

## Summary of A Fairer Share: A Conversation About Teacher Pay in Denver

Hosted by A+ Colorado | November 30, 2016



On Wednesday November 30, 2016, A+ Colorado hosted a public event intended for teachers, district administrators, and community members to discuss ideas raised in the recent A+ report *A Fair Share: A Proposal for Teacher Pay in Denver* about how to improve teacher pay in Denver, Colorado.

More than sixty people joined for the conversation, including current Denver Public Schools teachers, teachers from surrounding school districts, Denver Public School administrators, representatives from Denver Classroom Teachers Association, charter school administrators, representatives of education focused advocacy groups, policymakers, and community members.

The event had four distinct components: a presentation of the A+ report; a panel discussion from thought-leaders on teacher compensation; small group discussions about ideas for changing the teacher pay system; a large group share-out and discussion, including an opportunity for DPS and DCTA representatives to share their reactions. For a full agenda, please see the Appendix of this document.

The purpose of the event was to gather feedback and ideas about how to improve the teacher pay system from a diverse group of participants. The meeting objectives were:

- Better understand the **broad context** for teacher pay issues, the **current state** of ProComp, and possible **opportunities moving forward**
- **Identify what you like or would change** about the ideas presented in the A+ proposed model
- Understand how your feedback can help **inform** the joint engagement between DPS and DCTA.

The following is a summary of the discussion and written feedback gathered during the event. For additional information about the A+ proposal, please see the [report](#). You can also access a [tool](#) to experiment with the assumptions the A+ team used when developing the proposal to better understand how current resources spent on teacher pay in Denver could be restructured. We invite you [to share additional feedback](#) with us.

Additionally, DPS and DCTA are undertaking a process to seek additional feedback from teachers. At the end of January 2017, DPS and DCTA will have a survey out to teachers getting their input on priorities and trade-offs. From there, DPS and DCTA will host additional focus groups to dive into the survey data and take another step forward in designing an improved compensation system. Those dates have not yet been set for those sessions, but all teachers will receive information via email once finalized. For more information, we encourage you to contact either [DPS Department of Human Resources](#) or [DCTA leadership](#).

## **Discussion question: What do you like about the ideas presented in the A+ Teacher Pay model?**

Prioritize teacher retention through early salary increases

- Questions about how to implement this with the same budget, and ensuring that this shift would not come at the cost of capping salaries too early
- A current teacher highlighted that this aligns with rapid growth in skills in early years as a teacher

Focus resources on the districts highest priority schools through larger pay incentives for teachers working in those schools:

- Many discussants see this as an important retention strategy, more so than recruitment
- Many discussants like that the proposed incentives are substantially larger
- Some discussants highlighted that there is an opportunity to change the staffing models of hard-to-serve schools that resource allocation could drive.

Streamline experience-driven salary increases so that they focus on subject-matter expertise rather than progress toward advanced degrees:

- Discussants liked that streamlining the salary schedule simplified and clarified the pay structure
- One group raised the idea of how micro-credentialing could provide a way to demonstrate mastery of content
- Discussants like that there could be flexible and meaningful ways to get credit for subject-matter expertise
- Some discussants like that this moves away from the traditional salary structure that is so determined by acquisition of higher education degrees.

Align teacher pay with increases in roles and responsibilities created through DPS' Teacher Leadership & Collaboration system:

- Some discussants like the number of career pathways in the model as it reflected opportunities to grow incrementally

Reward high performance through performance-based pay:

- Several discussants said that teacher evaluations should matter in compensation, and some supported using LEAP

Feedback on the general principles:

- Discussants like that the proposed structure is simplified and clearer
- Discussants like higher earning potential

## **Discussion question: What would you change, eliminate, or add in the model?**

### Performance-based pay:

- Several discussants expressed concern that the current system penalizes teachers that work at high priority schools, where test scores are often low, because of the weight LEAP or “pay for performance” ascribes to test scores and the school’s rating.
- Questions arose around whether soft judgement could be a factor in any performance-based differentiated compensation.
- Some discussants raised the question about whether the evaluation system prioritizes the right things. Some discussants pointed that there could be different values—and different “performance” metrics—in different schools and communities.

### Role-aligned compensation:

- Concern that non-teacher leaders can be better teachers than teacher leaders
- Concern that not all great teachers are great coaches; teaching and coaching are different skill sets.
- Concern that teacher-leadership opportunities come too early in a teacher’s career
- Concern that roles not available to all teachers (for e.g. what does the teacher leadership structure look like for a school with a single art teacher? In small schools?)
- Some discussants do not like the idea of aligning compensation to roles. Some found this inauthentic to the teaching profession and feel there should be a path to top earning levels within the classroom, not just through administrative leadership.
- Recommendation that resources for compensation for teacher leadership should come from the resources allocated to administration, rather than the teacher pay budget.

### Subject-matter expertise based salary schedule:

- Some discussants wanted to increase the ways teachers can improve their competencies and compensation
- Discussants want a more robust definition of content-expertise
- Some discussants concerned that with lack of incentives for continued professional learning
- Concern that subject matter expertise was not necessarily applicable to all teachers.

### Earnings limits and earning potential:

- Many discussants concerned that this model sets teachers up for a fifteen-year career and does not reward teachers beyond that timeframe
- Concerns about how realistic high earnings potential is, and who has access to that maximum salary
- Discussants highlighted that there should be multiple paths to the highest tier or earnings potential.

### Highest-Priority School based incentives:

- Questions arose about how to define high-priority schools, and how to handle cases of teachers/schools on the defined cut points.

#### Address working conditions:

- Many discussants felt this conversation could not be divorced from changing working conditions, particularly around structuring teacher's time. Specifically, many discussants highlighted the importance of release time, including a willingness to trade of salary dollars for additional release time.
- Relatedly, participants discussed the value of extra pay for extra hours worked.
- Some discussants proposed including additional "classroom help" hours per week as part of a total compensation package.
- Many discussants highlighted that class size and school staffing should be part of the compensation conversation.
- Some discussants identified the need to address culture in the building as a critical retention lever.
- An example that was raised that could address the working conditions though staffing structure are the Teacher Turnaround Teams developed by TeachPlus Boston.

#### Finding additional resources:

- Some discussants proposed using resources for teacher leadership-aligned compensation from the administration budget allocation, rather than ProComp.

#### Focus on core-academic subject areas and traditional school structures:

- Concern that the proposal was not equitable for teachers in non-core subject areas. Examples that were raised were art teachers, language teachers, P.E. teachers.
- Concern that the model does not work for all schools. Examples raised included small schools.

#### Rewarding collaboration:

- Some discussants raised questions about whether the proposed system would improve collaboration or increase competition.

#### Addressing transition to a new model:

- Some discussants raised the challenges of any transition process and suggest grandfathering processes of current teachers should be open.

## **Discussion question: What is your greatest concern about changing the teacher pay system?**

### Student demographic-based pay:

- Some discussants raised concerns about having pay tied to working with high needs student populations

### Equal access:

- Many discussants were concerned that changes to the teacher leadership system are not necessarily equally available to all teachers depending on subject-taught, school-size etc.
- Many discussants were very concerned that prioritizing certain positions could create a backlash.
- Discussants stressed that all teachers should have the opportunity to be a part of the system.
- Many discussants raised concerns about valuing one content over another.

### Losing out/ tradeoffs:

- Discussants have concerns about the fact that their base pay may drop
- Some discussants are concerned that there will be winners and losers
- Some discussants highlighted that there is a clear tension between educating the “whole child” and the idea of recognizing the increased accountability that goes along with teaching a tested subject.
- Discussants raised questions about whether changes would incentivize teachers at different points in their careers. For example, discussants raised concerns about how a new compensation system would help recruit entry-level teachers.
- One discussant who identified as a PDU leader (leader of professional development) likes that there is a financial incentive for teachers to sign up for professional development as PD has been shown to be more effective outside of school hours, and worries this may go away if the system is changed.

### Performance based pay:

- Discussants are concerned about how to measure or determine what makes an effective teacher. Discussants talked about whether the instrument for measuring effectiveness is reflective of our values and our communities’ values.
- Discussants are concerned that a pay-for-performance structure could disincentivize teaching in hard to serve schools.
- Some discussants are concerned that there is a tension between merit pay and investing in kids.
- Discussants expressed uncertainty about the future of the evaluation system.
- Concern that there is overemphasis on achievement in schools in teacher pay system.
- Concern that incentive-based pay does not communicate trust in teachers’ abilities.

- Some discussants raised concerns that monetary incentives might be inappropriate for a public good.

Communication and change management:

- Discussants stress the need to have strong communication plans about any changes, the reasons behind those changes, and the impact of the changes.

Resource allocation/ Pulling the right levers:

- Discussants raised that central roles and the money allocated to those employees is not well accounted for and should be part of the conversation about what is available for the teacher compensation system.
- Discussants raised that focusing solely on compensation leads to other issues being overlooked.

Leadership-based compensation:

- Discussants worry that a teacher compensation system could pull them out of the classroom.

Reflective decision-making:

- Discussants expressed concern about a lack of teacher voice in district decision-making around compensation and other district initiatives.

Impact on building culture and relationships:

- Some discussants raised concerns about teacher leaders evaluating others rather than working tougher to improve.
- Some discussants raised concerns that changes could disincentivize collaboration.

Perfection as the enemy of the good:

- Some discussants raised the concern that aiming for the perfect system could prevent implementing a “good enough” system that is effective.

Longevity/ Continuous Improvement:

- Discussants raised concerns about how any changes to the compensation system would hold up overtime, and how other necessary changes might be addressed in the future.

## **Discussion question: What is your greatest hope or aspiration about changing the teacher pay system?**

### Simplification:

- Many discussants raise that they are hopeful that a new teacher pay system can be much simpler, and clearer.

### Connecting to other systems and treating the profession holistically:

- Some discussants hope that compensation will be better connected to other initiatives and strategies to improve the teaching profession and that the stronger connection can reinforce strengths (and change the problems) of all systems.
- Many discussants stress that compensation should be part of a larger movement to improve the sustainability of the teaching profession, including making the workload more reasonable.

### Drive retention:

- Discussants hope the teacher pay system can improve recruitment, particularly for teachers who reflect the demographics of their students.
- Some discussants hope that a new teacher pay system specifically targets retention of top performing teachers.
- Some discussants hope a new system can attract more STEM teachers, teachers who were the first in their families to attend college, and teachers of color.
- Some discussants hope that a new teacher pay system specifically targets retention of in hard to serve schools.

### Adequacy:

- Discussants hope that a new system can provide a livable wage, such that teachers can live in the communities in which they work, even after having a family. Solving the compensation issue gives more space to focus on other issues.
- Discussants hope for an increase in base salaries and COLA increases.
- Discussants hope that teacher compensation can be more competitive with other professions like law.

### Reflective of values:

- An improved compensation system reflects an increased societal value of education.
- Changes should communicate that teaching is a more well-regarded profession.

### Contextualization and ownership:

- Some discussants expressed hope that the system would be flexible enough to meet different schools' needs.
- Some discussants hope for an opportunity to grow their practice (including owning their continuous professional development), and an ability to pick their professional path, and have compensation follow accordingly.

Equity:

- New teachers, old teachers, all contents, all levels should be able to be rewarded under a teacher pay system.

Involvement and reflection of teacher voice:

- Many discussants expressed hope for having more teacher voice incorporated into the decision-making process.
- Many discussants hope more conversations occur around the implementation of a changing teacher pay system.

## **Discussion question: What (if anything) would you like more information or research on?**

How to get involved:

- Many discussants requested concrete ways to get involved in the conversation including bargaining.

Resources and allocation:

- Where is all the money? With all the tax increases we should be in better financial shape.
- How much money is allocated centrally, into testing services, central office jobs, “non-essential” positions, etc. that do not impact student achievement?

Comparative information:

- How is DPS doing relative to other district and/or charters in terms of compensation and earnings potentials?
- How does DPS’ resource allocation look compared to charter schools? Is DPS top heavy? What do charters do?
- Would a true “medical model” including a residency be effective?

Return on investment:

- What is the relative importance of salary in driving retention, compared to other factors? Is there a tradeoff between improving working conditions and getting paid more?
- What does the research show on the cost and impact of performance pay?
- What is the impact of incentives directed to low-performing schools?
- How do we account for the time/work it takes to grow student performance at different schools when the incentive is the same?

Teacher education:

- What is the research on micro-certifications? Is there any support for their impact on student outcomes? Are they more desirable?

Teacher evaluation:

- Some discussants wanted additional information about how teacher performance is measured.
- What are measures for evaluation if not student outcomes?

Leadership roles:

- What do leadership roles look like in practice?

Impact on schools and the teaching population:

- What practices will schools/ teachers use to improve performance? Will school cultures change? Could this induce culture gaps? How would this impact teacher of color?
- How does the research respond to the changing generational demographics of teachers? How do you design a system that is simultaneously attractive to millennials and meets the needs of veteran and retiring teachers?
- Is it true that if you teach in a turnaround school you put your job at risk?
- Can the pay system mitigate risks of working in a turnaround or failing school? Is there a hold harmless provision?

Reflection of values:

- What do we as a community value? Which community? Are resources allocated accordingly?
- How are subject prioritized? How do communities feel about math/reading teachers making significantly more than a social studies or gym teacher?

Impact of changing the pay model questions:

- How would future growth of student and teacher populations impact the model?
- How would teachers be grandfathered into the system? Would everyone get an increase in pay?

## Appendix: Event Agenda



### **A Fair Share: New Ideas for Improving Teacher Pay in Denver**

Hosted by A+ Colorado

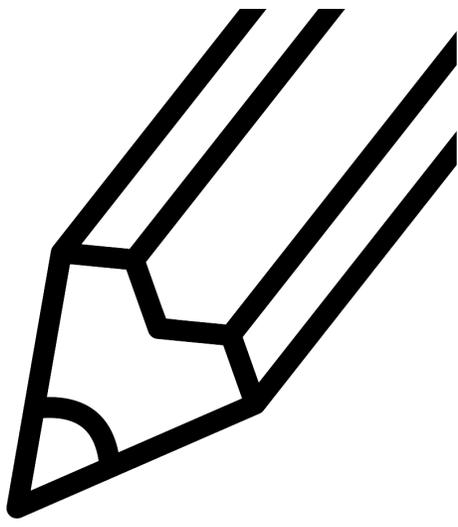
Wednesday November 30, 2016 || 5 to 7:15pm || Mile High United Way

#### Meeting Outcomes:

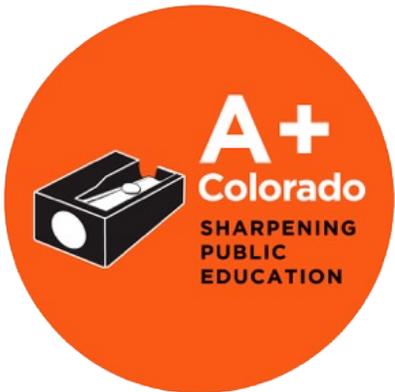
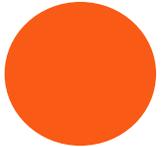
- Better understand the broad context for teacher pay issues, the current state of ProComp, and possible opportunities moving forward
- Identify what you like or would change about the ideas presented in the A+ proposed model
- Understand how your feedback can help inform the joint engagement between DPS and DCTA.

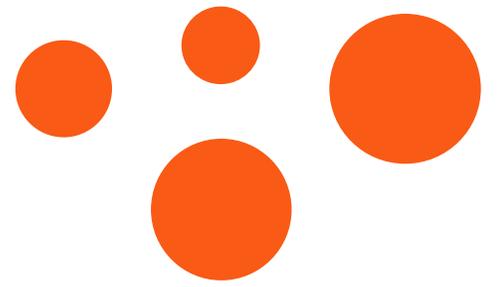
#### Agenda

- 5:00    **Welcome**
- 5:05    **Introduction**  
Desired outcomes, agenda, and ground rules
- 5:10    **Presentation of A+ Report A Fair Share**
- 5:20    **Panel:** Perspectives on challenges and opportunities in moving to a new teacher pay system
- Lawrence Garcia, CEA
  - Mike Miles, The Third Future
  - Mark Sass, TeachPlus
  - Amber Wilson, CTQ-CO
- 5:50    **Small Group Discussion:** see worksheet  
Please choose a recorder who can write legibly
- 6:20    **Report Out and Large Group Discussion**  
DPS and DCTA Panel for clarification and comments
- Debbie Hearty and Sean O'Neill, DPS
  - Pam Shamburg and Henry Roman, DCTA
- 7:10    **Thank you** and next steps
- 7:15    **Adjourn**



# A Fair Share: A New Proposal for Teacher Pay in Denver





# Objectives of the Project

- Understand how the Professional Compensation System for Teachers (ProComp) impacts teacher pay in Denver.
- Understand challenges and opportunities in improving teacher pay in Denver.

# What is ProComp?

- 2005 Mill Levy (\$25m) for incentive and reward system for teachers
- Designed collaboratively by DPS and DCTA
- Changed structure of pay system:
  - **Base pay** is set based on relevant experience and education
  - **Base building increases (raises)** are based on COLAs and achieving ProComp objectives
  - **One-time incentives (bonuses)** for achieving ProComp objectives

FIGURE 1: ProComp Incentives and Bonuses (2015-2016 School Year)

Knowledge and Skills	Professional Evaluation	Student Growth**	Market Incentives
Base salary Increase* for completing professional development	Base salary increases based on satisfactory evaluation (for probationary and non-probationary teachers)	Base salary Increase*** for meeting student learning objectives	Incentive to work in hard to serve school
Base salary Increase for Advanced Degrees and/or Licenses		Incentive for teachers whose students' test scores exceed district expectations	Incentive to work in roles with high vacancy and high turnover (i.e. math, English Language Arts-Spanish, and special education)
Reimbursement for tuition and student loans		Incentive for teachers in a top performing and high-growth school	

\* Base building 1-14 years of experience. 15+ years of experience is a bonus, and not base-building.

\*\* During the transition from TCAP to PARCC, calculating top performing and high growth schools was not possible. As such, in 2014-2015 those funds were consolidated and distributed to eighty-three schools based on past SPF data and a similar schools analysis.<sup>10</sup> The Exceeds Expectations bonus, given the lack of student growth data, was provided to teachers working in hard-to-serve schools.

\*\*\* Base-building if teachers and SSPs successfully participate in the Student Learning Objective process.

Note: DPS and DCTA reached a new agreement for the 2016-17 school year which includes: a) discontinuation of the exceeds expectations incentives, b) incentives for positions with low application rates, and c) a combination of the student learning objectives and professional evaluations incentives.

# Mixed Impacts of ProComp

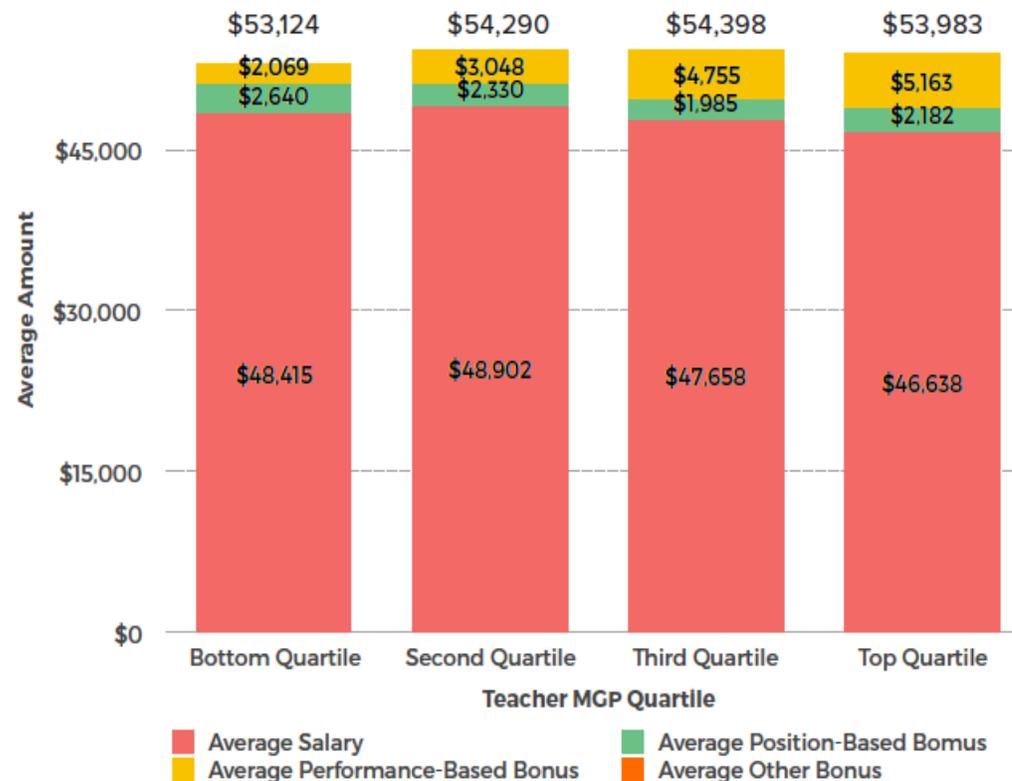
- **Impact on Teacher Salaries:**

- On average, teachers earn more under ProComp than they would under a traditional salary schedule, but researchers don't agree about the size of impact.
- ProComp ends up equalizing take home pay, rather than differentiating it for top performers.

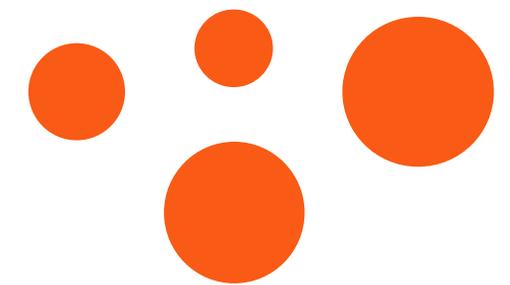
- **Impact on Student Achievement:**

- Weak evidence of any causal effect of ProComp on student achievement

FIGURE 4: Average Classroom Teacher Salary, by Teacher Median Growth Percentile in Mathematics



Source: Strategic Data Project, "Human Capital Diagnostic," Center for Education Policy Reform at Harvard University (2014)



# An Opportunity to Rethink Teacher Pay

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

In developing a model that addresses these questions, there are some clear principles that we believe should be upheld.

**CLARITY:**

The current allocation of ProComp dollars is a hodgepodge of incentives that should be streamlined. Teachers and taxpayers alike should be able to easily grasp what behaviors or actions merit ProComp dollars.

**ALIGNMENT:**

The teacher pay system should support the goals the district outlines for itself.

**EARLY INVESTMENT:**

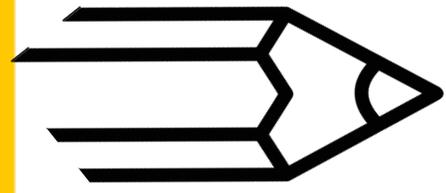
Research shows there is a clear difference in efficacy between first year teachers and sixth-year teachers. But remember, half of new teachers in DPS leave within the first three years. Though 46 percent of new DPS hires have at least three years of experience, about a quarter of all DPS teachers have three or fewer years of experience. The teacher compensation system should frontload the investment in teachers, increasing salary competitiveness, targeting retention, and setting teachers up for higher earnings earlier in their careers.

**ADEQUACY AND COMPETITIVENESS:**

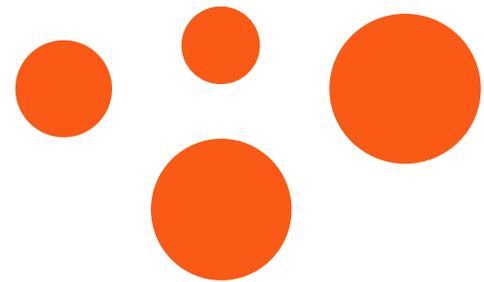
A teaching salary should provide a living wage, particularly as housing prices and other costs of living increase in the metro area. Teaching salaries should be competitive with similar professional positions within the district.

**RESEARCH-BASED PRACTICES:**

Structures should be rooted in research and data.



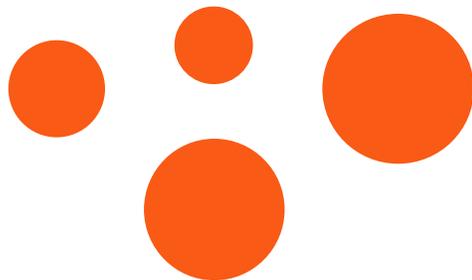
## A+ Proposed Teacher Pay Model



# Prioritize Retention Through Early Salary Increases

FIGURE 7: Early Salary Raises



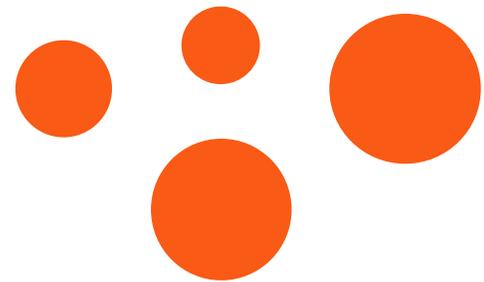


# Streamline Education-Driven Salary Increases

**FIGURE 8: Streamlined Salary Schedule**

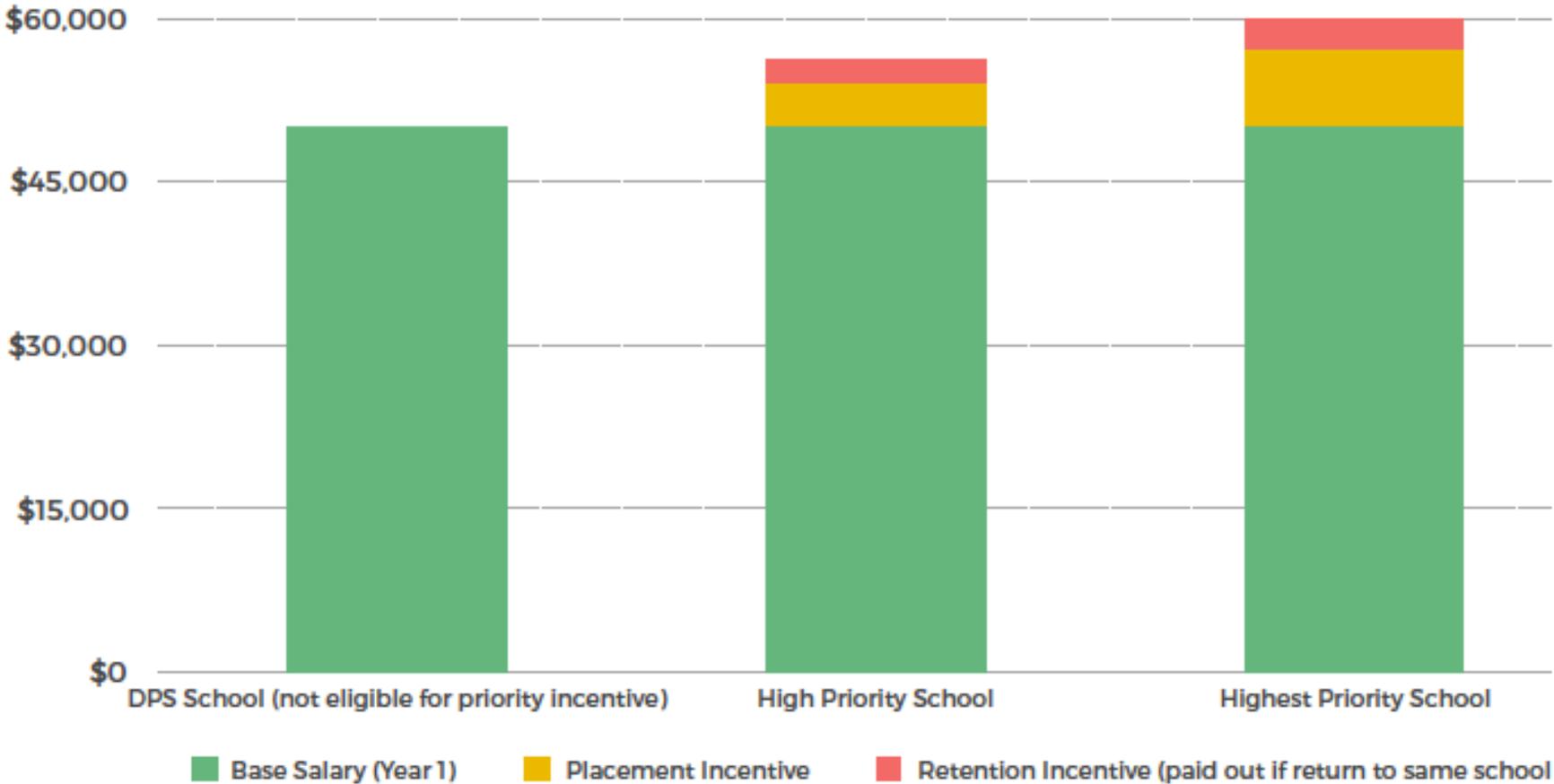
Step	BA	BA + 30	BA + 60	MA	MA + 30	MA + 60	Doctorate	General Teacher	Subject Matter Expert
1	\$39,850	\$40,142	\$40,433	\$43,729	\$43,729	\$44,543	\$47,340	\$42,000	\$44,100
2	\$40,149	\$40,524	\$40,903	\$44,111	\$44,111	\$46,686	\$49,611	\$44,730	\$46,967
3	\$40,262	\$40,784	\$42,529	\$44,371	\$45,553	\$48,586	\$51,643	\$47,637	\$50,019
4	\$40,466	\$41,005	\$44,117	\$44,592	\$47,286	\$50,454	\$53,634	\$50,734	\$53,271
5	\$40,832	\$42,707	\$45,992	\$46,293	\$49,275	\$52,580	\$55,900	\$54,032	\$56,733
6	\$41,078	\$44,521	\$47,948	\$48,108	\$51,359			\$54,842	\$57,584
7	\$42,810	\$46,409	\$49,960	\$49,996	\$53,561			\$55,665	\$58,448
8	\$44,614	\$48,335	\$52,075	\$52,075	\$55,835			\$56,500	\$59,325
9	\$46,481	\$50,412	\$54,297	\$54,297	\$58,212	\$62,160	\$66,111	\$57,347	\$60,215
10	\$48,456	\$52,551	\$56,637	\$56,637	\$60,730	\$64,805	\$68,961	\$58,207	\$61,118
11	\$50,500	\$54,752	\$59,033	\$59,033	\$63,280	\$67,587	\$71,938	\$59,080	\$62,035
12	\$52,655	\$57,090	\$61,571	\$61,571	\$66,061	\$70,503	\$75,033	\$59,967	\$62,965
13	\$55,346	\$60,014	\$64,841	\$64,841	\$69,349	\$74,042	\$78,760	\$60,866	\$63,909
								\$61,779	\$64,868
								\$62,706	\$65,841

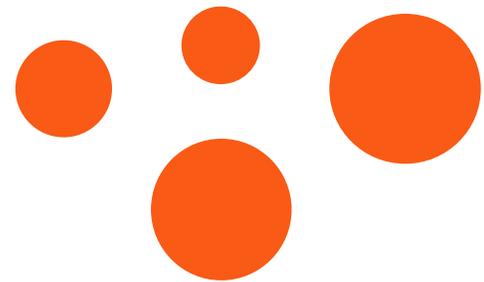




# Target Resources to Highest Priority Schools

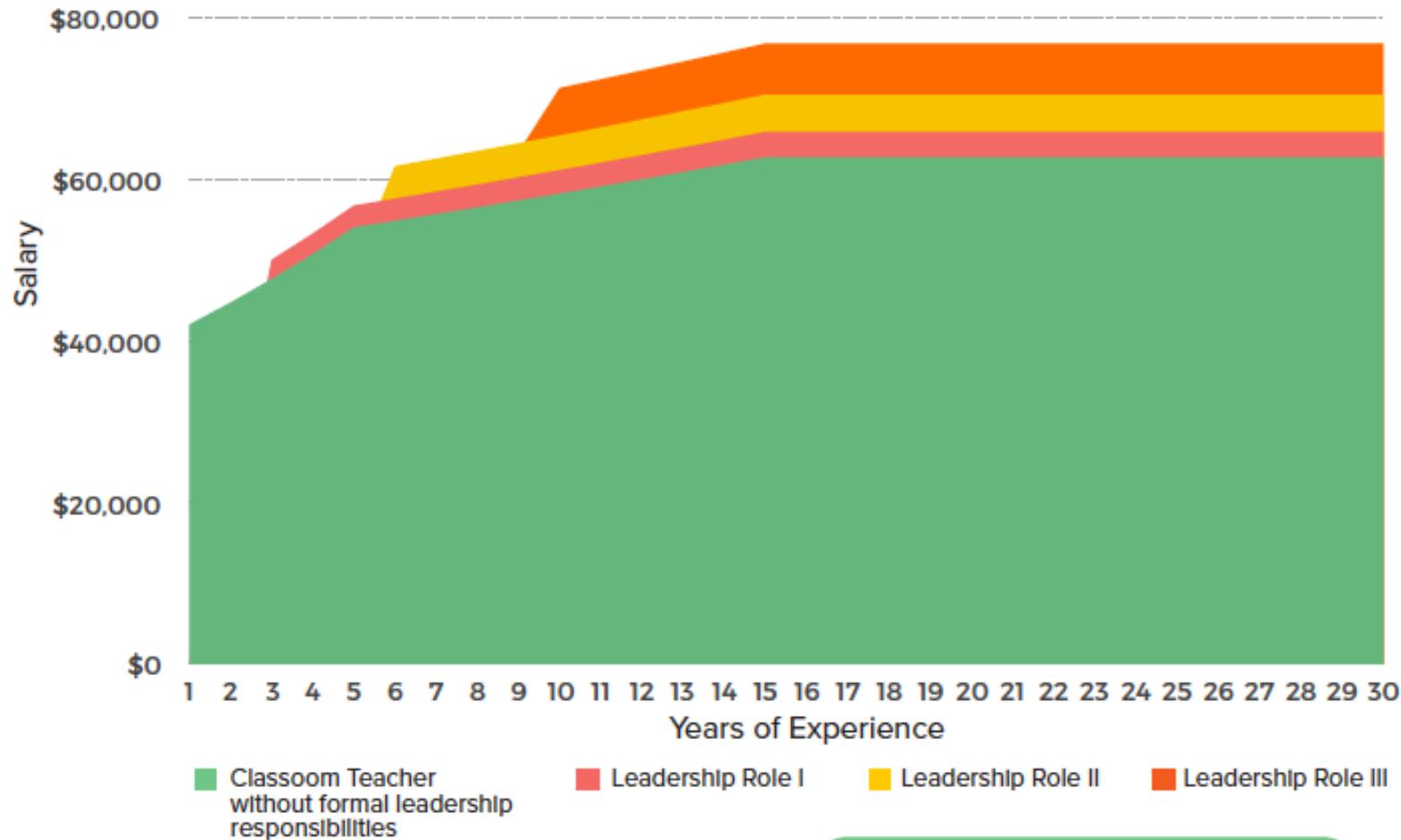
**FIGURE 9: High Priority Schools Incentives**

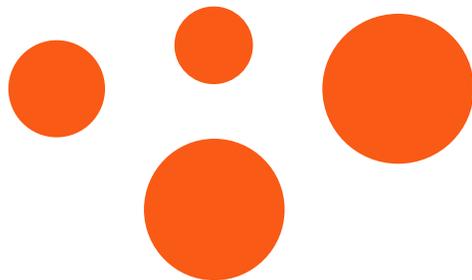




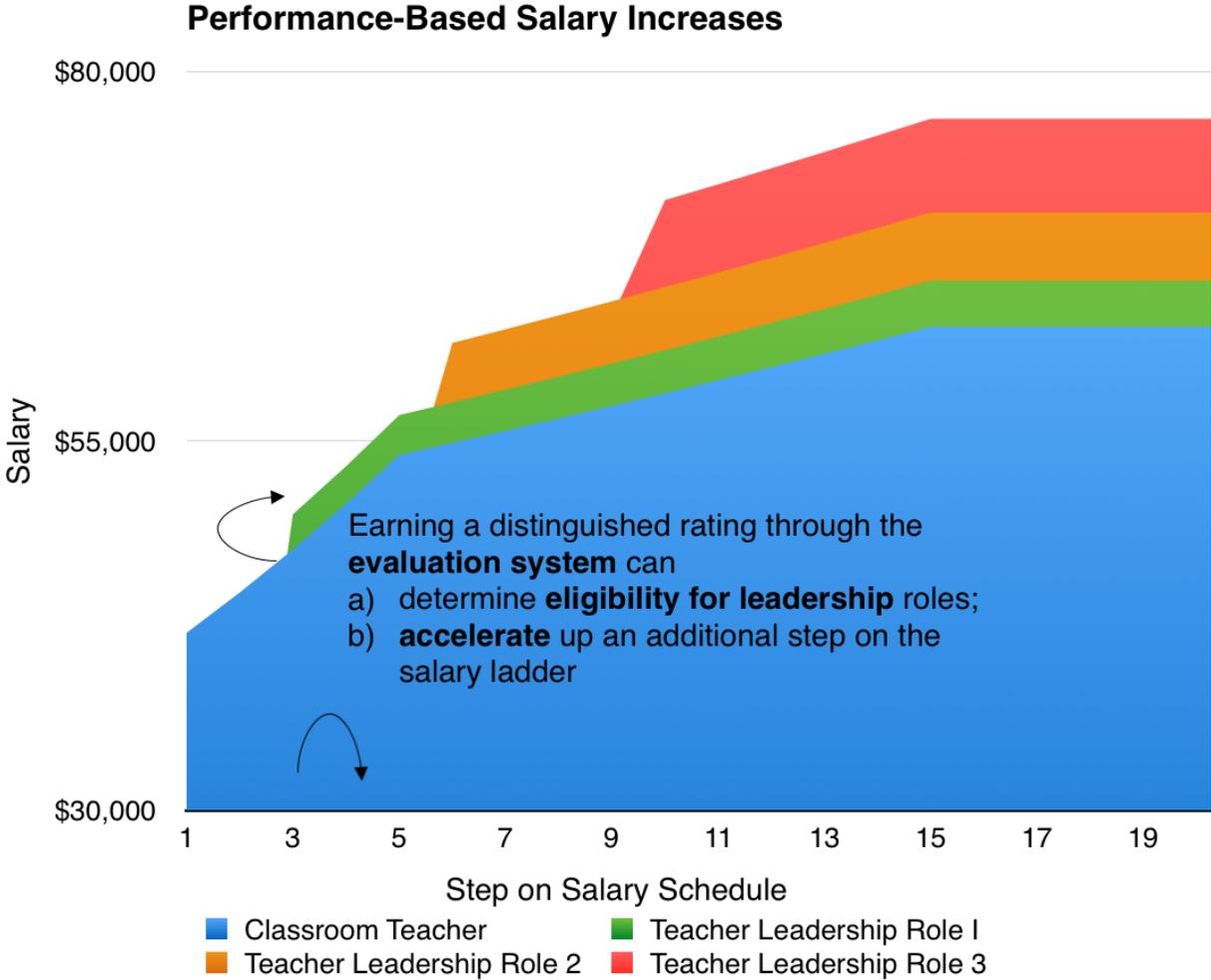
# Align Teacher Pay to Career Ladders

**FIGURE 10: Role-Based Salary Increases**



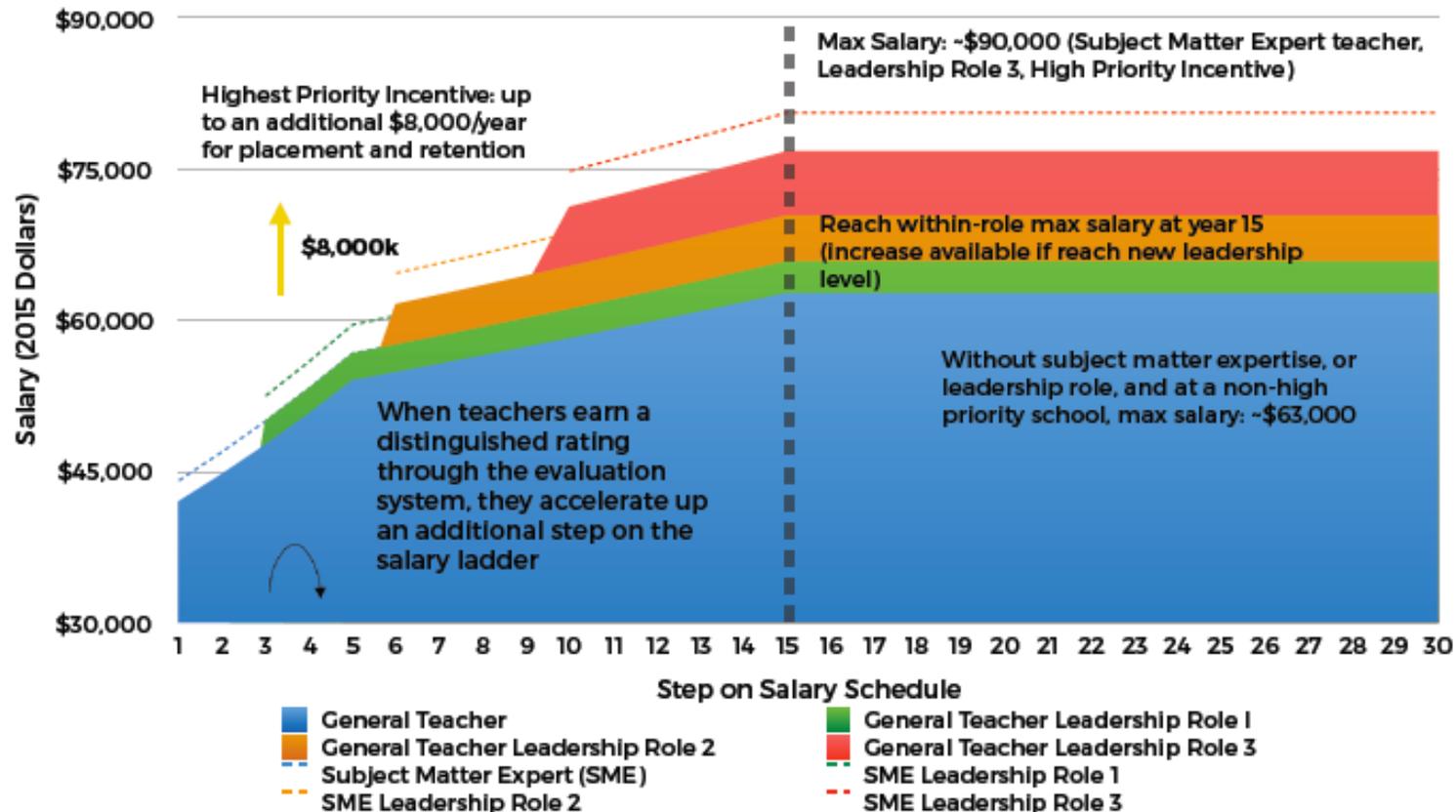


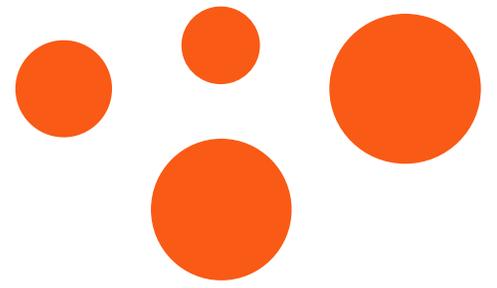
# Reward High Performance



# How it could all come together: A+ Teacher Pay Model

FIGURE 11: Teacher Pay Schedule Proposal





# Setting the Stage for Our Discussion

## Parameters:

- Work within current budget
- Ideas are conceptual (implementation issues can be addressed later)
- There are a lot of issues, try to identify what is most important to you (priorities)

## Ground Rules:

- One person talk at a time
- Please speak up here!
- No “shaggy dog stories” (be concise, share the air!)
- Be hard on the issues, easy on the people
- Misery is optional!
- Turn off cell phones