were being paid nothing. We shouldn’t forget those things. But maybe we could get even more amazing people to come to and stay in the teaching profession if no one had to make a choice between being paid well and being a teacher.”

**Hilary Estes**, *Sixth grade, Social Studies and Intervention teacher, Magnolia Science Academy*

The first piece would be an up-front signing bonus for moving to or staying in a hard-to-staff school. A study from Mathematica finds that these kinds of signing bonuses effectively move high-quality teachers to high-need schools.<sup>62</sup> The same Mathematica study found that the schools that received the effective and highly effective teachers through this program saw increased math and reading scores for their students, the equivalent of five to six months of student learning.<sup>63</sup>

However, we also know that one-time bonuses do not effectively retain teachers in hard-to-staff schools.<sup>64</sup> This accounts for the healthy dose of skepticism polled teachers had about the efficacy of such strategies. Therefore, the second piece of the incentive program, to be distributed over the course of the next two to three years, would be put into a pool for ongoing support, funding mentor teachers, teaching assistants, more professional development or even classroom supplies. By providing incentives to counter some of the challenges they may be facing in this new position, we can better ensure our teachers’ long-term retention and success.

#### MEASURING SUCCESS

Teacher-retention rates should be included in administrator evaluations, as well as in the evaluations of the mentor teachers supporting the newly transferred teachers.

Teacher-retention rates could also be included in school report cards and even in the districtwide Academic Performance Index (API).

#### CAVEATS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- We know that a highly effective teacher in one setting may or may not be highly successful in another. Therefore, re-signing the bonus should be contingent on continued ratings of effective or higher on evaluations in the new school.
- While all of these recommendations are far more effective and transparent with a multi-measure evaluation system with multiple bands of effectiveness, this particular recommendation would be almost impossible to administer without one. LAUSD has already attempted quality-blind “combat pay” in the past; it was ineffective for students and teachers<sup>65</sup> when students did not see any achievement gains and teachers left after their initial commitment. But within an incentive and compensation system that accounts for teacher quality, students would be more likely to see academic gains, and teachers would be rewarded both through their compensation and because of the appreciation and prestige the compensation would communicate.

### INCENTIVES FOR TEAM IMPACT ON STUDENT GROWTH

#### WHAT THIS TOOL DOES

Building a culture of collaboration can be one of the most effective ways to retain employees,<sup>66</sup> and nothing builds teamwork like sharing in a challenging mission. The district should offer rewards for schoolwide growth. The district currently sets academic goals for schools and outlines for school leadership what “above and beyond” looks like for each goal. The district should expand



those goals to align with LCFF’s eight state priorities by including important nonacademic measures such as attendance, dropout rates, suspension rates and parent engagement measures. Schools would be eligible for the schoolwide bonus when they meet all goals and go above and beyond on the priority goals set by the district. We know that measuring what it means for a school to go above and beyond for its students is about far more than test scores. That’s why this approach takes student growth into account but also looks at the many other factors schools grapple with every day.

In our poll, we found that only 47% identified “rewarding school-wide, or department-wide, impact on student growth, as measured by API” as “important” or “absolutely essential” for elevating student achievement and the teaching profession.<sup>67</sup> In follow-up interviews with teachers, it became clear that the word “API” was the key issue.<sup>68</sup> In this moment of transition, “API” is murky and unreliable. To speak to this valid concern, we recommend the district ensure their measures cover the many facets of a high-quality school and be clear and transparent with the measures being used.

Another common concern, in both wider teacher polls<sup>69</sup> and in evaluations of similar schoolwide programs,<sup>70</sup> is the issue of “free riders,” or teachers who may not pull their weight. For this reason, the district should require all growth goals be met, and only when particular growth goals are above and beyond can a school receive the bonus. For example, should the school meet all growth

targets except for science, the science department would feel a healthy pressure from their colleagues to ensure their students’ growth (*see page 7 for more information on measuring growth through a library of assessments*). On the other hand, if the district had set a priority for a particular school in improving attendance rates for boys of color and a school met all growth targets and went above and beyond in its attendance improvement target for boys of color, the entire staff would get a bonus, while being confident that each member of the school team pulled his or her weight.

Given the sheer size of LAUSD, it would be impossible for the district to know the inner workings of how a school reached its “above and beyond” goals. Therefore,

## A RATIONAL TRANSITION PLAN THAT

Recognizes that teachers need both monetary incentives and investments in ongoing support to be effective and lasting teachers at hard-to-staff schools

## EMPOWERING TODAY'S TEACHERS

Here are some ways teachers can be leveraged as leaders in using compensation as a retention tool:

- Teachers could serve as community and public liaisons to discuss the schoolwide goals and progress to goals.
- Teachers could serve as internal “goal managers” to communicate schoolwide goals to departments, grade-level teams and individual teachers.
- Highly effective teachers who have moved to high-turnover schools could open up their classroom as a “lab classroom” to help spread their expertise.
- Highly effective teachers currently in high-turnover schools could serve on the hiring panel for teachers who wish to transfer.

the district should distribute the majority of the money in a set per-person amount across the school, with some small portion given to the School Site Council or other leadership team to distribute as appropriate based on additional school-created goals.

This facet of the recommendation is modeled after a program started by New Leaders, a principal development nonprofit, in 2006. New Leaders partnered with DC Public Schools, Memphis City Schools and Friendship Public Charter Schools to begin the Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) Program. EPIC gave incentives on a per-person basis to schools that saw schoolwide dramatic gains for students. They were then asked to profile their success and catalog best practices. An evaluation of the program at the five-year mark found that all three pilot programs had seen significant gains for students and had prompted important discussions around systems and programs needed for students to thrive.<sup>71</sup> The success of this program highlights the potential for group incentives to drive student gains when it is paired with ongoing collaboration and focus on data. Because this recommendation includes goals that require whole-school effort, not simply a focus on tested subject areas, we believe these group incentives will inspire similarly student-focused and data-driven conversations.

### MEASURING SUCCESS

Schoolwide goals, as part of the school's overall Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), should be available publicly.

School Site Councils, or other leadership teams as appropriate, should meet at the beginning of the year to plan for how they will publicize the goals and what the parameters would be for distributing the discretionary portion of the award.

## A RATIONAL TRANSITION PLAN THAT

Enables teachers to earn financial incentives for working collaboratively to meet or exceed school growth goals

## CAVEATS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- In order to give integrity to the program and increase teacher buy-in, the district should publicly announce the amount of the incentive grant prior to the beginning of the school year.
- Team goals incentivize collaboration and can help build a culture of team spirit, but they cannot substitute for an underlying culture of trust and high-quality relationships. This compensation lever should not be used in isolation, and it is especially important to implement in conjunction with the school climate recommendations put forward in our colleagues' recommendations from the E4E-LA 2014 Teacher Policy Team on School Climate, "The Equity Movement: Implementing the School Climate Bill of Rights."<sup>72</sup>

## BENEFITS FOR OUR DISTRICT, STUDENTS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

### FOR OUR DISTRICT:

The district should not endure both a wave of retirements and persistent talent churn, as it puts a major strain on resources and leads to understaffed schools.

### FOR OUR STUDENTS:

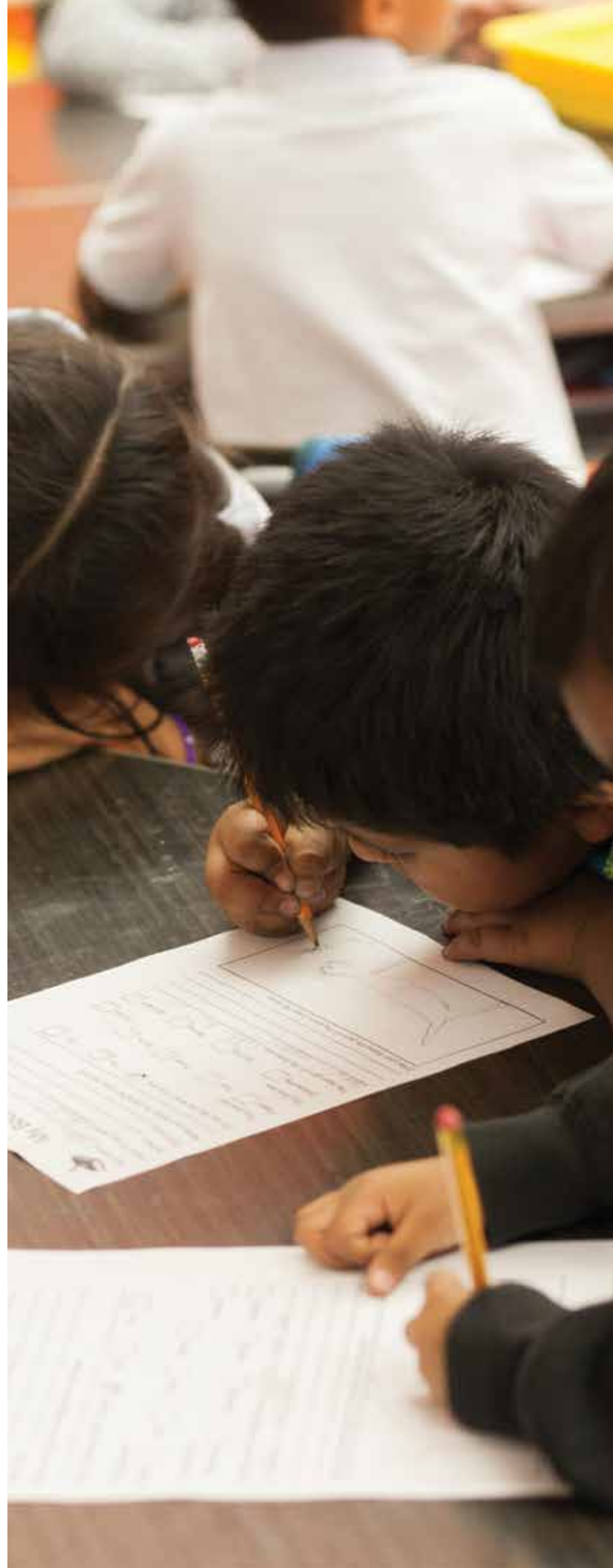
Investment, energy and attention focused on providing continuity of great teachers, which strengthens social, emotional and academic relationships with students.

### FOR OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES:

Regardless of zip code, the local school is connecting its success to the success of your child and building deeper ties to families and community.

### FOR OUR TAXPAYERS:

Taxpayers will know that their dollars are being invested in keeping talent in our schools that need them most.







# Conclusion

Changing compensation structures is often a contentious and difficult endeavor. However, maintaining a system that does not recognize excellence or serve our students is unacceptable; our educators and all of our future voters and citizens demand something better. We ask our colleagues to bring fresh eyes, open ears and a relentless focus on students to this conversation about reimagining a compensation system that enables LAUSD to attract, develop and retain great talent. We ask policy makers to bring a willingness to understand what inspires and sustains talented individuals taking on tough and important work. In doing so, both practitioners and policy makers might see past the polarizing rhetoric on compensation to find the value and promise of this noble profession.

# Notes

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- <sup>25</sup> Learn more about the Teacher-Assessed Student Achievement Data here: [http://www.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+\(Performance+Assessment\)/IMPACT+Guidebooks](http://www.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+(Performance+Assessment)/IMPACT+Guidebooks).
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# Teacher Policy Team Process and Methodology

## IDENTIFYING E4E'S POLICY FOCUS

E4E held more than 20 focus groups with roughly 160 teachers who serve our district schools and polled over 250 E4E members to identify the most important and impactful policy issues for the 2013–2014 school year.

## REVIEWING RESEARCH

We met for six weeks to review research on different national attempts to improve teacher compensation as well as local strategies being proposed, endorsed or piloted by National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, National Education Association Committee on Effective Teachers and Teaching, LAUSD and local charter networks. Additionally, we hosted conversations with leaders from LAUSD, Partnerships Uplifting Communities (PUC) schools and other national experts.

## CONDUCTING LOCAL RESEARCH

Our Policy Team conducted over 120 peer and administrator interviews to gather critical stakeholder feedback. We also conducted a survey of over 300 E4E-LA members and nonmembers to understand the most essential strategies for improving teacher compensation. The polling data pushed our Teacher Policy Team to revise and rework policy recommendations to meet key needs and concerns among our peers. Where there was less than 75% teacher support for our initial policy ideas, our Teacher Policy Team reexamined and reworked our recommendations to address key concerns.

## THE 2014 EDUCATORS 4 EXCELLENCE LOS ANGELES TEACHER POLICY TEAM ON DIFFERENTIATED COMPENSATION

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**For far too long,** education policy has been created without a critical voice at the table—the voice of classroom teachers.

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