Merit Pay: Will It Work? Is It Politically Viable?

A Conference Organized by the
Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance
June 2-4, 2010
Harvard Kennedy School

Draft Agenda

Sponsored by the Program on Education Policy and Governance, Taubman Center for State and Local Government with support from the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Thomas W. Smith Foundation, the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, and the Center for American Political Studies

Thursday, June 3

8:00-8:45 Registration and Continental Breakfast

8:45-9:00 Welcome and Opening Remarks
- Edward Glaeser, Fred and Eleanor Glimp Professor of Economics and Director, Taubman Center for State and Local Government, Harvard University
- Paul E. Peterson, Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government and Director, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University
- Michael Henderson, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University

9:00-10:45 Panel I: The Politics of Pay for Performance

Chair: Bill Purcell – Director, Institute of Politics, Harvard Kennedy School


Discussant: Stephen Goldsmith, Harvard Kennedy School

Paper: “Public and teacher attitudes toward teacher pay and pay for performance and how they relate to teacher salaries and/or the quality of local schools” – William G. Howell, Harris School and University of Chicago and Michael Henderson, Harvard University

Discussant: Stephen Ansolabehere, Harvard University
10:45-11:00 Break

11:00-12:30 Panel II: Impacts of Teacher Financial Incentives on Student Achievements: Innovations from the United States

Chair: Martin R. West – Harvard Graduate School of Education


Discussant: Richard J. Murnane, Harvard Graduate School of Education


Discussant: Elena Llaudet, Harvard University

12:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-3:45 Panel III. Compensation Effects on Teacher Supply

Chair: Alan Altshuler, Harvard Kennedy School

Paper: “The Determinants of Teacher Effectiveness: Does College Selectivity make a difference?” – Matthew Chingos, Harvard University; Paul E. Peterson, Harvard University

Discussant: Brian Gill, Mathematica Policy Research

Paper: “Do the Best Teachers have Skills Marketable outside the Teaching Profession?” – Martin R. West, Harvard Graduate School of Education; Matthew Chingos, Harvard University

Discussant: Steven G. Rivkin, Amherst College


Discussant: Michael Henderson, Harvard University
3:45-4:00  Break

4:00-4:45  Panel IV:  Can We Identify Ineffective Teachers?

Chair:  Kenneth K. Wong, Brown University


Discussant:  Joshua Goodman, Harvard Kennedy School

5:00  Reception will take place in the Allison Dining Room, Taubman Building, 5th Floor, Harvard Kennedy School

6:00  Dinner

Friday, June 4

8:15-9:00  Breakfast

9:00-10:30  Panel V:  Impacts of Teacher Financial Incentives on Student Achievements: Evidence from Abroad

Chair:  Paul E. Peterson – Harvard University


Discussant:  Jonah Rockoff, Columbia University

Paper:  “Teacher Performance Pay: Experimental Evidence from India” – Karthik Muralidharan, University of California at San Diego

Discussant:  Rajashri Chakrabarti, Federal Reserve Bank of New York

10:30-10:45  Break
10:45-12:15 Panel VI: Where Will the Money Come From?

Chair: Edward Glaeser – Harvard University


Discussant: Robert B. Schwartz, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Paper: “Can Pay for Performance Perform Politically? The Realities of Implementing Merit Pay Plans” – Jay P. Greene, University of Arkansas and Manhattan Institute; Stuart Buck, University of Arkansas

Discussant: James Stergios, Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research

12:15-12:30 Final Thoughts
Michael Henderson, Harvard University
Paul E. Peterson, Harvard University