

PERFORMANCE-BASED PAY: PERCEPTIONS OF
ELEMENTARY TEACHERS OF THE
PANDORA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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By

Jonathan Scott Marsh

University of Missouri Kansas City

B.S., University of Central Missouri, 1996

M.A. University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1999

Ed.S. University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2008

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PANDORA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Jonathan Scott Marsh, Candidate for Doctor of Education Degree
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ABSTRACT

In the last decade, there has been a resurgence in the support of using teacher pay to influence the outcome of student achievement on state tests. Current research about the effectiveness of these performance-based pay plans is varied and little research exists that qualitatively describes the experience that teachers have when engaging in these type of programs.

Performance-based pay systems are a form of compensation reform, and like any other institutional reform initiative, can succeed or fail for many reasons. Understanding these reasons is key to understanding the perceptions of teachers regarding change, and planning for effective change when it occurs. The purpose of this heuristic case study was to understand the perceptions teachers have about performance-based pay in its natural setting. The research questions were as follows: What are the perceptions that teachers have about performance-based pay systems? How do teachers perceive accountability in

reference to performance-based pay systems? How do teachers perceive equity in reference to performance-based pay systems?

This single instrumental case study used phenomenology and heuristics as a lens to investigate the perceptions of 54 teachers in regards to performance-based pay systems and illuminate common threads of understanding such that these understandings will better facilitate the transition between compensation systems should the need arise.

Results of this study indicated that although teachers believe that student achievement results play a part in determining teacher effectiveness, teachers also have a great mistrust of performance based pay systems. Teachers perceptions included a belief that these pay systems based on standardized test data are inherently flawed due to their inability to account for all student variables, and that these systems will create an environment where competition will result in increased teacher isolation and game-playing or cheating on standardized tests.

The examination of the data uncovered a cycle of reaction based upon the themes of understanding developed across sources. This cycle illustrates the phenomenon of progressing through a process of knowing, experiencing, and protecting oneself from a failing performance-based pay or merit program. This cycle incorporates issues unique to teachers and other public servants and is defined using Public Service Motivation Theory.

APPROVAL PAGE

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, have examined a dissertation titled “Performance-Based Pay: Perceptions of Elementary Teachers of the Pandora School District” presented by Jonathan Scott Marsh, candidate for the Doctor of Education degree, and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Loyce Caruthers Ph. D., Committee Chair

Division of Educational Leadership, Policy and Foundations

Gus Jacobs, Ph. D.

Division of Educational Leadership, Policy and Foundations

Jennifer Friend, Ph. D.

Division of Educational Leadership, Policy and Foundations

Sue Thompson, Ph. D.

Division of Educational Leadership, Policy and Foundations

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Preface: An Educator's View of Performance-based Systems

I have spent my career as a teacher mulling over the prospect of change within our system of pay and looking for the truth and wisdom behind both the current single salary schedule and that of performance-based pay systems. I have found that in both cases the deeper I have looked the more I experienced both excitement and disappointment.

My first impressions of performance-based pay systems seem to have developed long before I became a teacher. I believed that “good teachers” were hard to find, and that if I were a good teacher, I was in a minority of people within the field. This fed my hubris as a young teacher and I coincidentally felt that I should be paid more based on my assumptions about the effort and effectiveness of the people around me. I believed that the individuals around me could not have been doing as good as a job at educating youth, because I felt that teaching was a time related field, and that simply by adding more effort over time, I would naturally be doing a better job. I was unwilling to except the fact that I was spending more time simply because I was new to the work and inefficient at what I was doing. This perspective was reinforced in my eyes by what I recall as a societal view of teachers, which painted them as lazy.

Proud that I was a teacher, I looked to changing the perception of the general public around me by embracing new ideas of pay reform. I was over confident in my skills and I underestimated the value of the experienced educators around me. Again, it was my misconception about the value of the teachers around me that led me to believe that simply by having tenure, or being able to use time more efficiently to educate children, that more experienced teachers were just skipping out on the real responsibility

of teaching. This view of mine again was fed by my perceptions of the public's disgust with teachers in general. Teaching is or was more of a solitary task, and my knowledge (or the lack there in) of what was going on in other classrooms helped feed my own misconceptions.

As a young teacher I was asked to join our teacher contract negotiator team where I was confronted with the administration's desire to pursue performance-based pay plans, and the union president, who was stalwartly against so much as even discussing the idea. It seemed at the time to be narrow minded, and gave the impression of inflexibility.

My time ended as a negotiator when I began pursuing advanced degrees. As opportunity would allow, I would delve a little deeper into the performance pay systems. I would do a little research, write a paper or two, and I began to find that the idea was fundamentally more complicated than I at first thought. At the same time, our district was beginning to hit the edge of the performance envelope with our students according to No Child Left Behind, and the attitudes of the administration began to change (Anonymous, 2012).

Administrative demands to forever increasing test scores have resulted in the investment of statistical programs designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching practices of particular teachers. These results were then used to intimidate teachers into game playing with test scores in order to give the perception of growth. Even though our successes were far above the state average, they were no longer good enough. Standardized tests became the authority on student success, and professed wisdom from generations past against using single measures were ignored in relentless pursuit of test points.

Lost to me was the art and humanity of teaching in response to data supported quasi-scientific educational mandates. Adherence to a standardized program was valued over individualization between teachers. Lost was the idea that student growth was a multifaceted qualitative animal that could very rarely be caged, found was the quantitative comparison view of a child's and subsequently a teacher's worth.

This dissertation is the result of seventeen years of thought and curiosity about the pursuit of excellence, ideology, pedagogy, and respect both inside, and outside of the schoolhouse. As I have learned, grown, and experienced many aspects of performance related pay systems, it has become my concern that this knowledge, critical in today's educational setting, is absent in the minds of most educators. It is my concern that teachers and administrators may make regrettable decisions based on the assumptions of a tense public and competitive political agendas both fed by questionable beliefs about our educational system.

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I would also like to thank Dr. Loyce Caruthers who served as my “critical friend”, mentor, and coach, as well as my committee chair. Her commitment to my success has been unparalleled in my educational experience, and without her, the completion of this study would not have occurred.

I would like to thank Diane, my wife, and Dr. Jennifer Richardson for their hours of proof reading, revision and editing of this dissertation. Without their tireless patience, and wiliness to read and re-read this study, it also would not have reached completion.

And of course, the completion of a dissertation is not possible without the sacrifices of those around you. Without the help and support of my family and friends, I would never have been able to complete this journey. Thank you again, to all who have assisted or supported me during this time.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents. Although they provided a literature rich environment, and instilled in me a sense of wonder and desire to learn, I was not a cooperative student in my early years. The regular trips to the office, the mountainous piles of late work, and the low or failing grades in elementary were par for the course and eventually culminated in a parent teacher conference where my sixth grade teacher told them that I didn't have what it takes to make it through 7th grade.

There are only so many ways to make up for the years of turmoil, late nights making up work, and frustrating parent teacher conferences.

Mom and Dad, this dissertation is for you.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Current research indicates that there are many differing opinions about teacher performance-based pay systems and that those opinions are varied depending on a teacher's experience, age, gender, race or ethnicity, teaching level, and the environment in which they teach (Adams, 2009; Adkins, 2011; Eberts, Hollenbeck & Stone, 2002; Heavin, 2007; Prince & Koppich, 2011; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Washington, 2011). The problem that school districts confront when instituting performance-based pay (PBP) systems revolves around teachers' misunderstandings of those systems as it relates to their lived experiences in schools. It stands to reason that all stake-holders in an educational community should know and understand the potential risks and consequences, positive and negative, of moving to a performance-based compensation system, as our history is replete with examples of failed merit systems (Dee & Keys, 2005).

Merit pay is an old idea that has been an integral part of capitalistic economics for hundreds of years (Klein, 1973). The idea of merit is essentially rooted in the concepts of reinforcement, expectancy, and equity theories, which simply state that an employee will produce when rewarded, if the reward reflects the effort and is considered fair in comparison to other employees (Sutton & Bergerson, 2001). Merit pay systems in the past have relied heavily on either subjective means of evaluating teachers by administrators, or based only on the results of standardized tests (Chamberlin, Wragg, Haynes & Wragg, 2002).

Performance-based pay systems, which are sometimes placed under the older term of merit pay systems, are a way of adjusting an employee's compensation based on measurable outcomes other than seniority or college credits earned over time (Chamberlin et al, 2002). Performance-based pay is a structure put in place by school districts that serves several purposes. Arguably, the primary focus is to increase student performance by incenting teachers to work harder towards a measurable goal. Other foci, such as aligning with current capitalistic, western based compensations systems, attracting and retaining quality teachers, and creating a shared culture of rewarded work ethic, are just a few that tend to support the financial and goal based culture of our current school systems (Odden & Kelly, 2002).

Compensating teachers based on performance has been pursued intermittently since World War II (Carter, 2002). The reasons are varied and grounded in the historical aspects of teaching in the United States. Teaching, being a child based care-giving institution, initially was composed almost entirely of a female workforce, whose professional structure was created before the women's and civil rights movements (Altenbaugh, 1992). As the United States and its current educational systems developed under the conflicting demands of economic turbulence, continual population growth, and social equality, it became necessary for a pay system to be developed that took into account, and made equitable, these developing aspects of American education (Altenbaugh, 1992).

Thus was born the current salary schedule, which is based on two generally unarguable measures, years in service and graduate hours and degrees achieved beyond your initial bachelor degree (Carter, 2002). This salary schedule is the result of decades

of struggle for equality mostly vested in the equal rights movement for women (Carter, 2002). Teaching, being one of the first employment opportunities for college educated women and people of color, was also one of the first industries to demonstrate gross inequities between men and women, and also between whites and people of color (Carter, 2002). The single salary schedule guaranteed consistent pay increases based on the experience that teachers would gain in performance of their jobs, and the knowledge that would be gained through professional development based on college courses completed regardless of age, race, and gender (Odden & Kelly, 2002).

The basis of the perception problem with performance base pay systems stems from the rather dismal track record of merit pay systems, and the effect those failures are still having on the attitudes of today's educators. In general, implemented ideas around merit pay have been conceived with a large reliance on narrow views of student success, usually based only on the outcomes of standardized tests (Dee & Keys, 2005). During the 1970s and 1980s, school districts tried to implement merit systems, and the results indicated that merit pay created competition between teachers, a lack of collegiality, and lacked the funds to adequately award the teachers. By the 1980s merit pay was undermining the educational system and creating larger deficits with students. The failures in the 1980s were so profound that within the United States, most states passed legislation altering performance-based pay plans to the degree that little could be done with them effectively by teachers, administrators or boards of education (Dee & Keys, 2005). Until recently, this has resulted in a flat out ban on even so much as a discussion between many local, state, and national teacher unions, coupled with highly negative

experiences held by remaining tenured teachers who experienced poor merit pay systems firsthand.

The importance of these issues are at play in the face of possibilities that states across the country are pursuing performance base pay legislation, which will create a need for districts and communities to have a structure in place to begin the implementation of a performance base pay plan (Heavin, 2007). Recently, President Barrack Obama released his educational stimulus package, which included funding programs such as Race to the Top, and the Teacher Incentive Program whose purposes are to fund performance programs in schools nationwide (Sawchuk, 2010). These programs are creating yet another race for funding by states who are trying to find monies for their schools in an economically challenged environment (Sawchuk, 2010).

The new performance systems are based on the idea that you can track the learning patterns of children, develop a linear graph to predict future learning and then determine if a teacher is doing an adequate job by comparing the learning of their current students to the previous learning achievements (Betebenner, 2008, 2009). This system seems straight forward, but is based on several important assumptions. The first assumption is that growth is linear, and that children will learn the same amount year after year regardless of age or developmental periods. The second assumption is that the learning of a child can be narrowed to the influence of one teacher. It has been shown that learning is accumulative and that the previous experiences can have a profound effect on a student's current learning (Betebenner, 2008; Goe, 2008). The third assumption is that all variables are adequately accounted for in the learning process. In an attempt to achieve this, the tests have to be completely quantitative in nature and tend to be more

skill based, and although this does not explicitly mean that all variables are adequately accounted for, it does lend itself to a more credible appearance (Betebenner, 2008; Goe, 2008).

With this interest in mind I chose a qualitative design that would delve into the experiences that teachers have as they undergo the phenomenon of progressing into performance-based evaluation and compensation systems. This type of research could only be studied with a qualitative model that more acutely studies the lived experience and can be used to efficiently develop practices or policies in the future (Bazant, 2008; Creswell, 2009; McCormick & Peterman, 2012).

Purpose and Research Questions

Performance-based pay systems are a form of compensation reform, and like any other institutional reform initiative, can fail for many reasons. Understanding these reasons is key to understanding the perceptions of teachers regarding change, and planning for effective change when it occurs. The purpose of this heuristic case study was to understand the perceptions teachers have about performance-based pay in its natural setting. This case study was also heuristic in nature. Case study, and heuristics (a type of phenomenology), were chosen as the primary theoretical traditions in order to investigate the perceptions that Pandora teachers have about performance-based pay systems. I analyzed their experiences as expressed through the spoken and written word.

Case study research is very closely related to phenomenological research methods in that both investigate experiences, but case study research focuses more on how these experiences are shared within a specific bounded group (Stake, 1995). I used a very specific bounded group focused on a single question. The issue of the question

investigated was that of the perceptions of performance-based pay program, which meets the characteristics of a single instrumental case study. According to Stake (1995), instrumental case studies are a particular type of case study, which investigates a specific question about a person, group, or multiple groups as it relates to the reaction to an agency, effecting that group in a unique way. This differs from types of case study that research typical or traditional cases where the experience is wide spread and a function of the norm, but also not considered an extreme case study, as this experience would be considered the norm for all members of a society engaged in the phenomenon if it ever becomes a mainstream event (Yin, 2009).

The group that was investigated was the elementary teachers within the Pandora School District. Teachers at Pandora School District (pseudonym) often operate with perceptions about performance-based pay systems that may unjustifiably hinder, or accelerate, a district's process of moving into a performance-based pay system. I used the pseudonym (Pandora) to protect the identities of the members of the research site, as the school district is unique in size and population. I elected to invite the population of elementary teachers within the district to participate in this study due to the larger number of elementary teachers who do not have specific teaching assignments as compared with middle or secondary teachers. This more general teaching certification and description will create a larger pool of homogeneous grouping and therefor better protect the anonymity of the research participant.

Phenomenology, as a theoretical tradition, is the process from which one seeks meaning behind the lived experiences of a person or group of people (Patton, 2002). Phenomenology is designed to investigate the subjective experiences of the respondents

in order to derive greater meaning and understanding, without changing the views of the subject (Clandinin, 2007). If there were ever a more common “phenomenon” occurring in the field of education it is the renewed interest of performance-based pay as a compensation system (Jupp, 2005) The issues that occur when districts move toward performance-based pay systems range from distrust about measurable equity, to elation about the prospect of having more control over their ability to improve their financial outlook (Odden & Kelley, 2002). This case study required the structure of phenomenological research in order to acquire an in-depth understanding of teacher’s perceptions about performance-based pay systems. Such an understanding will provide Pandora district the ability to more effectively handle the wide range of concerns likely to affect the teachers of the Pandora district. As teachers move through the process of change involved in switching compensation systems, it is important to see how and from where teachers gain experience and create perceptions about performance-based pay. Information about performance-based pay plays an important part in the creation of perceptions about merit pay systems.

Heuristics is described as “...the process of internal search (that) provides the researcher the ability to discover the nature and meaning behind an experience and provide methods and procedures for further investigation” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Heuristics requires the researcher to look inside, to use intuition, indwelling, and focusing as a way of becoming the tool, and the medium, for which the understanding is unveiled (Moustakas, 1990). One must relinquish control of the situation and stumble into the experience wholly to truly understand (Patton, 2002).

This case study was heuristic in nature due to the fact that I was a member of the group I was studying. This provided me the ability to immerse myself into the population much easier, and to draw from my history with the district, and the teachers, as a platform from which to compare the experiences of the participants of the study, but required specific attention to bias, as my familiarity with the district had the potential of making my bias illusive and difficult to detect.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions that teachers have about performance-based pay systems?
2. How do teachers perceive accountability in reference to performance-based pay systems?
3. How do teachers perceive equity in reference to performance-based pay systems?

A quantitative study provides bounded empirically driven cause and effect studies. Causational studies are important and have their place, but their narrow focus prevents the flexibility needed to truly root out human experience from a qualitative question (Patton, 2002; Treiman, 2009). The strength that a quantitative design provides is embedded in its ability to remove variables from the experiment (Patton, 2002; Treiman, 2009). These particular abilities to isolate data and bracket the information is what was required to provide a beginning place for qualitative research (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The problem with strictly quantitative designs is that, although the exact effect can be measured, the meaning behind that effect often goes unseen (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Qualitative data, in contrast, is designed to dig deep into the meaning that underlies the effects seen, providing the humanistic meaning needed to provide a deeper

understanding (Patton, 2002). Qualitative studies use the varying aspects that are a weakness to quantitative data as tools for rich descriptions in its methodology (Moustakas, 1990). Qualitative data is collected in the form of experiences and recorded as field notes, journals, or interviews, where the analysis takes place on the plane of human experience where the researcher is the tool for analysis (Moustakas, 1990).

In this particular study, the use of a qualitative design approach was used to explore and find meaning as it relates to the perceptions that teachers have about performance base pay compensation systems. This study required a unique set of frameworks in which to guide and provide sound theoretical grounding. These theoretical frameworks provided structure to my research and helped make meaning of the data within the context of participants' experiences with PBP.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework, also known as a conceptual framework, describes the key assumptions, theories, constructs, or variables that define the operable issues of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). An understanding of these topics can provide a grounding that will provide meaning to the findings (Patton, 2002). I have chosen several topics from which I bracketed and analyzed the information that I received, as well as provide a guide to focus my study. These topics are social constructivism and constructionism, theories of motivation, and performance-based pay programs, including their historical and political development, current performance initiatives, and teacher perceptions.

As an educator, I have over my tenure experienced many of the same things as most educators. At one time, I was as convinced, as many others, that newer

compensation systems were the way of the future. My perception at that time was that I was missing out on opportunities to make more money based on my efforts, and felt cheated by the current system that seemed to reward less work with more pay.

As I have moved through my career and took time to research different forms of merit and performance-based pay. I have found to my dismay was that the research indicated, like most things, politics and avarice have created monsters of reasonable systems. More importantly, I have found that even though some systems have been put together with care and concern for all parties, they still lack the results sought for by their initiators (Jupp, 2010).

Given the realizations that I have come to over a period of years based on my own experiences and the research that I have done, I have concluded that I was operating under assumptions about the reality of merit or performance-based systems that were dangerously misinformed and potentially hazardous to my own well being had I pursued them with the vigor of other initiatives. This has led me to question whether the average teacher has adequate knowledge of performance systems, to adequately move into pay reform, whether the information presented comes from administrators, the public, the media, or the teachers' union.

I chose to employ the theories of constructivism and constructionism, which describe the development of belief systems and perceived reality based on the experiences and communications of thought within and between individuals and groups. These theories are key to understanding the development of a group's perception of their reality within a compensation system. Understanding teacher motivation plays an

important role in the process of describing current economic theory as it relates to work and compensation.

There are distinct issues that will be addressed within the topic of PBP; namely the historical context of federal policy development as a way of explaining current thought and practice as related to successes and failures in the past. These successes and failures provide a direct relationship to the perceived experience of the current phenomenon. I explore current initiatives as a way of defining the parameters of the experience. Additionally, it is necessary to understand the context in which the teacher's perceptions develop and to further define the policies and programs that are the construct of the experience. Understanding the political, historical and current environments in which teachers exist, provided structure and meaning to the perceptions teachers have developed concerning performance-based pay.

Social Constructionism and Constructivism

In order to understand the effects that the historical contexts, theories of motivation, and current performance initiatives have on teacher perceptions, one must have an understanding of how these forces create meaning for teachers in general. The psychological studies of social meaning have created two related fields of study; social constructionism, the study of how individuals and groups create their own social reality and the microcosm of social constructivism which details how the group as a whole develops the individual from within (Burr, 1995). Social constructivism has been a defining framework in many studies including both qualitative and quantitative models. Examples described in more detail in chapter two include qualitative studies and their effects on teacher-community partnerships and the development of educational reform

efforts within educational settings (Hogue, 2012; Toson, 2013). Quantitative analysis methods were used to describe the teaching effectiveness of socially constructed pedagogy and learning styles in Ahmad and Lah's (2013) study of teaching strategies within the science classroom.

Both the qualitative and quantitative studies involving social constructivism related to my study in that they were key fundamental theories that explain how the development of perception based on experience occur in large groups. In this particular study of the perceptions of performance-based pay, the interrelationships between teachers, politicians, administrators, and stakeholders helps to define the belief system as it develops through out the experience (Amad & Lah, 2013; Hogue 2012; Toson, 2013).

Social constructionism is a process from which the interactions of the group determine the course and development of the whole group. This development becomes self-perpetual until the group becomes large enough for sub-groups or sub-cultures to begin their own process of social change (Gergen, 1999). This change is spread through the actions of verbal and written discourse. Social constructionism is a key theory in the way that teacher's perceptions are developed within society, and is reflected through their experiences within the school system (Carter, 2002; Odden & Kelley, 2002).

Social constructivism is the process from which the person as a whole is created by interactions with those within his or her own social group. This development plays an important role in defining such issues as personal voice, validity, and power (Burr, 1995). The development of such issues as dependency and reliance are significant when discussing teachers' perceptions of their place within a current compensation system (Carter, 2002).

Due to the intrinsically humanistic nature of the study, it became clear to me that another quantitative study would not adequately describe the lived experience related to performance-based pay systems. A qualitative case study based around the theories of constructivism and constructionism is what was needed to pull from the subjects the truth I was seeking.

Theories of Motivation

There are many motivational theories that exist, some of which play directly into the issue of performance-based pay systems; Reinforcement theory, Adam's Equity Theory, and Expectancy Theory, to name a few. These theories, which have been the backbone of western capitalistic ideologies, tend to be the standard from which teacher motivations are compared. Theories of motivation have been used to describe the actions taken by subjects and to describe the reasoning behind those actions. Hardin's (2010) study of social cognitive theory, another type of motivational theory, was used to describe the effects of professional learning communities on teacher self-efficacy.

The study conducted by Hardin relates to my study, by providing an understanding of how motivational theory explains the actions taken by teachers within a specific construct when confronted with the prospect of change related to the magnitude of performance-based pay. These motivational theories are supported within both financial and social frameworks as assumed motivators related to the development of a program and effectiveness of the transition. Similarly these issues will be important within the current political environment in which PBP programs are being pursued. With the advent of current teacher evaluation legislation tying teacher performance to standardized tests, and tying those tests to teacher compensation and retention,

understanding teacher perceptions becomes timely and important. The purpose of performance-based pay systems is to create increased student performance and teacher retention by attracting and rewarding teachers who are interested in money earned as their motivating factor.

Reinforcement theory suggests that individuals act and react due to changes in positive and negative consequences (Goddard, 2009; Klein, 1973; Perry, Engbers, & Jun, 2008). This theory implies that if you lower a teacher's salary, that teacher will work harder to regain that salary, or to achieve a higher salary than already earned. This theory corresponds with the current salary schedules in the form of effort and achievement of college credits earned in groups beyond the initial bachelor's degree. This particular theory plays a large part in the process of most performance systems in that the reward for performance will be reinforced financially with each teacher.

Equity Theory is based on the reactions that coworkers have in response to perceived work and compensation of other workers (Sutton & Bergerson, 2001). The theory states that a person is driven to maximize reward and minimize effort (Behling & Starke, 1973). As boards of education, administrators and educators examine current pay structures across the United States, one of the concerns is that there are those people within, and outside, of education who feel there is a discrepancy between the work done by teachers and the value of their compensation (Carter, 2002). I had always been irritated with coworkers who I felt were not earning their keep. I had always been in favor of placing a limiting factor that would somehow make the pay structure more equitable from my perspective. As my district has approached the edge of performance target put in place by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2000 (NCLB) (Anonymous,

2012), I have become aware that although the general success of our building is dependent on my scores on a standardized test, there are others who go on about their jobs, as they always have, because they are relatively unaffected by politics. I have been frustrated that mine as well as others' efforts to make my building appear successful to the community at large is a responsibility not shared by all teachers within the building or district simply because their particular successes or failures are not readily attributable to our current evaluative measures.

Expectancy Theory revolves around three general premises, expectancy, instrumentality, and valance, which in short, determine the fairness and likelihood that certain measures will be rewarded adequately (Sutton & Bergerson, 2001). One of the struggles of merit and performance systems is the real or perceived issue with the fairness implied within the system, and the seemingly impossible chore of determining the effect that an individual teacher could have on a student's progress. In my experience, bonus pay items are of such little consequence that they rarely make a motivational impact in the way that I do things. For instance, the last time I was appointed as a teacher mentor, which is a time consuming position, my reward was a total of fifty dollars. On its own, not nearly a reasonable compensation for effort expended.

Performance-Based Pay Programs

Historical and political development of performance-based programs.

Performance-based pay initiatives and merit pay, the predecessor to performance pay, has been used in one form or another since the 1960s (Mintrop, 2004). They stem from the belief that achievements in learning can be quantifiably measured, and those measures can then be used to determine statistically the effectiveness of a given teacher

(Chamberlin et al, 2002). The idea behind the performance-based pay system is a fundamental pillar of several capitalistic economic theories as further outlined in chapter two (Sutton & Bergerson, 2001).

Performance base pay re-emerged in the 80s, and again in the late 90s and 2000s in light of demands placed upon schools by NCLB, and now more recently, the Race to the Top program (Sawchuk, 2010). Considering the problems of teacher retention and the quality of the education provided by the few willing to take on the job, improvements in test scores seem insurmountable (Moulthrop, Calegari & Eggers, 2005). Nonetheless, districts and states nationwide are considering or implementing new performance-based pay programs as a way of tending to both issues, teacher retention and student performance. Next generation performance systems with the use of new statistical programs and the use of digital formats have provided unparalleled opportunities to look at the performance of a child and more adequately transfer that performance to that of the teacher (Betebenner, 2008). Although these performance systems may be able to differentiate between teachers, the use of these scores has been unable to produce the desired effects on student growth systems as depicted in a three year study conducted in Tennessee (Springer, Hamilton, McCaffrey, Ballou, Le, Pepper, Lockwood, & Stecher, 2010).

The study conducted by Springer et al., (2010) is important in understanding the concepts of performance-based evaluations, and the effect those performance related items had when tying them to financial gains. This study was comprehensive in its exhaustive efforts to null out arguable threats to validity, which include, but were not limited to, the incidents of teacher cheating, randomness of subject selection, significance

of reward, and the overall willingness for teachers to remain in the program (Springer et al., 2010). The authors concluded that performance-based pay had little or no impact on student achievement as measured by growth models that use standardized tests scores to measure student gains (Springer et al., 2010). These ideas, and discoveries are central to the idea that performance-based pay is a valid strategy for student improvement, and as such, are significant to the validity of the results found in this study.

The development of current performance-based pay programs. There are generally three types of performance pay plans; school based performance awards, knowledge and skill based pay, and a combined approach. Each type has pros and cons, for instance skill based plans are easier to account for in that skills are measured usually by classes or seminars taken by the teacher, but leave out connection to student improvement (Prince, Koppich, Azar, Bhatt, & Witham, 2006). The successes and failures of these plans are highly contextual with federal, state, and local politics having a critical role in their implementation.

School based performance awards tend to focus on local, state, or federal goals, and are accounted for by the use of local or state generated tests. These pay programs usually do not impact the current salary schedule, and tend to be paid out as bonuses. One program, the Growth Model Pilot Project, currently in progress in Missouri, is a program where schools compare student growth data accumulated from volunteer schools (Missouri Growth Model: Executive Summary, 2013). This data is used to compare districts and buildings in the first year, and then specific classrooms the following year (Missouri Growth Model: Executive Summary, 2013).

Skill based performance pay is a pay program where salaries are increased through the accomplishment of directed instruction, or degree achievement. It is not necessary to modify the salary schedule but adjustments do sometimes occur in schools depending on the design of the plan (Prince et al., 2006). Combined plans are a mix of both school based performance, and skill attainment. These plans require a complete replacement of the current salary schedule (Prince et al., 2006).

In 1999 the Denver public school system, in cooperation with the teacher's union, moved to design a pay for performance program (Jupp, 2005). In 2003, the district put into effect the Professional Compensation System for Teachers (ProComp). In this PBP system there was a list of options such as whether or not teachers taught a state assessed content area, the number of professional development units that they earned, and the actual growth of the students as determined by state testing. (Gongring, Teske, & Jupp, 2010). Although historically, merit plans have yielded at best questionable results, the founders of the ProComp plan are enthusiastic about their early success and are seeing some movement towards some of their goals (Jupp, 2010). A more detailed description is outlined in chapter two relative to their history, implementation and current status.

The implementation of current programs. When implementing programs, there are roadblocks that can doom systems to failure before they can be fully implemented. These issues are related to the financial burdens of such programs, the instrumentality of these programs and the perceptions of the stakeholders, namely teachers, that these programs will be conducted fairly by the district and building administrators (Gallagher, 2004). These processes of implementation involve the need for time in order to develop buy in from both the public at large and the teachers within the current system. Research has

indicated that successful implementation will involve several steps, which are further explored in the review of the literature.

Teacher perceptions of performance-based pay programs. Teachers and their unions have been historically adamantly opposed to performance-based pay programs. The majority of the opposition is due to the effects they have on upending decades of equal rights initiatives, but more importantly the lack of perceived fairness of programs whether they are relying on the results of narrowly defined student growth, or the possibility of principal retaliation using loaded test scores as a leverage to force unpopular teachers out of the current setting (Costello, Shuey & Elson, 2006). These issues are complex and require the investigation of current perceptions, and the construction of those perceptions in understanding the development of current programs.

Overview of Methodology

The unit of analysis for this study was the perceptions that the teachers in the Pandora School District had about performance-based pay. A unit of analysis is simply the primary focus of the data collected in a study about a specific group, in a specific setting (Patton, 2002). In this study the natural conditions of the setting were directly related to performance-based pay due to the direct relationship that compensation has to work in general.

This study progressed through a process utilizing multiple qualitative methods for data collection. The data was collected from the population of teachers currently employed by the Pandora School District. The population is composed of 803 teachers (Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2008). This district is located in a suburban area of the Midwest and serves approximately 10,000 students spread

throughout two high schools, eleven elementary buildings, and three middle schools (Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2008). The student population is composed of 7,380 white students, or approximately (71.7%) of the total (Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2008). This percentage is actually more important in that although the district has been growing, the percentage of white students has dropped 7% since 2009, which represents a steady increase in the number of students of color (Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2008). The school has had a steady increase in the number of low socio-economic students (SES) rising from 22.1% to 27.2% since 2009 (Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2008).

“Maximum variation sampling” (Patton, 2002, p. 234.) was used as the major strategy for the selection of the purposeful sample. This type of purposeful sampling focuses on getting as wide a range of variation as possible in responses (Creswell & Clark, 2007). I selected participants from the population of elementary teachers in the Pandora School District with the intent to broaden the field of possible subjects, while at the same time providing a large enough sample to protect the anonymity of the participants themselves.

The purposeful sample was identified using a simple survey (see appendix A) that explained the purpose of the study, the basic requirements of the subject, and detailed the anonymity of any participating subjects. The questionnaire itself was used to flesh out the opinions and perceptions of teachers on the topic of performance-based pay and how it relates to current political movements both from the federal and state levels. The survey also pursued perceptions as they related to current local and district initiatives and recorded these perceptions as the teachers lived the phenomenon.

It was possible that more subjects may have been needed to complete the study. If so, emergent sampling, a type of purposeful sampling where the researcher makes decisions on the spot regarding sampling techniques (Patton, 2002), was considered if needed. Additionally, stratified sampling was needed to identify different reactions to the phenomenon based on a number of constructs. Stratified sampling was used to determine if groups should be investigated due to differences related to age, gender, race, ethnicity, or other factors (Patton, 2002).

The final type of purposeful sampling strategy was intensity sampling. This approach was used to purposefully choose individuals from a population that reflected the beliefs of their group or sub-group, but do so with a unique and overwhelming ability to make clear their beliefs about the phenomenon they experienced (Patton, 2002). I selected five subjects for in-depth and intensive interviewing, which is a major data source and the backbone of case study research.

Data sources for this study were the initial survey, documents, and in-depth interviews. As previously noted, the results of the survey were used as a sampling strategy, as well as to identify common strands of meaning, and to direct the further development of the interview question guide. Documents taken from a variety of sources, such as state and federal policies, resulting district policies, and union publications, were used to help frame the participants' perspectives of the performance-based program. These documents served to inform or persuade the subjects, and directly influence, as well as support the lived experience. Finally, I used in-depth interviews of the subjects themselves. These interviews involved the use of an interview guide, but was designed to

allow the subject to reflect and communicate more deeply their feelings and experiences from a very personal point of view.

The survey was composed of open and closed ended questions. The closed ended questions were analyzed using a Likert scale and descriptive statistics. The open-ended questions of the survey were analyzed using Miles and Huberman coding system (1994) where meaning was derived from the text based on frequency of words and their relationship within the text. The same process was used to analyze the documents.

The interviews were also be coded for theme development and also to incorporate the heuristic process, as outlined by Moustakas (1994), that involved the bracketing of concepts and reflection in order to define meaning that was significant to the phenomena. These processes are described in detail in the methodology chapter of this proposal.

Significance of the Study

The rationale for this qualitative study was to examine the common perceptions that elementary educators had about the phenomenon of performance-based pay. Although it is possible to quantify some of these experiences, it was the purpose of this qualitative study to provide the voice that is so often lacking from the design of a strictly quantitative study. Some questions that exist in research are purposely defined for a quantitative study, such as when a researcher wishes to know and understand what happened, or to what degree. Although quantitative programs do generate an immense amount of data, they usually fail to accurately describe the motivations that acted within the event itself. Qualitative studies give researchers the tools to look beyond the data and dig deeper into the realm of personal voices, and biases of the subjects studied (Creswell, 2009).

There are adequate amounts of literature that can be found in the orbits surrounding performance evaluation; Gallagher's (2004) study of teacher and performance and comparison to student achievement, or the rationale for compensation reform, Jupp (2005) and his initiative to reform Denver Public Schools Pay system to name a few. These studies measure specific outcomes of these performance-based systems, from the standpoint of how many achieved a certain performance, or how many chose not to opt-in to the program, but none discuss the perceptions of teachers from the standpoint of pre-program perceptions. Limited research exists that explores the phenomenon of teacher perceptions as they move through or begin the process of instituting a PBP program.

Although there have been significant amounts of information written and verbalized about the pros and cons of performance-based pay systems, there are very few qualitative studies that use rich descriptions and the qualitative tools to root out the deeper understanding concerning the true nature of teacher concerns about performance-based pay. Search results using ERIC and Ebsco yielded 123 results using the search phrase "performance-based pay". When the term "qualitative research" was added it reduced the results to 0 results. I next searched the term "teacher perceptions" which yielded 8,249 results. When I filtered for the term "performance based pay" it narrowed the search to one result. I changed the term from "performance based pay" to "merit pay" and received thirteen results. Of which when I filtered for qualitative research it yielded 0 results.

What few qualitative studies there are, such as Troman, Jefferey, and Raggie's (2007) study, tend to support from a post program perspective that teacher perception is

likely to favor creativity as an indicator of teacher success. In general, these researchers are not supportive of performance related measures of determining teacher quality. Studies such as Firestone (1991) and Kannapel, Coe, Aagaard, and Moore (1996) concluded that teachers felt that performance related measures were insulting and tended to treat teachers unprofessionally. Kannapel et al., (1996) went on to say that there were issues with previous systems from the standpoint of instrumentality and valence as promised amounts of monies were not awarded when funding measures fell through. It is not uncommon for school districts to underestimate the initial payouts required to fulfill its new contractual agreements, or to underestimate the public's willingness to raise levies or taxes to fund such programs.

It was my intention to add to the collective knowledge of performance initiatives through the qualitative contribution of this study. This project involved collecting data in the form of surveys, examining documents, and conducting in-depth interviews. Through surveys, documents, and interviews I located a common thread of understanding of phenomena that will allow productive communication on all sides of the issue of performance-based pay. I intend for this study to become a useful tool for my district, and others like Pandora, who are making changes to their teacher compensation systems. The literature suggests that districts planning to implement a major change in compensation reform must take time to evaluate the perceptions of the teachers affected by that change in order for that transition to be successful (Collom & Ogawa, 2000; Leithwood & Earl, 2000; Raham, 2000). Moving through systematic compensation reform can be an arduous task and will require understanding of the beliefs and perceptions of the teachers of the Pandora School District. Due to the direction of current political trending for

performance-based pay programs, the purpose of this study was to illuminate the desires and fears of the teachers such that the transition to a PBP system. If districts such as Pandora choose to embrace PBP systems the transition should be as painless as possible and progress in a way that is respectful of the needs of all members of the district and the community.

Chapter two will delve further into the issues of how teachers socially construct their perceptions of reality as related to motivation. I discuss past and current performance-based pay programs coupled with the development of federal policy to provide a framework for understanding the lived experiences of teachers with performance base pay systems.

Chapter three describes the type of study used, and provides a basis for understanding the data collected and meaning-making during the data analysis phase. I discuss the rationale for the use of the qualitative paradigm, and describe the study's design including the research site, sampling procedures, data sources, and analysis plans. I conclude with the limitations, validity, reliability, and ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter four will describe the analysis of data obtained through surveys completed by Pandora teachers, interview data taken from five teachers who agreed to participate further in the study, and finally the data rendered from document analysis. The results will be compared across sources and utilized to answer the research questions.

Chapter five will discuss implications of the results and introduce the cycle of reaction uncovered through the process of the data analysis. This dissertation will conclude with reflection and discussion of the opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

New federal policies such as the Race to the Top Program put into place by the Obama administration have signaled the process of abandoning more traditional compensation systems in education such as the step and lane compensation system currently in place today (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The rationale for this change is not new, but housed in the providence of national test scores that fall short of meeting our nation's expectations for excellence in the world theater, and failing to adequately prepare American students for a college education (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The main goal of Race to the Top is to encourage a more stringent teaching of the subjects of mathematics and language arts (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). These policies are not new, and have been attempted repeatedly for decades (Odden & Kelly, 2002). The push for performance-based pay incentives is founded in business as a strategy for improvement by attracting, hiring, and retaining the best talent (Sturman, Trevor, Boudreau & Gerhart, 2003).

The perceptions of the teacher, while moving from one compensation system to another, are largely un-researched in a true qualitative design. As I prepared for this study, I investigated a series of databases such as ERIC and Ebsco Host. As mentioned earlier, the qualitative research on teacher perception of performance-based pay is weak at best. The results concerning performance-based pay resulted in only 123 results, and when the field was narrowed further, by filtering for teacher perceptions, the results dropped to zero. I then searched these databases for only teacher perceptions and yielded 8,249 results. When performance-based pay was used to filter the results, it reduced the

list to one article. I repeated these steps using merit pay; albeit a much older term, and was only able to identify 13 results.

This absence in the literature, combined with the current state and national direction being taken towards compensating teachers based on the outcomes of their students test scores, provided the rationale for this study. The research indicates that the attitudes of teachers about performance-based pay should be taken into account before a move within district is attempted (Troman, Jefferey & Raggle, 2007). This study ascertained what those attitudes are by exploring the perceptions of teachers regarding performance-based programs. Based on the findings, Chapter Five provides a framework to begin the communication process in the advent of transitioning to a performance-based compensation program.

In my experience, there are essentially three distinct viewpoints that provide unique perspectives about the development of performance-based pay programs. (See table 1.) These viewpoints are largely determined by the roles individuals play in the broader educational system, and the pressures as well as issues of power resulting from the responsibilities related to their specific professional positions (Wrobbel, 2009). The development of their perspective relates directly back to, and can be explained by a combination of thought and theory related to social constructivism, and motivational theory (Burr, 1995). These three viewpoints are interwoven within the context of educational pursuit and although it is important to understand the underpinnings of each one, this study will use the basic descriptions of two perspectives in order to gain a deeper understanding of the third perspective, which is more closely linked to the teachers of Pandora school district.

Table 1.

Three Viewpoints of Performance-Based Pay Programs

Aligned Pro-PBP	Aligned Neutral PBP	Aligned Con-PBP
Those members who promote viewpoint one, align themselves with the idea that performance-based pay (PBP) programs are adequate solutions to increase student achievement.	Members representing the second viewpoint are considerably less vocal than the other two.	The third viewpoint is voiced by individuals who are directly affected by the results of performance-based pay programs, namely, teachers.
These individuals may include, but are not limited to administrators, board members, and politicians.	Their membership includes a smaller population of generally non-biased researchers that prefer to evaluate programs for effectiveness and may not have a vested interest in the results of their studies either way.	This group is generally vocal concerning the validity of programs and cite many logistics and realities of student performance that lie outside of their locus of control.

Those members who promote viewpoint one, align themselves with the idea that performance-based pay (PBP) programs are adequate solutions to increase student achievement (Jupp, 2010; Sturman, Trevor, Boudreau & Gerhart, 2003). These individuals may include, but are not limited to administrators, board members, and politicians. They tend to believe that student performance is more related to teacher performance within the classroom and use statistical models to describe student growth as a linear predictable model devoid of reasonable variables of success or failure (Betebenner, 2008). They cite articles and studies that support their belief system, and

generally tend to ignore or downplay contradictory research that challenge their perspective (Altenbaugh, 1992).

Members representing the second viewpoint are considerably less vocal than the other two. Their membership includes a smaller population of generally non-biased researchers that prefer to evaluate programs for effectiveness and may not have a vested interest in the results of their studies either way (Sawchuk 2010; Springer et al., 2010). Their results almost always indicate that performance-based pay programs are not effective, but teachers may not have access to this research (Loveless, 2000).

The third viewpoint is voiced by individuals who are directly affected by the results of performance-based pay programs, namely, teachers (Odden & Kelly, 2002). This group is generally vocal concerning the validity of programs and cite many logistics and realities of student performance that lie outside of their locus of control (Moulthrop et al., 2005). Although there have been many articles written concerning the anecdotal evidence of teacher perceptions, there are very few qualitative studies conducted (as discussed earlier in this chapter) in earnest concerning the true perceptions of teachers and current performance models (Weaver, 2003). The viewpoints of the administrators, board members, and politicians as well as the researchers are used to provide a framework for understanding the perceptions of those who exist in the third group, teachers.

Understanding these distinct viewpoints requires knowing how social constructivism, social constructionism and theories of motivation operate within the workplace. These concepts will illuminate the intricate balance that exists in our educational system between the inner world of the individual and the outer world that

may influence group membership (Burr, 1995). Social constructivism and constructionism, theories of motivation, and the issues of performance-based pay including historical and current trends, effects on implementation, and current teacher perceptions comprise the literature review of the current proposal. These topics provide the foundation knowledge of the proposed inquiry. Furthermore, they provide meaning and grounding from which the research is conducted and the results are gathered

First, I discuss the theories of social constructivism and constructionism in order to define how the perceptions of an individual or group are created and reinforced by a number of dynamics. Individual and group realities and perceptions can be extremely resilient to outside manipulation (Burr, 1995). This discussion is followed by motivational theory, which contributes to the understanding of reactions and decisions made by individuals and groups. Social constructionism and constructivism provides the structure for how teachers perceive performance-based pay programs, motivational theory describes the stimulus for the actions they may take. Lastly, a detailed description of performance-based pay programs that outlines their historical and political development, current performance initiatives, and teacher perceptions of these programs are provided.

Understanding the complexities of performance base programs will illuminate the driving forces that provide impetus for teacher action based on the interplay between social constructionism and constructivism and motivational theories. These topics helped me create understanding of the perspectives of teachers and provide the theoretical underpinnings for reporting on the findings.

Social Constructionism and Social Constructivism

The attempt to understand the perceptions of teachers as a whole or just one teacher in isolation was a difficult and problematic task to undertake. The perception itself is meaningless unless you understand the background of the specific teacher and an understanding of the social realities related to being a member of the teacher group (Moustakas, 1990). These understandings must be derived from understanding the development of social systems as a whole. There are two defining theories that describe how individuals and groups develop an understanding of how reality is created within the contexts of their own experiences. These theories are Social Constructionism and Social Constructivism.

The process of understanding the perspectives of teachers has to begin with an understanding of how perspectives, and especially knowledge, is formed from social interactions and relate to the understandings of the individual when communicating knowledge and perspective.

The purpose and concepts of social construction and social constructivism

The purpose of these theories as it relates to understanding performance-based pay systems is to provide a base understanding of how teachers develop their belief systems about their own experiences as those experiences relate to other teachers and the world around them. Social Constructivism and Social Constructionism go hand in hand with existentialism as it relates to phenomenology, which by nature is the study of how people relate and experience a specific phenomenon.

A qualitative researcher endeavors to create a bridge of understanding through a process of emersion, which allows the researcher to remain open in a “timeless moment” to the phenomenon at hand (Moustakas, 1990). This emersion is an attempt to create a

platform of relative understanding from which the subject's specific thoughts and feelings become grounded in a relative set of cognitive structures. This hinges on the presumption that human beings share a common set of experiences and knowledge from which they operate, or at the least a few common experience from which paradigms of understanding can be altered in order to communicate effectively (Moustakas, 1990).

These presumptions have led to the development of two distinct branches of essentialist psychology, social constructivism, and social constructionism. Although very similar to each other, the first refers to the development of knowledge based on the individual, and the latter refers to the development of knowledge through social interaction (Boghossian, 2006; Burr, 1995). Both Constructivism and Constructionism lend themselves well to heuristics due to their ability to look at the reality of thought and belief as created by oneself and as a part of a social construct.

Humans create very specific constructs based on societal realities. Society and its norms are created by people and are forever intertwined. One cannot exist without the other (Berger & Luckman, 1967). Therefore, in order to understand society, or in particular a sub-group of society, one must understand how the reality of society is created and under what conditions it may change. A perspective shared by heuristics, a form of phenomenology, is the meaning of a given experience is dependent on the context from which the individual or group experiences phenomena (Welton, 1999). Do people construct knowledge the same way? The question at hand involves the concept that people may *know* the same things or the acknowledgement of a universal knowledge (Gadamer, 1976). In lies the point, the phrase, *our knowledge or universal knowledge* reinforces the concept that knowledge is socially constructed through discourse.

Generally speaking this theory contradicts empirical psychology that depends on data driven sources of pinning down behavioral schema based on the idea that all normal humans have minds and identities that develop the same (Burr, 1995). Likewise when applying these ideas towards this study, an understanding of how teachers develop their knowledge and understanding of reality becomes significant.

Social Constructivism is a psychological and philosophical framework used to pin down the essence and processes involved in creating knowledge and understanding (Boghossian, 2006). This definition is vague, and does not lend much in the way of understanding what social constructivism is, and has been left this way for a reason. According to Burr (1995), constructionism is also a process used almost entirely by psychologists and methodologists to define their respective research, and each has applied their own ideas altering the definition only slightly. This process though is essential in allowing the researcher the ability to draw investigations from a standpoint of philosophical freedom the root causes of a particular experience, without being hindered by the structures of a definition based on the research of others.

Social Constructionism and Social Constructivism take on knowledge and understanding of identity and power systems as they relate to the particular social environment of the individual. Although some definitions differ, the general idea is that one cannot see their own environment from outside of their own environment (Burr, 1995). According to Burr (1995), researchers cannot literally take themselves out of the equation as they have been created from the equation. Constructionism is reflected in heuristic research methods, which build their foundations on the understanding that the researcher is lodged firmly in the research environment (Moustakas, 1990). This can

create issues where the meanings of a study's participants are being based on the perspectives of the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). The researcher must take care to illuminate the meanings participants have of the phenomena. Heuristics as a research method comes into play to help the researcher make clear individual perspectives and to use them as a lens for understanding the findings of a particular study (Patton, 2002).

Understanding the nuances between social constructionism and social constructivism

The discussion concerning Social Constructivism begins with the topic of belief and truth (Heidegger, 1962). What makes knowledge true? More importantly what makes fact true? This seems like an easy question to answer, for instance the Earth is round, (or mostly so). Your average American gained this knowledge in school (or from community members); science supports it, and so does most mainstream religious organizations (Simanek, 2013). This has not always been so, for a very long period of time the world was known to be flat, and children learned this in the schools they attended (or from community members), science supported it, and so did the churches (Simanek, 2013). The world at large held this belief to be absolute truth and defended it vehemently. The interesting point is that time frame dependent both versions of the nature of the world are *true*; considering that such versions are dependent on how that knowledge was constructed amongst a group, which is the essence of social constructionism -- humans create knowledge and understanding through social interaction and discourse (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1999).

The real question at hand might not be what the population thought the world was, or what the population thinks it is, but what it will be thought of in the future. For

instance, looking at the way knowledge is created in terms of the Grand Unification Theory is a perfect example of socially constructed knowledge (Hawking, 1988). Physicists for decades have been in search of a single theory that will explain and unite the physical theories that govern large objects (gravitational) and the very small objects (atomic) and tie the two together (Hawking, 1988). In the early twentieth century, this search for knowledge was set in motion by physicists Albert Einstein, Max Planck, and Enrico Fermi (Hawking, 1988). Since the beginning, knowledge and theories about the nature of the universe have been debated and have varied widely as new thought answered seemingly unanswerable questions. Ideas like Quantum Mechanics, String Theory, and the idea that there may be many dimensions and parallel universes that predict and explain why things work the way they do are explained according to what we see and experience (Hawking, 1988).

The truth behind mainstream quantitative scientific work lies in the agreed beliefs of a core set of researchers and scientists believed to be the experts in their field. When a critical mass of these scientists espouse support for an idea mostly through the process of written and verbal discourse, the new idea at hand then gains value and is accepted as the new set of truth about the nature of the world at large (Banerjee, 2007). In the field of Mathematics, a *rigorous proof* is referred to as a *statement*, the process of mathematical rigor is defined by Banerjee (2007) as:

...checking for contradictions in a mathematical proof, and if there are none, there is said to be "complete certainty" about the final statement. This proof, then, is said to be a complete and unshakable guarantee that the statement in question is true. This raises a red flag straight away. Proofs cannot, by themselves, provide complete certainty -- as defined, they need certain premises to work. (para. 1).

Proofs always rely on a body of logic to be the framework for the proof, and at the

simplest, they rely on certain core axioms (Banerjee, 2007). Both of these examples are perfect in describing the concepts of socially constructed knowledge, and describe how intensely beliefs are likely to play a part in understanding performance-based pay.

A major point of contention illustrated in this study is the perception of the reliability of standardized testing of students to adequately evaluate the value that a teacher has based on student test scores (Weaver, 2003). The argument of whether the variables inherently present in children, long assumed to be outside the locus of teacher control, can truly be accounted for is null according to current researchers and presents an accurate measure of teacher performance (Betebenner, 2009). These variables may include the student's race, ethnicity, socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity, emotional or behavioral issues or even something as simple as whether or not the student was having a good day (Weaver, 2003).

Timothy Todd, a building principal (personal communication, 2013) referred to the accuracy of growth model evaluations as "faith based systems." He went on to clarify this phrase by stating that for an individual to believe that these growth model tests accurately reflect the value of the teacher, the individual must first believe that these variables which until recently were considered almost impossible to account for, have been accounted for. In simpler terms, the truth concerning the validity of performance-based systems lie in the socially held belief that these beliefs are valid and accurate. In this case, truth was derived from a socially constructed and accepted belief that these variables were accounted for in the utilization of growth models.

Socially constructed beliefs systems can be considered truth and remain a theory as in the case of the Theory of Evolution or the idea of Intelligent Design. If the

American society at large slowly begins to believe that the theory of evolution has the quality of truth or fact, then it becomes the belief system (Boghossian, 2006). It could be argued that there are large populations of people housed in the bible belt of the United States, that feel differently about evolution, but they hold on to another large scale discourse presented by respected leaders in their respective religions. The point is still the same; a population determines its own truth and knowledge through written and spoken discourse. In regards to the Grand Unification Theory, a mathematical proof, or the validity of growth model evaluative systems, the *truth* behind each of these is more a function of socially constructed beliefs than the complex scientific constructs used to describe them.

Respectively so, the argument about knowledge becomes clear; what we believe to be true is largely a part of what we have been told or read and has a little less to do with what our own experiences have told us (Burr, 1995; Kinicki, 2008). In fact, people will change their reactions to knowledge based on the willingness to align themselves with the community at large. A study by Solomon Asch in 1951, an effect he referred to as public compliance, he identified as a situation where members of a group were willing to support an obvious false answer rather than report a true answer that differed from the majority opinion (Kinicki, 2008).

Due to the Asch effect, the first idea that must be entertained concerning social constructivism is that there is no such thing as an objective fact. All knowledge is created in a social context, and that context drives the reality of our thinking (Burr, 1995; Heidegger, 1962). Our view of what is real is dependent mostly on our own experiences in a cycle of reinforcement dependent on society at large. These reinforcements are

historically and culturally driven and vary from one unique group to another. Generally speaking, the more complex the knowledge, the more obscure its source, the more likely that it will have widely differing attributes.

There are few things in our common experiences as complex as determining and isolating variables that determine a successful student. There are many differing viewpoints that collide in a panacea of experiences from those of varying educational backgrounds; including educational attainment or educational experiences as an, administrator, teacher, parent or community member. These experiences compete with each other in defining a consistent view of the reality of teaching and learning. In larger social groups where information and ideas can travel instantly and over a large area, the settling that occurs into a niche of perspective is hindered and becomes disrupted as continual new ideas invade the social context (Gergen, 1999).

It stands to reason a very important tenet of social constructionism is that language is a pre-condition for thought and used as a form of social action (Burr, 1995). As a society grows and becomes fractured into many subgroups, the areas of relative truth become skewed due to perspective and discourse contained within groups. Each particular group creates its own skewed reality, and it is that reality from which the members center their beliefs (Burr, 1995). The more skewed the reality, the more likely that interactions from other groups will create friction and discontent, both within, and between the groups. This discord is most frequently evident, not so much in the form of action, but in the expression of words (Burr, 1995).

As societies get larger and more complex, it becomes evident that members of groups will interact and begin to mingle and share ideas. Kenneth Gergen (1999) states in

his book, *An Invitation to Social Construction*, that a single person may belong to many groups, and the language used in any of these groups is tempered through reflection and experience. Whereas in one group a phrase may have one meaning, in another it may be totally different. What becomes truth when observing a series of groups depends entirely upon which groups hold sway, and which are being silenced (Gergen, 1999). Everything in the world becomes part of an invisible cultural structure from which is derived meaning.

Knowledge then makes a transition from an object to a process that leaves open the ability to adapt and change as need be or as demanded by the social constraints at that time (Heidegger, 1962). Since knowledge is lodged firmly in the house of social discourse; which will be discussed in a later section, then it only makes sense that knowledge is socially constructed by the people experiencing the development of that particular piece of knowledge. This experience as mentioned before is tempered by the predilections, assumptions and beliefs owned by the culture creating the knowledge (Heidegger, 1926). Not only does this apply to knowledge about the world in general but also in the way that we construct our own identities.

As this construction of knowledge relates to the perceptions that teachers have of performance-based pay systems, a teacher may have developed specific beliefs and perspectives of reality that are true from the standpoint of their own experiences, but more importantly, these truths are reinforced by the beliefs of those teachers around them. These beliefs become a reinforcing element that significantly pervades the ideology of a particular group and can be extremely difficult to change. This lack of flexibility in

thought and belief creates truth, and that truth can have profound effects on the community surrounding it.

According to Mead (1934) a person's identity is forged through the social interactions of the people around them. In a sense, individuals are responsible for sharing in the creation of not only our own but others' identities and the environment from which derive a sense of what is true and real and this creation is due to interactive discourse between all members of the group. Inherently, this personal knowledge of truth becomes a very powerful force from which the individual derives his or her sense of what the world is, and their place in it (Burr, 1995). Most of the frustrations found between cultures come from the blending of epistemic and religious knowledge that conflict in the way that the individuals in each particular culture acknowledge truth and reason (Boghossian, 2006). For one group a fact is a fact and for another group it is not. For one culture the idea has intimate meaning and for the other it does not. This conflict then becomes volatile as individuals on both sides of a particular issue have belief systems, which become questioned at the core (Boghossian, 2006).

If teachers believe that performance-based pay systems will hinder their ability to teach, then it will. The only thing necessary to make these assertions true is consistent conviction that performance base pay systems are not in the best interest for teachers. Thus, change as described through the fluid interactions between groups and over time in the face of newer more powerful ideas can happen. It can have undeterminable effects on the population as paradigms are shifted in order to accommodate a new reality (Gergen, 1999). In regards to performance-based pay systems, change on behalf of stalwart teachers can occur, but will take large amounts of communication over time and

supported through what is believed as credible sources that also hold the new belief about the fairness performance-based pay systems to be true and inviolate.

Social constructivism differs from mainstream psychology in that it forces the researcher to look at the function of the individual as it relates to their position in society. The individual's position is analyzed in relation to power, difference and inequality with regards to the social environment (Burr, 1995). The idea that all individuals within a group are identical, creates stereotypes that lead to misunderstanding between members of the group, and more importantly, large scale silencing of those who do not represent the members of the elite or powerful (Gergen, 1999). The result is obvious. Without the ability for individuals in the group to differ slightly (or more so) within the realm of a social system of belief, gray areas that lead to change within society would not exist. The elements that create social change often start on the edges and work their way in through use of common ideas and expressive discourse (Burr, 1995). From the standpoint of performance-based pay and more importantly student growth, the perception of students as having identical properties or being relatively indistinguishable from each other makes the mathematics behind the statistics easier to compute, but will have profound effects concerning the sustainability of such a system.

Understanding discourse and its relationship within social constructionism and constructivism

As mentioned earlier, discourse is the medium from which social knowledge is developed and shared. Discourse in itself is complicated and requires a look at different ideological viewpoints to understand it completely. According to Foucault (1972), the Marxist viewpoint simply looks at discourse as a function of power, utilized by the

capitalist employers to subjugate the employee and create a construction of reality that benefits the economy and creates wealth for the upper class. Foucault (1971), on the other hand, tends to look at discourse as a way of creating reality and power through knowledge; in fact, he insisted that knowledge and power go hand in hand.

Knowledge and power are complex when viewed from the aspect of socially constructed realities. It is entirely possible that structures such as intelligence tests can be put into place to systematically create control over the individual (Foucault, 1972). Foucault contended that the independent person entered into knowledge and therefore power on their own free will; however, the type of knowledge that the individual experiences can alter the reality for that particular person (Foucault, 1972). The nature of the experience can determine the reality from which a teacher exists which can then influence the group; hence, the social and political impetus from which these beliefs also arise. Once a critical mass of individuals has certain beliefs the system can become self-regulatory.

According to Burr (1995) there are essentially two types of discourse used to study and research a phenomenon, micro and macro. Micro social constructionism refers to the interaction between individuals on a day-to-day basis. This particular type of constructionism is fluid in style and can derive its truth basis from multiple perspectives (Gergen, 1999). These different perspectives when acted upon through interpersonal processes, creates a joint action and determines how the individual creates voice and with it power (Burr, 1995). For instance, the act of voicing belief also creates power and validity both for the individual expressing and for those interacting. This power builds upon itself as the communication spreads from one individual to another within the

group. Whether or not a person is acting as their own agency, or simply the product of societal creation, the understanding of how these internal and external issues interact to create group norms and identity are at the heart of a true phenomenological study.

“...(A)s individuals we are constantly subject to an interplay of different discourses, each with its own structure of rights, obligations and possibilities for action, and each carrying identity and power implications” (Burr, 1995, p. 117).

As discourse in today’s society has become instantaneous over large areas and between many groups of people, the influence of thought and discourse has an exponentially profound impact as compared with earlier times. Groups within a society can move or change the society based on their ability to be heard and to communicate ideas (Gergen, 1999). Of course the process of identity and power depends on each and every situation that occurs in the process of normal life (Burr, 1995). A situation is a particular event depicted by a specific point of view. In any given situation, large or small, there are many points of views colliding and interacting. These multiple views operate from their own positions of power with the perspective of ascertaining control over the event, even if that control is only that of establishing their right to exist (Burr, 1995).

The process of discourse and interplay between individuals creates a competition between different powers, all of which struggle under the learned discourse of social status quo; which sets the rules and norms for discourse and power. In general, a particular heated conversation may involve one or more of the individuals using discourse to force a position of power on the other, such as when men or women use sexuality and either the assumed lack of understanding, or the assumed lack of ability as a

pillar of weakness (Burr, 1995). Neither of these situations are *fixable*, a man cannot become a woman and vice versa, so this creates a situation of immovable legitimacy supported by the discourse of the learned and accepted, the status quo. Conflict then becomes focused on accepted points of view housed in a social construction that all members play a part in reinforcing. From this particular point, micro-social constructivism moves into the world of macro social constructivism (Burr, 1995).

Macro social constructionism is the study of how power structures influence the development and direction of discourse and in turn the development of the nature of reality for those within the group. Macro social constructionists tend to research sources of social inequity such as gender relations, race and ethnicity (Burr, 1995). Burr goes on to point out that macro and micro constructionism are not necessarily conflicting or independent structures and can be studied simultaneously. Examples of macro-constructivism would entail the use of political platforms, the media or the use of distributed sources of opinion through the Internet or even specific trade journals. These sources of discourse are used to inform or persuade and can have an immense impact on maintaining the status quo or the inverse, such as making significant changes in the policies that currently exist. From the standpoint of macro-related power, identity of what has historically been referred to as fringe groups such as minorities, gays, lesbians, ethnic and religious sects, these groups are allowed to operate in regards to ways that help reinforce stereotypes and thus maintain the status quo of power for the groups in charge. This begs the question, what happens when administrators and teachers move towards breaking the status quo through major paradigm shifts in beliefs about performance and its impact on teacher compensation and perceptions of reality?

Social constructionism and constructivism as frameworks within this study

Social constructionism and constructivism do not work against each other, rather, they are the Yin and Yang of the perspectives related to the development of the whole person and a theory shared by the heuristic sciences (Moustakas, 1990). Constructionism dealing with the outward effects that a particular society has in creating its own reality, and constructivism which outlines the inward development of the person based on the effects that a society has in creating the individual (Burr, 1995). These ideas favor nurture versus nature where the whole individual is not a product of genetic coding per se, but the product of countless interactions with environment that they exist in (Burr, 1995). In other words, one cannot exist without the other. The individual cannot be created without the extrinsic pressure of the community around it and likewise the community cannot grow or change without the pressures of the individuals within it.

Although intimately connected, the viewpoint from which this dissertation proceeded is that of social constructionism, where the focus of the research was in the outward effects that individuals have in creating their own reality including power systems and systems of authority and voice. At the same time social constructivism was incorporated as a heuristic reality of the development of the whole person in regards to their place and voice in the population. These ideas are intertwined and required the use of heuristic methods of phenomenological research to determine the meaning of experience and understanding of teachers' perceptions. From these analyses, themes of understanding were created that can be used to engage in discourse related to teachers' perceptions of performance-based pay systems.

Social constructivism has been used as a framework in several investigations. In a case study, Hogue (2012) found that elements of social constructivism played an important role in the development of partnerships between a school and its community. As a qualitative investigation the use of in-depth interviews were used to explore meanings of community partnerships for ten teachers. Interviews were analyzed for common themes that centered on the ideas of demonstrating collaborative character, defining clear roles, and building solid infrastructure (Hogue, 2012).

Another case study conducted by Toson (2013) focused on the experiences of twenty-six different school professionals to uncover an understanding of school capacity for inclusion. This study was conducted using enumerative analysis depicted by Miles and Huberman (1994); themes identified in the data were related to the development of group dynamics as depicted by social constructivism. These theories held up and were validated through interviews with school administrators who concurred with the teacher's perspectives about the development of programs as group constructions (Toson, 2013).

More main line empirically based studies have been used to describe constructivism as a change agent in educational reform, such as in Ahmad and Lah's (2013) study of designed teaching sequence as it relates to conceptual understanding. In this study 37 students were selected for the experimental group in two classes as compared to the control group of 189 students in eight classes in similar buildings with similar demographics. The students were compared based on the results of a post diagnostic test. The test was designed to ascertain the effect that social constructivist theories had on teaching styles and whether or not those specific styles presented effective means for student success on the post test (Ahmad & Lah, 2013). The results of

this study indicated by the use of chi-square analysis that those students within the experimental group showed a much higher attainment of knowledge and a more rigorous understanding of the processes involved in the scientific inquiry (Ahmad & Lah, 2013).

When looking into the issue of performance-based pay systems, the construction of the reality of the experience of performance-based pay systems is crucial. This reality is lodged distinctly in the area of human motivation, that proponents of pay motivated systems claim is key to making significant changes in the quality of our teaching personnel. Understanding the processes behind motivational theory provided a framework of understanding for developing performance-based pay systems. Investigating the perceptions of teachers in regards to performance-based pay required an understanding of the motivational theories that provide impetus for change at the individual and group levels. Both of these micro and macro systems and the needs of the individual are intertwined and dependent on the success of any performance-based program (Odden & Kelley, 2002).

Motivational Theories

Motivation affects many different aspects of our lives, and occurs on many different levels from familiar to professional, and from instinctual to intellectual. These motivations overlap and sometimes are in conflict with one another and can create havoc within a complex social setting (Graham & Weiner, 2012). Motivational theories have been used as frameworks for understanding or used to describe their effects on the actions and activities engaged by groups of people. In the Hardin (2010) quantitative study, motivational theories such as social cognitive theory was used to describe the dynamics of teacher self-efficacy and involved a sample of 452 teachers from 47 internationally

based schools. The inquiry allowed for bivariate co-relational study of the results from closed ended questionnaires in order to identify unidirectional and or bidirectional causality. Results study indicated that that the effect of professional learning communities on teacher self-efficacy based on motivational theory structure showed a weak (.60) but positive significant correlation.

In a case study conducted in 2003, eighty employees were questioned as to the motivational factors concerning performance-based pay and their jobs (Alan & William, 2003). The results indicated that the pay had little effect on performance, and that the receiving of a negative evaluation created more of a dissention between managers and employees than was equaled out by what increases were seen in productivity. Although limited by time and population size, the overall evidence suggested a contradiction between the businesses productivity and the advent of performance-based pay (Alan & William, 2003).

Contrarily performance-based pay plans in Kentucky resulted in 1,756 teachers responding in a survey that a \$2,000 bonus was very desirable when attached to building increases in standardized scores, the difference being that no particular teacher was singled out, but worked as a group to achieve the bonus referred to a solidary reward (Kelley, 1999). These successes were in light of general research that indicates that extrinsic rewards rarely contribute to significant improvement (Kelley, 1999). These theories were upheld in the qualitative section of Kelley's study that indicated teachers responded that a salary bonus was not a motivator but an acknowledgment of work well done.

When investigating performance-based pay as a motivational structure it becomes necessary to become familiar with the motivators that effect work and professional design of teaching. To begin with, there are many economic theories on motivation such as: Adam's Equity Theory, Maslow's Need Hierarchy, McClelland's Need Theory, Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory, and Vroom's Expectancy Theory (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008). These theories have been used as the impetus to improve teacher quality by imposing financial related evaluations of the teachers themselves. The theories are complex and interrelated within the context of teacher performance and take into account assumptions about the education system as a whole. They postulate the possible actions and reactions that lead to predictable results related to initiatives and direct an individual's voluntary actions, including psychological processes that create these actions and how they interact with each other (Graham & Weiner, 2012).

Generally speaking there is a continuum in which different types of motivation occur, nomothetic and idiographic. Nomothetic motivation centers on the idea that motivation should be studied and classified from the standpoint of what makes the organism being studied the same. In other words, nomothetic research revolves around innate qualities of an organism, which would include ideas of instinct and biologic control. Idiographic motivators on the other hand, deal more with the distinctions between organisms and tend to focus on external factors that determine specific examples of self-determination (Petri, 1996). These ideas have been more recently or commonly referred to as nature versus nurture.

Although there are many arguments and designs for and against nomothetic and idiographic motivations, the concept that humans were the product of a dualist melding of

both was introduced by Rene Descartes and still holds sway in current times (Petri, 1996). The true issue between these two ideas depends more upon what type of stimulus the organism is subject to than anything else. Motivation can be seen as innate when the organism is responding to hunger, as hunger is an internal physiological motivator for survival (Graham & Weiner, 2012). Motivation can be seen as idiographic when the organism chooses to consume different types of foods based on the culture predilections. Both can become blended when a person chooses a particular type of career or employment based on desire in order to earn a compensation that allows them to afford food and shelter (Graham & Weiner, 2012).

Maslow's Need Theory and its relationship to teachers

Maslow's Need Theory creates a spectrum of levels that begin with a specifically nomothetic level of physiological survival where the person has specific needs for continued existence, such as food, shelter, water, etc. This particular need level is very impersonal and is universally understood by people as a set of basic needs (Lester, Hvezda, Sullivan & Plourde, 1983; Krietner & Kinicki, 2008). These sets of basic needs are usually the ones that an individual would consider first when providing assistance, as the continued existence of the organism cannot be assured without them.

Following survival is safety, again the flight or fight response dictates on a very innate level the actions needed in order to acquire and maintain life free of pain and death (Lester et al., 1983). Safety is a highly regarded motivator and can be used to justify many actions based on the stimulus that created the motivation and action. For instance, in most societies the killing of another individual is considered a crime. In the United States, a significant number of states uphold the killing of another individual when the

person who is killing feels that they or their family (or property) is being threatened (Purves, 2013). Even state governments have the right to impose lethal means of social control if they feel that a criminal is too dangerous to be allowed to continue existing.

The next level on Maslow's hierarchy is that of love (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008). Love can be described as an affective process that humans are uniquely engaged in, others might consider it an instinctual process necessary for survival, either way, it places itself in the middle of nomothetic and idiographic motivators. This has the potential to be a very highly debated level depending on which form of motivation a person subscribes to, or the specific cultural context that is being applied. Love in itself has so many culturally relevant meanings that one's specific view on love could vary greatly even within an individual's own social setting.

The last two levels of motivation, esteem and self-actualization, become more meta-cognitive in nature. They deal with the human's need to develop prestige, and recognition from others and the need to be self-fulfilled as an emotionally stable and successful person (Lester et al., 1983). These sets of motivational drives are what stimulate a person to act in order to earn rewards or to compete with another person for recognition. Pride makes it's presence known in these levels and can be a very large motivator when it comes to economic or job related issues. Regardless of safety or survival, if an individual is not motivated to become an actualized person, he or she will become stagnated at their current position, production or voluntary action and reduce their efforts. Individuals may go looking for other work that provides motivational compensation at higher levels when they feel that their current work and future work are equal in providing for needs registering on the lower levels of Maslow's list. The final

two levels have little to do with innate universal responses but become unique and personalized for each particular individual.

Current research does indicate that the use of performance-based pay plans tend to impact the higher end of Maslow's needs hierarchy more so than on the lower end. Teachers tend to indicate that the loss of prestige or the feelings of inadequacy weigh more when considering performance-based pay of a monetary nature (Kelley, 1999). In a study conducted in Christian based private schools, teachers indicated that they felt comfortable allowing administrators to choose the degree of monetary compensation mainly because administrators tended to overcompensate based on their own perceptions of reward strength (Wrobbel, 2009). The teachers were not as attached to the money as the administrators presumed (Wrobbel, 2009). This study also brought to light that there were different perceptions of performance-based pay depending on your position in the system (Wrobbel, 2009).

As indicated, motivation in general can be a complicated issue when these theories are applied to the workplace, specifically, the workplace of teachers. Because there are so many contributing aspects to education identifying a specific type of motivation becomes very difficult. If educators were to take the motivation of the children out of the equation with their many dimensions of motivators and perspectives, and their inevitable interaction with teachers which according to social constructivist theory cannot be accomplished (Burr, 1995), it would result in narrowing down the motivation to teaching to the opposite ends of Maslow's hierarchy, survival and fulfillment.

Teachers may teach to earn money in order to live, and or to engage in an activity that provides them with self-actualization and fulfillment. Arguably these types of motivation can differ greatly from teacher to teacher depending on their views of survival and fulfillment (Lester et al., 1983). A teacher paired with a spouse who can provide all of the levels on the lower levels of Maslow's list, may teach for reasons much higher on Maslow's hierarchy, where as a teacher who is working in order to earn money for food and shelter may find themselves motivated to do what is needed to keep that lower level of safety and food satisfied. These competing groups of individuals make up a wide variety of individuals within a school setting. Because of this, there is a broad spectrum of motivations taking place at any given time that creates further conflict within the dynamic setting where these motivations clash and create confusion and wreak havoc upon the workplace. This was discussed indicated in Allan and Williams's (2003) study, where the cooperate goals measured in the study were not met and any intrinsic motivators were overshadowed by the negative results of unsatisfactory evaluations.

Superintendents and principals are charged with ensuring the educational success of the students under their care, and are charged with motivating their staff of teachers to provide environments conducive to providing optimum learning. When looking at motivation, school leaders have engaged many times in economic motivators even though research has indicated that teachers and administrators may have different perceptions of the motivational aspects of money (Wrobbel, 2009). There have been many educational reform efforts to align the success of the teachers to the needs and challenges of the larger society. The motivation behind these efforts generally focuses on student achievement and providing motivating tactics in order to guide improvements in teaching (Altenbaugh,

1992). One of these tactics is to make changes to the pay structure used by schools around the nation.

The pay structure as it stands had its beginning in the 1920s in large urban school districts as a way of providing a fair and structured system of compensation for teachers (Odden & Kelley, 2002). Generally speaking the pay structure is (at any specific time) a two dimensional scale based on 1) years of service, and 2) graduate hours accomplished. The amounts of money for each of these scales vary with almost every school district. Some are percentage multipliers of the original base (year one/bachelor degree only) sector; some are random and arbitrary depending on the needs of the district (Odden & Kelley, 2002).

This pay scale has remained largely unchanged for the last ninety years illustrating the inadequacies in compensation between men and women and having been a springboard for women's suffrage movements since its inception (Carter, 2002). This has led to a point where people feel that teachers are either overpaid or underpaid. Those who feel that teachers are underpaid feel that an increase in teacher salaries would create a more competitive environment, or that teachers would be more motivated to join the teaching profession or work harder in it (Odden, Kelley, 2002). These goals are supported by current motivational theory.

Adam's Equity Theory and its relationship to teachers

Given teaching's close relationship to the woman's right movement (Carter, 2002), Adam's Equity Theory plays a large role in defining motivation for teachers. Adam identifies two major components of employee input in exchange for employer outcomes (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008). Employee inputs might be experience, age,

creativity, effort, and personal appearance. Additionally, an employee might bring to the job such inputs as a sense of humor, personality, or loyalty, some of these are expected as part of the job, and others are simply benefits provided by that particular employee.

Employees use these inputs as a way of being competitive in getting and retaining employment (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008). Employer outcomes involve pay, benefits, job security, status, and recognition for involvement and input. McClelland's Need Theory plays a role in employer outcomes as individuals also have a need for achievement and this recognition plays a direct role in satisfying Maslow's upper tier needs for self actualization and fulfillment (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008).

The issues involving teachers lie in the perceptions of inequity that accompany a structured pay system that rewards time spent in a position over actual accomplishment in comparison to others with less time in. Adams identified two situations of inequity, positive and negative from a single perspective. Positive inequity stems from the perception that a person is receiving more compensation for work done than others contributing the same amount (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008). Generally this makes older teachers feel rewarded. This feeling of expectation of high reward is a factor of a process where the expectancy of reward is directly related to the experience remembered and anticipated by the employee (Seta, Seta, & Erber, 1993).

Negative inequity stems from the perception that employees are receiving less compensation for the same work done by another person, which leads to dissonance within employees (Wilke & Steur, 1972). In my experience this generally affects younger teachers who see their efforts as equal to those older than they are, and who are rewarded more. This perspective also seems shared by others outside of teaching that

may feel that it is unfair for teachers to earn money based on time served as the only indicator of level of compensation. performance-based pay systems and merit pay are born of this perspective and supported by many taxpayers, business owners and politicians including President Obama (Bazinnet, 2013).

Interestingly enough, inequity generates unique outcomes based on overpayment from the standpoint of when people with lower qualifications are paid more than those of higher qualifications. In a study conducted by Wilke and Steur (1972), individuals who were overpaid tended to work harder in order to compensate for they're overpayment and reinforce their worth to the employer. This experimental study was conducted with 66 subjects using a two by three design where individuals participated in two levels of pay and were able to identify three levels of perception (low, medium and high). This reinforces Adam's theory that balance between positive and negative inequity tends to be sought from both sides when inequity is present.

Equity theory identifies three particular parts of organizational justice that determine in more detail the type of equity or inequity being displayed. These levels are referred to as "justices" and are listed as distributive, procedural, and interactional and cover the many factors that effect the interpretation and outcome of motivational tactics. The first is that of distributive justice, which illustrates the perception of how resources are being distributed or allocated. Is there a system in place, and if so does everyone get fair compensation based on effort or skills employed (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008)?

Historically, inequities in distributive justices have affected women, and people of color due to beliefs that the same work from these individuals was not worthy of the same level of compensation afforded white males. In 1905, the average female was paid an

average annual salary of \$903 a year compared with their male counterparts who earned \$1,303 a year (Carter, 2002). This is a 44% increase based on the woman's salary (Carter, 2002). Comparisons to culturally diverse groups showed pay discrepancies worse than those compared to woman. For instance, in 1936 teachers who belonged to a minority group were allowed to earn 50% of the pay of a white teacher within the district (Clarke & Brown, 2013).

The second component is that of procedural justice. Procedural justice is closely tied to distributive justice but focuses on the fairness of the system in place. The fact that everyone is getting a fair share based on the system doesn't make a difference if the system is inherently unfair to begin with (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008). Systems that base themselves in arbitrary, narrowly focused or highly subjective means of evaluation of performance fail to motivate individuals effectively (Odden & Kelley, 2002). Merit pay systems are great examples of systems that utilized very poor procedural systems for distributing monies to teachers. Some systems based pay on outcomes from single state tests, others on activities engaged above and beyond expected contractual obligations. Still others were simply based on principal personal evaluation. All have been short lived and considered expensive failures on the part of school leadership as ways to motivate for increased student achievement (Odden & Kelley, 2002).

The third and final part is that of interactional justice. Interactional justice involves the fairness in which everyone is treated (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008). Again, it does not really matter if the distribution and procedures are leveled and equal for everyone if some employees are being respected when other employees are not. Interactional justices involve many different aspects of job related environment and can

range from policies that are humiliating in general, to specific interactions between individuals within the setting, such as employer-employee interactions, employee-employee interactions, and customer-employee interactions. Examples of sexism, racism, and class related issues can create situations where procedural and distributive situations are fair, but the workplace is still viewed as an undesirable environment.

Integral to Equity Theory are the expectations that provide the basis for reality when interpreting the fairness of any particular reward system. Victor Vroom added to Adam's work when he created Expectancy Theory (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008), Vroom postulated that key to the amount of performance depended directly to how much the employee believed that there existed a set of guaranteed outcomes. This particular belief must be supported through a system of reliable outcomes based on specific employee performances (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008).

Expectancy Theory and its relationship to teachers

Expectancy Theory has two parts, instrumentality and valence. Instrumentality centers on the idea that a certain outcome was preceded by a specific performance whereas valence is the description used to identify the outcome as positive or negative (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008). For instance, if a person works hard and completes a series of tasks they will receive a promotion. This is a perfect description of instrumentality. Valence on the other hand could be described as positive if this promotion comes with a pay raise or bonus and negative if it leads to longer hours and more stress.

For the current system the instrumentality of standard step and lane grid assures teachers that if they work for x number of years they will be guaranteed no less than y amount of pay based on tenure and time served. This system also guarantees that if a

teacher accomplishes x number of graduate hours they will receive y amount of pay based on the number of approved hours completed. This system is mostly objective and rates high on procedural and distributive justice systems.

The valence for the current system is valued amongst teachers because the increase in pay is guaranteed without concern of added pain short of the course work required for graduate degree achievement (Loveless, 2000). Valence should register very positive because these steps are permanent and cannot be taken away once earned. Based on the assumption that teachers have become too comfortable and less likely to perform at their best, school boards and administrators have endeavored to align teacher compensation with motivational theories that could boost student achievement. In the last few years, with support from politicians and the general public, performance-based pay systems have been making a comeback.

The problem with performance-based pay systems is the narrow view that politicians, administrators and the uniformed public have about what is interpreted as a reward. Berger and Berger (2008) refer to the dynamic population of any work force that may have individuals from all walks of life who depending on their current positions may value time off over extra pay, or value contributions to a retirement system over time off. The perceived motivators of a teaching staff made by policy makers often conflict with the beliefs of the policy makers. This can lead to a mismatch between reward value and motivation (Berger & Berger, 2008). This type of mismatch can lead to the dismal failure of a performance-based system when all other aspects of the system are aligned.

Motivation can also be negatively impacted within a well-established system when the vision or principles of the organization do not align with the pay structure, or

false assumptions about the organization go unchallenged (Lawler, 1990). These assumptions concerning the organization may be unfounded, or have been allowed to change over time and have created a low valence within the structure. Employees may feel that the reward or pay is not worth the effort, or that the effort is depicted as not genuine. These assumptions are complicated when there is a breakdown of procedural justice concerning the evaluation of the workforce (Lawler, 1990).

The real question may remain. How do you reward an educator for work well done? Generally speaking, rewards of any major consequence are almost always out of the realm of possibility even for the most affluent districts (Carter, 2002; Odden & Kelley, 2002). Even in the private sector, profits for improvement may not exceed the value of the merit system in place (Berger & Berger, 2008). Pay for performance programs can then fall into a category of punishment versus reward, when they set a base salary so low that failure to exceed results in a below average pay (Berger & Berger, 2008). This scenario creates a situation that is worse than the status quo, in that the motivational aspect of the reform has been dismantled before it could take hold. This naturally begs the question, what are the elements of effective systems? Performance-based pay systems have been instituted in the last ten years and are still in place. The purpose behind these plans and their make up has put these districts in the spotlight as other districts are looking for new ways to raise the bar.

Performance-Based Pay

Performance-based pay, also categorized as merit pay, is a form of compensation, in which teachers work under a base salary schedule with bonus pay in incremental amounts according to quantifiable gains in student performance. (Chamberlin, Wragg,

Haynes & Wragg, 2002). Merit pay has had a beleaguered if not dismal history in the American school system. It has been plagued with controversy and failure since its inception in the 1960s (Mintrop, 2004). To understand the differences between performance-based pay, a firm understanding of the current system and its foundations is important in light of how teachers perceive change to this system.

The current system moves teachers through a bilateral grid where one axis determines position based on years of service, and the other based on college or professional development credits earned (Odden & Kelley, 2002). Movement through this pay system can happen in two directions at once; and given that a teacher is industrious, the teacher can soon be earning almost twice their starting salary (Odden & Kelley, 2002). This system, commonly known as the single salary schedule, is extremely objective, in that it provides the ability for the teacher to exist in a fair and impartial pay system in regards to experience, gender, race, and ethnicity (Loveless, 2000). The drawbacks to this system have become widely debated as a way of unfairly compensating poor teachers for work that was considered substandard (Jupp, 2005).

The single salary schedule although considered objective, is not a part of the evaluation system used to determine the effectiveness of a teacher and has become widely debated as a way of unfairly compensating poor teachers for work that could be considered substandard (Jupp, 2005; Loveless, 2000). This creates a possible issue where a teacher who may be relatively ineffective, but has not violated any specific contractual agreement that would necessitate dismissal, are paid just as well as teachers who are effective. This system is further criticized as a protection program put in place and maintained by powerful teacher's unions (Jupp, 2005).

Teacher's unions have supported the single salary schedule as a guaranteed way of assuring that teachers who exist as a member of a protected class, such as female or person of color, are paid equally with white males (Carter, 2002). But they have drawn criticism for providing a method for rewarding mediocrity (Moulthrop et al., 2005). Given the general understanding of motivation and compensation, the consensus held by proponents for performance-based pay programs is that teachers do not work hard because there is not a financial impetus to do so (Moulthrop et al., 2005). This theory was tested in Tennessee in a study, Project on Incentives in Teaching (Springer, et. al, 2010). This study, discussed in the opening of this section, was designed to provide empirical evidence in order to support the theory that teachers, when rewarded with merit or bonus pay, will produce higher levels of student achievement (Springer, et. al, 2010). The study showed conclusively that performance-based pay had no positive impact on student achievement (Springer, et. al, 2010).

The step and lane system also relies on a core belief of education in general, that the more purposeful knowledge attained in a structured environment, the more skills the individual has as to rely on, and therefore has become a more valuable asset to an organization (Odden & Kelley, 2002). Only recently have administrators and politicians embraced the theory that furthering a teacher's education does not provide a meaningful skill set in a population of teachers (Harwell, 2003). This theory is supported by studies that use standardized test scores of students to rationalize this belief, and may have merit, but is more likely an indicator that the professional development that is attained may be aligned with standardized test based initiatives (Harwell, 2003). None-the-less, student test scores on standardized tests have become a uniquely American way of assessing the

value of its education system and have led to the development of far reaching federal policy (Ellis, 2004).

In light of public demand for improved national and state test scores, the United States is making a gradual shift from a more traditional form of knowledge-centered education to a more essentialist-centered educational system (Ellis, 2004). A teacher centered educational system hinges on the idea that teachers are the vessel and expert of the knowledge in their field and that in order to attain that knowledge, students will be required to come to school ready and eager to learn. This system puts most of the responsibility of the learning solely at the feet of the student who is required to work hard to attain the knowledge and skills needed to continue in education and succeed in these endeavors (Ellis, 2004).

Essentialist-educational systems are developed around the idea that the schools are responsible for providing the knowledge and skills needed to create a stable work force and economy (Ellis, 2004). Given the recent economic woes of the current recession, it is understandable that parents may be looking for guarantees that their children will be gainfully employed when they graduate from a public school, and is equally as prepared to continue their education at a college or university (Ellis, 2004). Essentialist centered systems tend to focus on the ability of the teacher to provide that worker, and our society has seen a general reluctance to chastise the student as the teacher has now become the sole individual responsible for the students learning (McLaren, 2013).

Given the changes within our society as it relates to a vision of education, responsibility for learning, and fair compensation for adequately educating children,

states and local communities have been more interested in aligning their school's compensation systems with a system that is more aligned with the current values of what has been determined as a competitive and healthy, free economy (Jupp, 2005).

Stakeholders wish to take on the challenge of dealing with the problems of the old single salary system and improve the quality of education for all students (Jupp, 2005). Merit pay and other forms of performance-based pay programs, which have historically not produced desired effects, are making a comeback as a possible solution to stakeholder desires (Springer et al., 2010).

Race to the Top, like other programs from America's past, have sought to align school compensation systems with student performance by attempting to conjure from student test scores an objective evaluation of a teacher's influence on student learning (Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2008). Until recently, most teacher unions have fought back, stating that there are too many intervening variables that determine a student's success or failure in the classroom and that using a single measure of a child's performance is a poor indicator of teacher productivity (Odden & Kelley, 2002). Nonetheless the research does support that all generalities aside, good teachers tend to have students who score well on standardized tests, and poor ones do not (Jupp, 2005).

Performance base pay systems and their effectiveness have been used to understand many different aspects of school reform. Recent work has shown that simply evaluating a school based on specific test scores rarely gives those concerned a relative or realistic view of the progress made by their students (Betebenner, 2009). A study conducted by Springer et al. (2010) demonstrated over a three-year period that

performance incentives had almost no impact on improving student achievement. This study conducted in Tennessee, examined the state test scores of 296 middle school math teachers ranging from grades five through eight. These teachers and their students were randomized into clusters of stratified characteristics within each particular school. Each teacher volunteered for the study and received a \$750 stipend for participation. This payment was used to offset the work involved by the teachers beyond their own contract to conduct meetings and activities related to the use of the growth data collected over the three-year period. Growth rates of the students in each particular teacher's classes were compared using value added models of student achievement where the differences between previous years test scores were used to predict growth and the growth amount itself was used to depict success within the classroom. Teachers were allowed to earn \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$15,000 depending on the amount of growth determined by the growth models (Springer, et. al, 2010).

In Springer's (2010) study, of the 296 teachers who began the project, only 148 remained after three years. The reasons for this were investigated by the study and none were related to participation in the project whether they were part of the control or experimental groups. Other biases or threats to the validity were quantitatively investigated such as teacher randomization, teacher cheating, and the occurrence of teachers eliminating struggling students from the classes (Springer, et. al, 2010). Although suspect items did occur, the study found that there was no significant difference between those who participated in the study and those who did not. The only randomization that could not be accounted for was that of student placement. It was noted in the study that the placement of students with specific teachers within groups could

have been constructed by building principals in such a way as to benefit some teachers and not others (Springer, et. al, 2010). Principal favoritism could not be tested for, and therefore remains a possible threat to the validity of the study.

The results of this study depicted that over a three-year period there were no real indicators that significant amounts of bonuses had any real impacts on student performance. The average gains for those participating in the study and those who were not were less than one percent. Except in the first year of the study, where there was actually a full standard negative deviation from the control group, the treatment group mirrored the growth and decline of the control group every year (Springer et al., 2010). The fundamental results indicated that rewarding teachers based on student growth has no impact on student achievement.

Even though the Springer (2010) study warned against the use of performance base pay programs, states across the nation are still pursuing performance-based pay programs. In order to understand teacher perceptions, one must understand the political forces driving change, the problems associated with evaluating student and subsequently teacher success, instituting current programs, and the effects these programs have on teacher perceptions.

The historical and political motivators of performance or merit related pay systems

Schools within the United States have been suffering losses in standing as compared with other countries around the world (White House, 2012). The lack of progress made by our economically disadvantaged, those with learning disabilities, those citizens of color and the subsequent passing of No Child Left Behind, and its successor Race to the Top, has put in place mandates to improve the education for all members of

our society regardless of race, ethnicity, ability, or social standing (White House, 2012). These new mandates have placed upon schools the task of educating all members of our society in a way that is competitive with the rest of the world. Accountability, especially for the teacher, is now prompting states to change state law to receive federal funding by integrating standardized test performance as an indicator of teacher worthiness. This is generally the first step in implementing a pay for performance program, which could undo the current step and lane system in favor of a bonus system. To further understand the development of current systems, investigating the political policies that have driven them is key.

The current political program, Race to the Top, followed President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2000 (Anonymous, 2012), is a renewed version of Improving American's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, which was a renewed version of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) of 1981, which were newer versions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Anonymous, 2012). The purposes of president Lyndon Johnson's ESEA act was a part of his agenda on the "war on poverty" and focused on reducing the achievement gap between white students and people of color while improving education as a whole (Anonymous, 2012). ESEA originally banned a national curriculum but provided funding for schools that housed at least 75% poor students by the use of title I funding (Anonymous, 2012). Since the 1960s much has changed with ESEA in that it has been re-enacted every 3-5 years since inception (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Major issues with ESEA that have changed over time have been the development of a national curriculum, referred to as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS),

adequate yearly progress, and the decreased monies in the 1980s for Title I funding.

CCSS features a much more intensive curriculum in language arts and math that shortens the number of topics in each year in order to go into more depth, and provide a deeper understanding of each remaining concept (Anonymous, 2012; Reeves, Wiggs, Lassiter, Piercy, Ventura & Bell, 2011).

CCSS are currently the newest set of curricular standards being employed by a majority of states in the United States (Reeves et al., 2011). These standards are designed around the Obama administration's goals of uniting the nation under a single curriculum and provide more rigorous standards from which our graduates can compete with other nations, and to have our students graduating from public school ready for a college education (Reeves et al., 2011). States are not required to adopt these standards, but doing so allows the states one of the requirements for attaining a waiver from NCLB, which has statistically become so arduous that for states to continue would create significant problems for schools deemed not making adequate yearly progress.

During the 1980s, Title I funding was reduced in favor of state control, but it also introduced the element of standardized testing as a form of accountability (Anonymous, 2012). In the 1990s, NCLB ramped up accountability with the addition of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was introduced as a part of NCLB, and required states to meet or exceed an upwardly moving target for student progress on state standardized tests. AYP also was determined by the success of subgroups within a school district, and those scores alone could determine the failure or success of the building or district as a whole (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). In light of constantly more challenging educational expectations, schools within a few years were unable to make progress and

before long most schools in the nation were not making adequate progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

During the Bush administration this was most evident with NCLB, where students were broken down into groups and sub groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Each of these groups were required to make adequate yearly progress by showing a set amount of proficiency based on state tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). What made this program difficult was that each year the bar for success was raised in order to reach an eventual goal of 100% attainment.

Due to these challenges presented by the politics of the national stage, performance-based pay systems began making a come back again in the late 1990s and 2000s in light of demands placed upon schools by the NCLB, and more recently Race to the Top (Learning Point Associates, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Schools are under constant pressure to demonstrate success for every student, and these successes must be validated on state tests. Again, as in the past, state testing is taking a center seat in determining school success, and that vision of success can determine the political and financial success of a school district. One of the main principles behind NCLB was that each of the school population's testing subgroups that were composed of special needs children, children of color, children from disadvantaged households, and those who spoke English as a second language, were held to the same standard, and more importantly, if any of those subgroups did not meet the standard, the school as a whole was rated as not making adequate yearly progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

As schools across the country began to reach the edge of their performance envelope, more and more were reporting failure, until the vast majority of schools participating in

NCLB were considered not making progress. Schools were then required to notify the public that their school, which had been performing better on state tests than ever before, was now failing. In light of this seemingly failed policy, and the election of Barack Obama as President, a new educational program was ushered in that focussed more on the growth of students per teacher (White House, 2012). The Race to the Top program was designed to provide additional funding to states that changed state law to use state testing as an indicator of success based on student scores (White House, 2012). This funding would be used in part to reward teachers for reaching benchmarks of success according to these state tests. This is generally the first step in implementing a pay for performance program, which could undo the current step and lane system in favor of a bonus system.

The development of current growth related models of teacher effectiveness

The advent of newer, more complex statistical programs are attempting to null out discrepancies between teachers and provide administrators the ability to sort teachers based on effectiveness even though there is little evidence to support that they are accurate (Gallagher, 2004; Milanowski, 2004). These new systems are creating resurgence in efforts to put into place performance related pay systems at the state and federal levels (Springer et al., 2010). As districts move closer and closer to performance-based compensation systems which use state test scores to determine pay levels, it is important to determine how teachers move into these systems.

More recent programs such as Educational Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS) use a students previous test scores to compare current test scores to determine whether or not growth occurred during their time with a particular teacher (Betebenner, 2008). These types of assessments are referred to as a growth models or value added

models, as they do not necessarily focus on a certain arbitrary score, but looks at the growth of each student during a specific time frame (Betebenner, 2008).

Proponents of these programs consider them entirely more accurate due to their statistical ability to predict appropriate growth per child and then compare those groups of children taught by each teacher to other teachers in a building, district, and state (Song & Felch, 2009). For so long teachers and administrators alike have been frustrated by a lack of accountability within the teaching ranks. Teachers have been able to attribute low test scores to a variety of plausible variables outside of their control. These variables include, but are not limited to poverty, learning disabilities, race, or even poor teaching before them. The EVAAS system claims to be able account for these variables statistically and null out intervening variables such that growth is predicted on a linear graph, and a series of snap shot evaluations can be used to predict and evaluate the teacher's performance (Betebenner, 2008).

Organizations and individuals are still critical of growth programs maintain that there is no statistical device complicated enough to account for the variables that effect student learning (Song & Felch, 2009). Others fear that there are systematic issues within schools, such as class size, or behavioral issues with the students, that make it easy for administrators to use standardized scores against teachers (Weaver, 2003). These concerns are integral in the development of pay for performance programs as employees must believe, first that their performance is accurately measured, and secondly the utility behind the reward is adequately accounted for (Sturman et al. 2003).

Skepticism aside, programs have been developed that have garnered some teacher support. The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) operated by the

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching is a program designed to improve teaching by enhancing teaching skills in the areas of curricular development, outcome based assessments, and the use of research-based best practices. There are four guiding principles of TAP that drive the program to success (Costello et al., 2006):

The four principles of TAP are:

1. Multiple Career Paths: New avenues of career advancement are being developed so that teachers with outstanding skills are given new leadership and mentoring roles to help develop their colleagues.
2. Ongoing Applied Professional Growth: Teachers invest time on a regular basis to work collaboratively on ways to improve their instruction aligned to a school improvement plan.
3. Instructional Focused Accountability: Each teacher is evaluated four to six times a year by multiple trained evaluators using the TAP Teaching Skills, Knowledge and Responsibility Standards.
4. Performance-Based Compensation: Teachers are evaluated and rewarded based on performance standards for professional growth, classroom achievement gains, and school wide achievement gains...(p. 1).

The TAP program has brought about almost revolutionary gains in the area of teacher action research. Teachers are required to use research based best practices in creating curricular goals and outcomes. Teachers then use outcome-based evaluations to determine whether their efforts led to success. (Costello et al., 2006).

- Identifying and supporting students in their academics through data analysis and disaggregating student data (breaking data into component parts by subject area).
- Increasing teacher awareness, understanding and alignment with state standards.
- Supporting other teachers through coaching, modeling, demonstrating and team-teaching.
- Discussing pacing, lesson structure and the importance of differentiating lessons to meet the needs of every student.
- Visiting each other's classrooms and adapting best practices to reach all students.
- Eliminating unproductive practices and concentrating on those that enable students to achieve their potential.
- Identifying academic areas where teachers benefit from coaching by fellow educators.

According to Costello et al. (2006), "Finding ways to receive additional professional development that directly benefits students and sharing that professional development within their cluster groups, using varied assessment methods to evaluate students" (p. 35).

In 1999 the Denver public school system in cooperation with the teacher's union adopted a "pay for performance program" (Jupp, 2005, p. 10). Later in 2003 the district put into effect the Professional Compensation System for Teachers (ProComp) based on the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) implemented in large urban districts such as

Cincinnati Public Schools. This system included a list of options that any and all teachers may choose to work for in order to earn bonus pay. Every teacher has the choice of as many or as few earning options as they wish to participate in. For instance a teacher may get a 1% bonus for teaching in a field that is difficult to staff, or they may work with kids that fall into an at risk category. One of the truly innovative elements of TAP was that it allowed teachers the choice of either participating in the current salary schedule, or adopting the new bonus program (Jupp, 2005). In Denver, the starting salary in the old system was \$31,320, and this did not change with the new system. However, the old system ending salary rose from \$64,919 to between \$85,000 and \$95,000. It should be noted that all new hires to the district were not given a choice and were required to participate in the TAP system (Moulthrop et al., 2005).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers are now attracted to schools like Denver because of their competitive salary schedule and opportunities for advancement (Drevitch, 2006). In 2003, the teachers of the Denver School District were polled and the results showed that a remarkable 82% of the teachers favored merit pay based on a performance system such as Pro-comp (Jupp, 2005). These results could be considered questionable in that Jupp (2005) admits that during the pilot program for ProComp, considerable amounts of money was spent on the teachers within the pilot schools. These monies were used to provide those teachers with lavish parties, steak dinners, breakfasts serving eggs benedict and events with expensive hors d'oeuvres as a reward for their hard work (Jupp, 2005). Following this treatment, Bill Slotnik who headed a team of researchers for Community Training and Advancement Center (CTAC), conducted over 600 interviews of these teachers in the program and developed a program that linked

these teachers and their students in 16 schools. The results, not surprisingly, showed overwhelming support for the ProComp pilot program while demonstrating how the funds were distributed to deserving teachers (Jupp, 2005). Two years later a less formal survey was given to the Denver employees, and although less than half responded, of those that did, none showed any disfavor for their current performance-based pay system (Jupp, 2005).

Vaughn, a K-5 elementary school in the Los Angeles Unified School District in Pacoima California, is located 20 minutes from the Los Angeles downtown area. Vaughn's population is 96% Latino and 4% African American (Moulthrop et al., 2005). They operate, on average, with 97% of these students participating in free and reduced lunch programs. Vaughn was plagued with typical urban problems such as high absenteeism, and low student performance (Moulthrop et al., 2005). The student population comes from families where 69% have no high school education; most of the parents are classified in low socio-economic status, working as gardeners, factory workers, etc. English is not spoken by 78% of the students, and that is complicated by the fact that most of these immigrant children spent little or no time in their home country's school system, so their native language skills are poor at best (Moulthrop et al., 2005).

Dr. Yvonne Chan, the principal of Vaughn, is credited with turning the school around and making it a success. Chan began by separating her school from the district by becoming a charter school in 1993. She instituted several different plans and made major changes in the financial spending of the building. In 1999, Chan began a performance-based pay system with 10 teacher volunteers (Moulthrop et al., 2005). Again, like in

Denver, teachers were given the option to participate in the program. In the first semester she paid out between \$150, and \$1,659 in bonuses per teacher in the program. The next semester the total number of teachers rose to 15, and no person made less than \$650 in bonuses that semester. By 2003, every teacher was participating voluntarily in the bonus program (Moulthrop et al., 2005).

Vaughn's results were mixed. Although Vaughn has the lowest base salary in the school district, the teachers are ranking among the highest paid teachers in California. A teacher with 15 years experience has a starting salary of \$51,000, but has the potential of earning an extra \$19,000 dollars in bonuses. Vaughn is currently turning away teachers who are applying for jobs and the school's students are scoring higher on state tests than any other California schools of the same demographics (Moulthrop et al., 2005).

Performance-based pay, or merit pay systems are expensive (Berger & Berger, 2008). To put one into practice without thoroughly investigating the economic ramifications for a district or state invites disaster, and ultimately failure (Moulthrop et al., 2005).

California experienced this outcome in 2000 and 2001. The state offered new funds for school districts that participated in their Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). To sum up this program, districts could opt into the program by adopting the state merit system, and in doing so they would receive funding from their state to maintain the salary increases. California was only able to fund this program for 430 schools annually (Mintrop, 2004). The first year that this program was implemented 299 schools participated. By 2001 the total number of school districts participating had grown to 1,266 (Mintrop, 2004).

Vaughn achieved many successes, but not without cost. The building runs on a bare bones budget, where everything from lunch services, to construction projects are bid out to the local community. Dr. Chan made the salaries in her building the priority, and spends most of her free time drumming up grants and donations from local businesses (Moulthrop et al., 2005).

Another goal of Vaughn was to increase test scores. A study conducted in 2004 by Alix Gallagher was aimed at determining the overall effect size of specific teachers in the Vaughn Elementary School. The study involved looking at the Teacher Evaluation System (TES) and the Educational Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS) to analyze standardized test scores to determine effect size. The study utilized the hierarchical linear modeling to isolate classroom effects and student growth. The results were in line with other studies showing only a .23 correlation in mathematics and a .27 correlation in literacy, between what is identified as an effective teaching and the outcomes delivered by those teachers on the standardized test (Gallagher, 2004).

For most professional careers it is extremely difficult to evaluate in any quantifiable way, the exact contributions that a specific individual within a system actually has, and with all of the variables that effect learning, teaching is even more difficult to evaluate (Rothstein, 2005). In response, newer systems that compare the growth rates of students to previous growth rates are used to determine the effectiveness of a teacher (Betebenner, 2008). These programs are intended to level the playing field between teachers so that each teacher can be compared to another regardless of population.

Administrators claim that having the time to conduct evaluations and give adequate feedback is one of their largest concerns (Rothstein, 2005). This concern is due to the large numbers of subordinates and the lack of time needed to adequately supervise them. There is so little time contributed to teacher evaluations in the average school that meaningful evaluations are a rarity, and the rest are devoid of much that could be useful to an aspiring educator (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007).

According to Rothstein (2005):

In the private sector, when pay is based on merit, managers devote many hours, sometimes as much as a week, to each employee's evaluation. Young law firm associates have senior partners for mentoring, supervision and modeling, where the partner-to-associate ratio is typically one to one. Business executives rarely have more than five subordinates reporting to them. At newspapers, editors often supervise no more than 10 reporters. But in public schools, it is common for one principal to oversee 25 teachers, often with little or no administrative assistance. No merit system that is based on careful supervisory evaluation, relying heavily on qualitative performance measures, can succeed with a 1:25 supervisory ratio (p. 6).

Evidently, evaluative systems that rely solely on administrative input are doomed for failure by principals with even the best intentions (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). One of the most highly expressed criticisms of merit pay systems is that one to three classroom evaluations a year are not enough to adequately evaluate a teacher (Dee & Keys, 2005). Further, research into teacher-affect relationships demonstrate that they are hard to define. In a study conducted by Milanowski (2004) in the Cincinnati Public School District found that evaluating teachers using growth models showed very weak correlations.

Milanowski (2004) used a population that was composed of over 48,000 students and 3000 teachers and collected data from the third through eighth grade were used in this study. Milanowski (2004) looked at PRAXIS III scores and compared those with principal evaluation methods that took into account observations, lesson plans, daily attendance, family contact logs, and achieved professional development. The purpose was to identify teachers who were by most measures considered hard working and demonstrated research based teaching strategies in their classrooms. This study was able to determine what was reported as five linkages between teacher behavior, student achievement, teacher evaluation ratings, and finally value added measurement (Milanowski, 2004).

Milanowski (2004) was only able to determine a correlation of .10 to .20 in the effect sizes of teachers in respect to success on the state standardized test, PRAXIS III. A conclusion was made that these growth model scores could be useful, but only when used in correlation with other determinants of teacher evaluation (Milanowski, 2004).

Implementing performance-based pay systems

As mentioned earlier, performance-based pay, or merit pay is a sensitive topic (American Association of School Administrators, 2007). Educators at all levels have expressed very distinct opinions about the equity and feasibility of performance-based pay programs. Teacher unions in the past have adamantly opposed merit pay systems (Koppich, 2005), although, systems like the one employed by Denver Public Schools, had union support, and even worked with the union to make an equitable program. For the unions that are still opposed, it is because merit pay systems have been blamed for creating bad situations including, unhealthy competition between teachers, loss of tenure

rights, and giving administrators a financial lever that can be used subjectively against teachers (Weaver, 2003).

There are concerns that merit pay systems put too much of a financial burden on districts and create deficits that not only come back to haunt teachers years down the road, but create educational issues and missed opportunities for students (Koppich, 2005). One of the strengths of the current salary schedule is that it is predictable, and the funding is much easier to budget for based on the movement step and lane for the teachers within the system. One of the challenges to a performance-based pay system is the amount of financing needed to implement the program in a way that is sustainable. In November of 2005 Denver schools asked for a 25 million dollar levy to support their salary program (Moulthrop et al., 2005). Voters overwhelmingly approved the levy keeping performance-based pay system intact for the Denver School District (Associated, 2005). Without this levy, the work done in Denver would have been cast aside as the affordability of such a program would have made it unsustainable. It is also important to remember that considerable amounts of funding from philanthropic organizations were used to politically ensure the success of the program (Jupp, 2005).

Teachers fear that performance-based systems are extremely hard to quantify, and that teachers may be punished for failures outside of their control. These accountability requirements cannot take into account the complexity of teaching, and the many factors that contribute to developing the whole individual (Mintrop, 2004). Studies such as Gallagher (2004) and Milanowski (2004) support that there are very low correlations between the effect of quality teachers and their performance on state tests. Programs such as TES, TAP and EVAAS try hard to quantify student growth as a function of

standardized test scores, but have had a difficult time coming up with correlations higher than .27. Never-the-less, as schools move towards developing a teacher performance-based pay system there are essentially four things that make a such a system successful: (a) long term effective financial planning, (b) strong real quantifiable need, (c) well-rounded and diverse assessments, and (d) teacher buy-in (Kennedy, 2005; Koppich, 2005).

The first consideration before beginning to attempt a merit-pay system of any type, is to see if you have the financial means to maintain the longevity that merit systems demand. Many districts have tried and failed due to the shortsightedness of their building and district administrators. As mentioned before, Denver was required to pass a 25 million dollar levy in order to fund their program (Jupp, 2005).

A need for change must be identified and agreed upon by all stakeholders in the school including the administration, teachers and community (Koppich, 2005). The two most viable reasons evident in the literature that supported merit-pay systems were lack of monies for competitive salaries, and lack of ability to provide incentives to bring new teachers into the district. Usually where one of those problems existed, the other one did also.

Research has indicated that as districts move towards a performance-based system, union and teacher support is paramount (Troman, Jefferey & Raggle, 2007). Failure to obtain teacher support caused Florida's Governor Crist to veto a bill to tie salaries to performance-based initiatives in 2010 (Cannon, 2010), and more recently in Chicago, teachers were on strike for over a week due to issues with using performance-based initiatives in teacher evaluations (Payne, 2012). The general fears, as indicated in both

instances, are that the teachers who choose to teach in *hard-to-staff* school districts are under unreasonable expectations to educate children who are growing up in less than optimum environments. These teachers contend that children are not equally prepared for school, or they exist in home environments not conducive to proper educational attainment. Supporters of the teachers also state that there are related issues to inner-city poverty that adds to the problem as it relates to these parents ability to support their child in the school system. The teachers in Chicago stated that by putting this system in place you would be removing teachers from a system that is already difficult to staff (Payne, 2012).

Finally, the literature indicates that if a test score is going to be used to gauge success, it should represent an accurate reflection of teacher performance. As previously discussed, finding tests complicated and comprehensive enough to adequately measure a teacher's effect on student learning is very difficult (Milanoski, 2004).

Schools around our nation are also suffering from a lack of qualified teachers willing to teach in what is referred to as hard-to-staff positions (Loveless, 2000). Once teachers are found, retaining those teachers in challenging areas has become a serious problem. Most states, even ones without a large failing metropolitan population, have in place bonuses for teachers willing to take on hard-to-staff positions. These bonuses might be in the form of free education for those willing to become certified in these areas. Hard to staff positions include, but are not limited to, math, science, counseling, and home and industrial sciences.

Given the problems in blighted and disadvantaged communities with staffing their schools, pay for performance programs have offered them the ability to tie bonuses to

teacher salaries for simply teaching in hard to fill areas (Moulthrop et al., 2005). These types of bonuses though do not rely on a certain outcome of success, but more or less just the willingness for a teacher to fill a position and follow school policy. These systems are usually supported by unions in that, as before, outcomes in a challenging position are not be used to determine the effectiveness of the teacher (Loveless, 2000).

One concern over the change in federal educational policy and the Race to the Top program is that this will create a revolving door of teachers moving from one job to another as former teachers are released due to poor test scores. Considering the already general low pay and Spartan lifestyles that teachers have been expected to undertake as a part of their careers as educators, these extra demands, which some consider to be unrealistic, are contributing to an already serious problem in retaining and attracting new teachers to the profession (Moulthrop et al., 2005). None-the-less, states and districts nation-wide are considering or have been implementing new performance-based pay programs as a way of accomplishing both goals at once (Moulthrop et al., 2005).

Even considering the demands of disadvantaged schools, and the pressure to perform by the public and federal policy, the development of performance-based evaluation systems have made exponential leaps in the last 20 years. The dismal failure of the 1980s to impose pay systems around mono-dimensional evaluations that rarely included anything beyond state test scores or the principal's subjective analysis, ended by 1986 with all of the 29 states that used merit pay abandoning the practice (Dee & Keys, 2005). These failures have been forgotten in recent years and the creation of the Race to the Top program, where states now are reversing policy and embracing pay for

performance programs as a way of gaining much needed funding from the federal government (White House, 2012).

Administrators, and even the statisticians when looking back on former mistakes, agree that when developing these programs, it is important to recognize that teaching is a complex and multidimensional field that would require multidimensional, objective evaluative practices if it were going to be successful (Betebenner, 2008; Odden, 2004). Most of these individuals have agreed that student success on standardized tests has a place in a teacher's evaluation, they have also stated that there many factors in what makes a good teacher, and certainly there are other aspects of the job that play a part in developing the child but are not measured on state tests (Loveless, 2000). There are responsibilities that teacher's take on within a building to promote the welfare of the child and support the vision of a building, not to mention the aspects of being a good employee, that can be undermined by a system that is too heavily reliant on student test scores (Loveless, 2000).

In order for performance pay to be effective, it has to be based on assessments and scales that are as diverse and objective as possible. There needs to be many ways that an employee can quantifiably support and justify their efforts in student development. This is proving to be the Achilles heel of all programs, yet schools are moving forward undaunted (Gallagher 2004). Although, teacher assessment ultimately falls into the domain of the building administrator, the more successful systems have included data generated not only from test scores but other teacher evaluations, Vaughn Elementary School's TES system is an example (Gallagher 2004).

The final part is essential. There has to be buy-in from the teachers participating, especially if there is a strong teacher union present in the district. Successful districts not only had teacher unions who allowed the system, but had unions who helped in the implementation of the system. The most successful systems allowed teachers the choice of whether or not to participate in the system at all (Jupp, 2005).

Teacher perceptions of performance-based pay systems

Performance-based pay still continues to be one of the most heavily debated issues facing education. History has shown that when teacher effectiveness is reduced to a single score that the teachers do not believe is a true and relevant indicator of success that problems arise as teachers will do whatever they feel is necessary to protect their own survival within the school (Frysh, 2011; Jonsson, 2011). Recent research has also indicated as mentioned earlier in this chapter, that performance related bonuses have no effect on student performance (Springer, Hamilton, McCaffrey, Ballou, Le, Pepper, Lockwood, & Stecher, 2010).

Problems that have arisen due to these pressures have produced teaching behaviors that are considered unprofessional and ultimately damage the growth of the school and that of its students. Teachers and administrators who feel that they may lose their jobs or suffer financial setbacks due to what they believe are unreasonable evaluative measures, will simply cheat or condone cheating on the state tests (Frysh, 2011). Teachers may engage in practices such as copying the test, and then working the problems with the students in advance (Frysh, 2011; Jonsson, 2011). Teachers who have been thrust into a competitive environment will react like their counterparts in the private sector and protect effective measures from those they are competing with (Hanushek &

Rivkin, 2003). Teachers will refuse to share strategies that give them an advantage compared with the teachers around them. Given these behaviors, the research indicates that competition does not produce improved results on state tests scores (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2003). Administrators in response to these problems are hesitant to put into place a full system but are looking for a balanced evaluative measure that takes into account the many aspects of teaching (Costello et al., 2006).

The need for more balanced forms of evaluation for teachers have created realizations in the minds of administrators and policy makers alike. These realizations have brought about reform in most aspects of education, all of which impact student performance, including (a) value added assessments of students, which show progress over a time frame based on entrance and exit success, (b) the consideration of target groups in hard to staff positions, and (c) implementing “master teachers” as instructional coaches and teacher evaluators (Costello et al., 2006). These types of programs, which seemed impossible 20 years ago, are gaining respect in the educational field due to advancements in technology that allow for greater collection and synthesis of data.

There is a distinct desire for educational evaluation reform, a desire that has been voiced on both sides of our political aisle (Troman, Jefferey & Raggle, 2007). Republican and democratic platforms alike have espoused the need for this change in response to public criticism about the effectiveness of American public schools (Troman et al., 2007). As our political structures, national, state and locally move forward into this next era of evaluative measures and begin the process of change, administrators and boards of education must take steps to ensure the process is done in the most efficient way possible (Troman et al., 2007).

Districts that take into consideration the feelings and experiences of teachers as they move towards and into a performance-based pay system are more likely to have success implementing and maintaining the program (Collom & Ogawa, 2000).

Identifying those particular perceptions and experiences is difficult, and phenomenological research designs are scarce. In addition, teachers' perspectives about teaching in general change over time and with experience and based on age, race, and gender (Carter, 2002). These complications make it difficult to provide universal understanding to the experience of moving into performance-based pay systems.

Pay for performance systems are full of possibilities, both of risk and retribution, to both teacher, and administrator alike. With the new Race for the Top program on the heels of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2000 (NCLB), performance-based programs are beginning to sprout up in states all over the country. It is important for school districts to evaluate fully the risks and potentials of all programs and to beware the mistakes of past systems (Anonymous, 2012).

The frameworks discussed in this chapter were used to provide a grounding for the development of the methodology which included the appropriate design needed to answer the research questions and frame the results in relation to the literature. Chapter three will discuss in detail the population of Pandora School District and the methods used in this study and the implications of validity as it relates to qualitative research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Compensation reform as a platform at the national level has been re-emerging as a possible solution to the problems associated with lagging test scores in comparison to other countries. One of the causations assumed with these poor scores is related to the perception that poor teachers are ineffective because are not motivated financially to see that their students succeed (Adkins, 2011; White House, 2012). While these problems have also been blamed on a multitude of issues, from teacher tenure, increasing class size, current national issues related to the financial recession, and a growing diversity in our schools, it has also been suggested that low pay in education and pay unrelated to academic success play a large factor (Weaver, 2003). These issues, mounting over the last thirty years, have caused a greater interest in the domain of federal and state governments in order to create equity and equality (Odden & Kelley, 2002).

In light of these state and national interests, new programs have entered the arena of education, such as President Obama's Race to the Top program, which is designed to reward states that provide *pay for performance initiatives* (White House, 2012). States must qualify for said monies, and will be branded as not meeting these standards if current state law prohibits merit or performance pay initiatives. States are more interested than ever, given the economic recession of 2008; to bend to the will of the federal government in order to obtain desperately needed funds.

As the nation deals with its financial struggles, Pandora although relatively affluent, has not been immune to the effects of the current recession. The district has done very well on state testing, but is constantly looking for ways to make gains

compared to the districts they compete with. With the new Common Core Curriculum setting much more stringent and challenging standards of academic growth; Pandora is looking for new ways to increase performance in order to meet the ever-increasing bar set by the state (Podgursky, 2007). These two issues combined have created an environment where teachers already arguably low paid, could be enticed into a performance-based system much more readily, making the move to performance-based compensation statewide, and within the district, much less problematic, as this tactic has been employed in the private sector as a solution to belt tightening in the current economy (Von Kennel, 2012).

This is not an unusual tactic as performance-based pay plans are becoming increasingly more attractive to districts that are looking for ways of improving already relatively good scores with better scores and finding new monies to bolster their current financial struggles (Podgursky, 2007). In response to these new demands states are changing laws in order to incorporate standardized testing as a component of teacher evaluation, which has historically been the first step to merit pay programs. The state of Missouri was granted Race to the Top funding under the requirements that it would begin using student growth assessment data to inform and reward teachers based on those outcomes (Missouri Race to the Top Executive Summary, 2010). The state was able to do this, after repeated failures, by changing laws to allow state testing to be used in teacher evaluation (Network for Educator Effectiveness, 2014).

As our country and state change policies in an attempt to compensate our nation's teachers based on the performance of their students, it has become necessary to understand the perceptions of the teachers in order that process proceed as successfully as

possible (Heavin, 2007; Sawchuk, 2010). Teachers are an integral part of the process, as well as the cooperation from their representative unions and other relevant organizations. The perception of the teachers concerning performance-based pay systems becomes a critical point from which the success of such a program will be initially determined (Troman, Jefferey & Raggle, 2007). It is possible that teachers may have perceptions of performance-based pay systems that could unduly support or sabotage the efforts of an administration to put into place an effective performance-based compensation system.

The purpose of this heuristic case study was to bring to light the perceptions of the teachers in the Pandora School District as I investigated the possibilities of that district developing a performance-base pay plan in response to state and federal changes in policy (Sawchuk, 2010). Current research states that one of the tenets of successfully integrating a performance-based pay plan is to investigate the feelings and beliefs of the teachers within the district in order to determine the compatibility of the system with the needs of the teachers (Wright, 2003). This chapter will describe the type of study used, namely a heuristic case study, and provide a basis for understanding the data collected and meaning behind it. I discuss the rationale for the use of the qualitative paradigm, review the traditions used to construct the research, describe the study's design including the research site, sampling procedures, data sources, and analysis plan implemented. I conclude with the limitations, validity, reliability, and ethical considerations of the study.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

The search for meaning is the underpinnings of qualitative knowledge. To know that something exists is useful, but to know why something exists, is exponentially more meaningful. Quantitative research is excellent for isolating variables and determining an

exact occurrence under specific conditions, and given that, it is a great starting from which to begin research (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research on the other hand picks up where quantitative research leaves off and determines the *why* of an experience (Patton, 2002). The *why*, is usually the gem of any data set. It is the telling part that allows the researcher, co-researchers, subjects, and readers to walk away, not only with a good idea of the phenomenon that occurred, but more importantly, the underlying reasons for its occurrence (Moustakas, 1994). The *why* cannot always be determined depending on the overt nature of what you are studying. People can be extraordinarily difficult to research due to the wide array of variables that exist within each subject (Moustakas, 1994). Reasoning, reaction, and perception can differ greatly depending on the pre-existing experiences of each individual (Burr, 1995). What is required for this study is a qualitative structure that uses the human as a tool for exploring the experiences of people (Patton, 2002).

In humanistic research, the subject, the human, can be asked why, or how, or to what extent (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) a phenomenon may exist. Dialogues can be established, writings can be interpreted, and the artistic expressions of the subject can be examined for meaning and truth. The experience that subject relates is the heart of the meaning behind knowledge (Lichtman, 2010). The researcher's own experiences is also important in the process of bridging meaning between that of the subject and the reader (Moustakas, 1990).

As I struggled with the question about performance-based pay, my own experiences as a teacher, the observations I have made of other teachers, and the possibility of my school district moving towards a performance-based pay system,

stimulated the idea that, were the district to move into such a system, the perceptions or even misperceptions of the teachers about performance-based pay systems could be an obstacle that the district as a whole would have to overcome. School reform issues centered on compensation systems are very touchy subjects. This is not a classroom intervention procedure, but a long-term change in policy that potentially could alter the livelihood of thousands of individuals. These types of changes are likely to produce immediate powerful, responses related to deep ingrained beliefs based on decades of experience (Altenbaugh, 1992). It is possible that the educators of this district may not realize, or understand, the nature of these experiences or to what extent they play in developing their own perceptions of performance-base pay programs.

Due to the very personal and experiential nature of my study, I chose qualitative research methods as the best way of getting to the true meaning behind teacher perceptions that could determine the ultimate success or failure of any proposed performance-based pay system. The study was guided by the overarching question of what are the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding performance-based pay systems and three preliminary sub-questions:

1. What themes are depicted in teachers' descriptions of performance-based pay systems?
2. How do teachers perceive accountability in reference to performance-based pay systems?
3. What are teachers' perceptions of equity in reference to performance-based pay systems?

In short, I explored, through the lens of my own experience, the feelings, beliefs, and perceptions that teachers have about performance base pay and its perceived effects on their jobs. This required the use of a case study approach that utilizes heuristic inquiry, a form of phenomenology.

Theoretical Traditions

Theoretical traditions exist as a guiding structure to the methodology of a qualitative study. These traditions provide grounding in theory that can be applied depending on the type of questions posed, according to the type of population, data collection process, and analytical procedures the researcher intends to use to bring clarity to the reader (Patton, 2002). In this particular study, I chose single instrumental case study and heuristics, a form of phenomenology, as theoretical traditions to guide the various phases of the study with the goal of answering the research questions concerning teachers' perceptions of performance-based pay.

Case study. Case study research is conducted when the analysis of an individual, group, or multiple cases as they relate to a common experience, is desired. The population of a case study can vary significantly from one individual, to a small group with a common descriptor, such as married women of color, or a population of a residence, town, county, or nation. There are three different types of case studies, instrumental, intrinsic, and collective or multiple of which each has their own specific purpose (Patton, 2002). A single instrumental case study investigates a single issue through the lens of a single bounded case or individual. The issue itself may not be novel, and other case studies could be identified. A *single instrumental case study* can involve one individual or a host of individuals, but the issue surrounding the subject is what is

being investigated, and not the subject itself (Merriam, 1998). An *intrinsic case study* is used to look at a unique issue that is describable from one specific point of view. In this particular type of case study, the issue itself is unique and focused on a narrow population of individuals. This type of case study is used to describe the effects of a program or an event (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 1995). *Collective* or *multiple case studies* operate like an intrinsic case study, only multiple cases are used and compared to identify common themes. These types of case studies are used generally to compare cases across a range of related populations or cases that share a common issue. Examples of such cases studies would include looking at various state policies as a way of describing a developing national policy (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

This study used the single instrumental case study format to investigate teachers' perceptions of performance-based pay systems. A single instrument case study was chosen as the major technique due to the nature of the question: What are the experiences that the teachers as a group of people at the Pandora School District have had with performance-based pay systems? More importantly, how do these experiences change the individual, what feelings and perceptions are present, and how are they changed through the experience? This type of questioning demands the use of qualitative research methods, specifically that of case study, and heuristic analysis. This study qualifies as an instrumental case study in that I researched a particular phenomenon occurring with teachers, and not the teacher themselves. Instrumental case studies investigate a question or puzzlement associated with the subject and not the subject independently (Stake, 1995). The case is bounded to elementary teachers at the Pandora School District, of

which there were 372 possible participant, of which 54 chose to respond to survey at the initial sampling stage, as depicted in the design of the study.

Phenomenology. Phenomenological research finds meaning in the experiences of a person, or groups of people, centered on a unique event in their lives (Smith et al., 2009). This theoretical tradition focuses its analysis in the context of the event as it directly relates to the humanistic experience of the subjects involved (Lichtman, 2010). Thus, I have situated heuristic inquiry, a method of phenomenological research, within a broader discussion of the philosophical tenets of the lived experience. Phenomenology, a departure from more traditional philosophies based on empirical realities, requires the researcher or philosopher to derive reality from the multiple horizons of perception as experienced first, naively, in a fashion where pre-suppositions are bracketed and the meaning behind the experience can be understood from within (Moran, 2000; Sokolowski, 2007). The individual perceives reality and then reflects on that reality before integrating it within their being. Moustakas, referring to Husserl's work on Philosophical Phenomenology, described the process of experiencing a phenomenon in regards to the intentionality of the subject (Moustakas, 1994). The intentionality is described by two elements noema and noesis.

These elements relate to each as the Noema refers to the experience of the phenomenon and noesis refers to the meaning derived from the experience (Moustakas, 1994). For instance, a tree is the object and the photograph of the tree is the noema as experienced in one time frame. The picture is not the tree, but one horizon of understanding of the tree. The meaning taken from observing the photograph is the noesis and cannot be separated from the noematic experience of the photograph. These concepts

are interrelated and deal specifically with the mind and the intentionality of what is experienced. It is through a repetitive and circular process that one develops horizons of understanding that overlap, and provide meaning again, to both what is experienced and how it is experienced (Moran, 2000). These overlapping horizons of teachers' experiences provided meaning concerning the phenomenon created by changing our current compensation systems to performance-based pay (PBP) systems. Group experiences by can be analyzed and understood. The phenomenon in itself does not have to be a tangible event (Moran, 2000), but can be completely internalized like those experienced in a moment of religious reflection or epiphany. The challenge of phenomenological research, or qualitative research in general, is accurately interpreting the finding of the meaning of the experience, as perceived by the subject (Moran, 2000). This challenge rises from the multiple horizons and viewpoints that can exist within a community of individuals. Although philosophies of social constructivism and social constructionism tend to argue about what comes first, the chicken or the egg, in terms of the creation of knowledge as an independent or group creation, the end result is still the same, viewpoints of different community members are crucial to understanding the phenomenon being studied.

Heuristics. Heuristic research has two main requirements as part of a phenomenological study. The first is that the researcher must have a common intense experience with the phenomenon being studied, and the second is that the research subjects must also have experienced this phenomenon intensely (Patton, 2002). It is this shared experience that creates the nature of the heuristic inquiry and without this shared researcher subject relationship, the type of study would fall into another more separate

category. Due to the fact that I am a member of the group that was investigated, heuristic inquiry supports the use of my lived experiences with performance-based pay as a means of understanding perceived meanings of the participants with the phenomenon. My experiences within the district, as a member of PBP focus groups, union contract negotiation teams, and as a member of a state tested grade level, has put me in the position of being intimately involved with PBP and performance-based assessments.

Heuristics, as a phenomenological approach, focuses on the understanding of the lived human experience through the lens of co-researchers, or subjects (Moustakas, 1994) and transcends the subjects of the study. This method forms the structure from which "...the process of internal search provides the researcher the ability to discover the nature and meaning behind an experience and provide methods and procedures for further investigation." (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9) The knowledge and understanding of the researcher, as the analytical tool, is expanded and refined when investigating a group from within (Moustakas, 1990; Stake, 1995). I revealed my biases through a process of immersion and a repeated return to the data in order to create transparency, which contributed to the validity of findings (Moustakas, 1990). I looked inside, to use intuition, indwelling, and focusing as a way of becoming the tool and the medium for which the understanding was unveiled (Moustakas, 1990). This required relinquishing control of the situation and allowing myself to openly experience the phenomena to truly understand (Patton, 2002). Understanding occurs through repeated observation, in-depth analysis of texts, and communication, from which I was able to separate out common threads of meaning from the vast collections of data. It is from these common collections of data that the themes of understanding were developed.

Design of the Study

Research Site, Financial Status, and Student Core

Paramount to the perceptions of teachers concerning performance-based pay are the conditions in which the educator teaches. Three major components of these conditions involve the financial status, physical environment, and the demographics of the student core (Odden & Kelley, 2002).

The Pandora School district is located in the Midwest area of the United States. Over the last fifty years, the school district has made a slow transition from mostly agrarian population to that of a suburban population. Local commerce has been constantly increasing along with the residential growth. Until the recession of 2008, this had resulted in a district that was occasionally adjusting its finances and rolling back money to the community due to the Hancock amendment (Kirby, 2013). The district services approximately 10,000 students and employs approximately 800 certified teachers. The district is located in middle to upper middle class suburban area that has, over its history, incorporated several smaller school communities into a single larger district (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008).

The range of salaries is representative of the district's economy as well as state finances. Pandora receives very little state aid because of the abundance of local revenue. For instance, in 2012, federal funding represented only 3.2% of the district's revenue stream (Kelly, 2012). This compares to a national average of about 8% (Data First, 2013). In the Pandora School District the range of salaries is based on the step and lane salary schedule discussed in chapter two. This schedule begins at bachelor's degree for a teacher with no experience, at approximately \$38,000 and maxes at approximately \$78,000 for

teachers who have thirty years of experience and have also acquired their terminal degree. The beginning salary average in a Midwest state such as Missouri is \$27,751 (“Salary Benchmarks”, 2012). The salary schedule of the district is segmented in increments of eight college hour steps and allows the teacher to be compensated for completing a terminal degree such as philosophical or educational doctorate. The teachers enjoy many benefits ranging from paid personal business days, sick days, family emergency days, military, court, and grievance, to duty free lunch and recess.

The students in the district do well on state standardized tests, (See Figure 1.) but like all school districts are still existing in a culture of constant growth put in place by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2000 (Anonymous, 2012). Figure one, the fifth grade mathematics and language arts longitudinal scores are displayed. Although there is fluctuation from year to year, the trend for both math and language arts is steadily upwards. Considering the expectation of constant growth demanded by NCLB, one can see the results as the district has continued to strive for continued growth. NCLB expectations for growth, has been replaced by static levels of achievement under Race to the Top, but the new Common Core Curriculum has set the bar very high for student success.

Table 1.

Fifth Grade Longitudinal MAP Achievement Levels.

**Missouri Assessment Program
Achievement Level Report
District: PANDORA**

Eng. Language Arts State Overall

Fifth Grade Language Arts	Year	Acc	Rep	BB	%BB	Basic	%Basic	Prof	%Prof	Adv	%Adv
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Fifth Grade/	2014	67,016	66,880	4,150	6.2	28,845	43.1	22,217	33.2	11,668	17.4
Fifth Grade	2013	66,809	66,680	4,713	7.1	26,656	40	21,519	32.3	13,792	20.7
Fifth Grade	2012	67,613	67,484	4,649	6.9	27,321	40.5	21,786	32.3	13,728	20.3
Fifth Grade	2011	68,132	68,002	4,682	6.9	27,933	41.1	22,084	32.5	13,303	19.6
Fifth Grade	2010	67,498	67,359	4,753	7.1	27,733	41.2	21,692	32.2	13,181	19.6

Mathematics State Overall

Fifth Grade Mathematics	Year	Acc	Rep	BB	%BB	Basic	%Basic	Prof	%Prof	Adv	%Adv
Fifth Grade	2014	66,994	66,934	4,765	7.1	26,834	40.1	23,760	35.5	11,575	17.3
Fifth Grade	2013	66,802	66,760	3,883	5.8	26,509	39.7	23,941	35.9	12,427	18.6
Fifth Grade	2012	67,581	67,518	3,861	5.7	26,544	39.3	24,165	35.8	12,948	19.2
Fifth Grade	2011	68,127	68,084	4,099	6	27,658	40.6	24,760	36.4	11,567	17
Fifth Grade	2010	67,505	67,463	4,145	6.1	27,979	41.5	24,709	36.6	10,630	15.8

Eng. Language Arts District Overall

Fifth Grade Language Arts	Year	Acc	Rep	BB	%BB	Basic	%Basic	Prof	%Prof	Adv	%Adv
Fifth Grade	2014	821	820	15	*	276	33.7	314	38.3	215	26.2
Fifth Grade	2013	800	797	28	*	210	26.3	283	35.5	276	34.6
Fifth Grade	2012	789	789	19	*	221	28	299	37.9	250	31.7
Fifth Grade	2011	773	772	24	*	237	30.7	272	35.2	239	31
Fifth Grade	2010	792	790	31	*	237	30	278	35.2	244	30.9

Mathematics District Overall

Fifth Grade Mathematics	Year	Acc	Rep	BB	%BB	Basic	%Basic	Prof	%Prof	Adv	%Adv
Fifth Grade	2014	822	822	26	*	257	31.3	300	36.5	239	29.1
Fifth Grade	2013	800	800	23	*	212	26.5	288	36	277	34.6
Fifth Grade	2012	789	789	16	*	224	28.4	281	35.6	268	34
Fifth Grade	2011	773	771	22	*	192	24.9	292	37.9	265	34.4
Fifth Grade	2010	792	792	23	*	226	28.5	301	38	242	30.6

The challenges created by NCLB and now the Race to the Top program has made success in the urban core extremely difficult to attain, and has created two conditions at Pandora. First, the levels of achievement set by state are very high, creating more challenging goals than the struggling urban district is likely to meet. Second, the district has a reputation for success and having the resources to guarantee opportunities for its students. This has led to an increasing number of urban families searching for opportunities for their children and finding those opportunities at Pandora. This has been

attributed to an increase in the district's free and reduced lunch numbers as well as an increase in the percentage of students of color. The district now has the privilege and challenge of serving a much more diverse population (Personal Communication, March 6, 2012).

The diversity of the children in the district from which the state test scores are taken represents a growing trend towards a wider diversity. The district's numbers of children of color has grown from 15% to 22% since the base year was established in 2006, coincidentally the number of free and reduced lunch students have doubled in the same amount of time, rising from 5% to 10%. (Missouri Census Data Center, 2012). Although both of these numbers are lower than the state average, the growth rate is much greater. For instance, when the district's free-and-reduced student numbers doubled, the state free-and-reduced lunch numbers only increased by a third (Missouri Census Data Center, 2012). New challenges for teachers are emerging in regards to understanding the unique needs and perspectives of a community that is increasingly becoming more diverse in nature.

According to the SF1 Profile Report on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website for Missouri, (See table I) the 2010 census reported these population demographics for the Pandora School District (Anonymous, 2013).

Table 2.

Comparison of Pandora School District Demographics 2000 – 2010

Race	Total	Percent of total population 2000	Total	Percent of Total population 2010
	2000	2000	2010	2010

One Race	53339	98	60581	97
White	49004	90	52801	85
Black or African American	2301	4	4519	7
American Indian and Alaska Native	252	1	344	1
Asian	986	2	1748	3
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	147	0	266	0
Some Other Race	649	1	903	2
Multi Race - Persons reporting more than one race	1020	1	1680	3
White alone or in combination with one or more other races	49894	92	54333	87
Black or African American alone or in combination with one or more other races	2591	5	5181	8
American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination with one or more other races	576	1	809	1
Asian alone or in combination with one or more other races	1217	2	2242	4
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone or in combination with one or more other races	185	0	350	1
Some Other Race alone or in combination with one or more other races	976	2	1180	2

Participants

The participants in this study were the elementary teachers of Pandora School District. Elementary teachers were chosen in order to provide reasonable protection and anonymity during this study. The protection of research participants is paramount, and must, at all times, be protected. Aside from providing basic protection from reprisal, the perception of security elicited more accurate and unfiltered responses by the research participants (Patton, 2002). The population of middle and high school teachers in particular grade levels and subject areas was too small to guarantee that an individual, such as a building administrator, could not narrow down and identify subjects based on their descriptions and interview responses. Middle school math teachers, for instance, represent approximately 12 out of 800 teachers within the district between two middle school locations. Elementary teachers, in comparison represent nearly 400 possible participants, most of which who participate in state testing and test over multiple core subjects.

The participants of the study were overwhelmingly white female as depicted in Table 3. This difference in population between the demographics of the population of teachers and those of the students may create issues where identity may create problems of understanding between groups.

Table 3

Demographics of the Participants of Pandora School District

	White	Black	Native American	Other
Percent of Population	96.08%	1.96%	1.96%	0.00%
Total each	52	1	1	0
	Male	Female		
Percent of Population	3.92%	96.08%		
Total each	2	52		

The much larger, yet definable, population of elementary teachers is spread over ten elementary schools, providing a much larger pool from which to survey and draw samples that would be more statistically aligned. Narrowing my focus to elementary teachers may have created a limitation within the purpose of understanding a phenomenon as a whole, but created a foundation of understanding from which future studies may be conducted. This created a much more reliable pool from which to pull from and validate.

Sampling Techniques

There are essentially two types of sampling that a researcher may employ, probabilistic, and non-probabilistic. Probabilistic sampling is done randomly and generates a non-biased sample (Merriam, 1998). This type of sampling is required for quantitative research, but is inappropriate for qualitative research where the sample being sought is one that has very specific experiences concerning the topic at hand (Merriam, 1998). Non-probabilistic sampling does just that. It searches out and finds unique individuals who have experienced a phenomenon intensely and uses that experience as

the core sample for the study. Sampling in a phenomenological design also parallels case study design by requiring that the subjects have a willingness to participate in the study. These two qualities require a much different sampling technique than would be expected in a quantitative model (Moustakas, 1994).

Because these sampling methods were based around the parameters of qualitative structure, purposeful sampling was required, and the sample group size becomes irrelevant (Yin, 2009). Purposeful sampling is a sampling technique that requires the researcher to weigh heavily the qualities of the subjects. The subjects must have or be in the process of experiencing the phenomenon. They must be intensely interested in understanding the nature and meanings of the phenomenon. They must be willing to participate in lengthy interviews, be willing to be recorded either through audio or video formats, and be willing to have their anonymous results published in the dissertation and possibly other scholarly publications (Moustakas, 1994). The sampling used in this study proceeded in steps, in accordance with the process, of moving from large group surveys to intense interviews. There were four types of purposeful sampling used in this study; maximum variation, intensity, emergent, and stratified sampling.

The study began with a large group survey of the entire population of elementary teachers at Pandora school district in order to utilize maximum variation sampling, where a cross cut of the population was randomly selected from those responding to the survey (Patton, 2002) in order to obtain as wide of a range of variation as possible in responses (Creswell, 2007). Technically speaking, the entire population of elementary teachers was my sample, but this added to the validity of the results by eliminating bias from this particular selection. It is expected that I would get approximately 25% return on the

surveys, or approximately 100 teachers. The purpose of the survey was to create a data set of general teacher perceptions, basic describable characteristics, and provide for willingness to participate in further interviews. These quantitative data were used to create a crystallization of the finding from the documents and the interviews.

Crystallization is a paradigm for deeply understanding complex social perspectives that allows for each unique perspective to align itself within the context and symmetry of the group experience in a way that further defines the experience, recognizes differences within groups without artificially framing the phenomenon (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

The second set of data was taken from the large group sample of subjects. Maximum variation sampling and criterion sampling was used to identify subjects with information rich experiences that represent with as much intensity as possible the experiences reported from the large group survey (Moustakas, 1990). Maximum variation sampling and criterion sampling, a sampling technique that allowed me to define and use basic criteria described by the large data set, allowed me to identify those individuals that reflect the beliefs of their group or sub-group, but do so with a unique and overwhelming ability to make clear their beliefs in the matter. I wanted to glean data from their lived experiences in a manner that presents clear or compelling portraits of participants and allows the researcher and reader to experience phenomena from the perspective of the participants.

I selected five subjects for these intense interviews, but it was possible that more subjects may have been needed to complete the study, making it necessary to employ emergent sampling as the need arose. Emergent sampling is the type of purposeful

sampling where the researcher makes decisions on the spot regarding sampling techniques (Patton, 2002). The benefit to emergent sampling is the ability to keep the focus of the study, yet remain flexible to achieve maximum understanding and representation of meanings that the groups ascribe to the phenomena. I considered age, gender, race, and/or other possible political factors (Moustakas, 1994). These factors were compared and contrasted with the survey data to insure that the voices heard were representative of the group as a whole. It was possible that stratified sampling might have been needed to identify different reactions to the phenomenon.

I considered using stratified sampling when it becomes necessary to account for significantly different viewpoints, or horizons, of the phenomenon. Stratified sampling is used to separate out certain elements of a population so that the researcher can break down the interviews into unique groups (Patton, 2002). Current research indicates that higher ability teachers tend to leave education for more lucrative pursuits, while less able teachers tend to stay in education (Podgursky, 2007). Considering these findings and the relatively secure conditions of teaching compared with higher paying jobs in the private sector, there may be a population of younger teachers who might be more willing than current tenured teachers to pursue a higher risk, higher pay system in lieu of one with more security (Podgursky, 2007). The survey asked elementary teachers to identify their age, gender, race, length of teaching experience, and the grade level and subjects taught. This information allowed me to determine multiple meanings of the phenomena based on demographics and teaching experience.

Data Sources

I used multiple forms of data in order to create a crystallization of my results. I incorporated a forced choice and open-ended survey, in-depth interviews, documents such as other written materials available to teachers that inform or create, or add to the experience of performance-based pay.

Surveys. Subjects were identified using a survey that explains the purpose of the study, the basic requirements of the subject, and detailing the anonymity of any participating subjects. The survey itself employed a Likert or summative scale structure and a series of open-ended questions (See appendix A). Likert scales for identifying a psychometric data based on the positive or negative feelings endowed in the subject of the questionnaire (Nardi, 2003). Likert scales are preferred due to their balanced form of positive and negative answer choices (Nardi, 2003). The survey itself served two purposes, as a sampling tool and a source of data.

The survey itself formed three parts. The first part pertained to gathering the demographics of each subject responding to the survey. The general information questions were designed to aid in stratifying the data in cross sections based on gender, race, length of career, and current teaching assignment. This information was used to determine whether or not there were basic differences between sub-groups within the district. This also began the process of setting the environment for the interview and helped develop a rapport with the subject.

- 1) How long have you been teaching?
- 2) How many different schools have you taught in?
- 3) How long have you been teaching at your current school?
- 4) Please select your current teaching position.

- 5) Please select your current age group of students.
- 6) Are you male or female?
- 7) Please select the race that you identify with as your own.

Selected response answers were categorized by grouped frequency ranging in ten-year segments. If needed, these responses were used to stratify the data and determine whether or not there were differences in experiences based on teaching experience or grade levels taught.

The second section of the survey was a forced choice questionnaire designed to provide a basis of general understanding of performance-based pay (PBP) systems and develop a general understanding of the depth of experience each subject may have. These particular questions used a Likert scale to ascertain their feelings and perceptions of performance-based pay models. Some examples of the questions used are:

- 1) I believe there is a direct relationship between the effectiveness of a teacher and their students' results on standardized tests.
 - a. Yes to a large degree
 - b. Yes to a minor degree
 - c. No
- 2) I believe that there are very few student-centered variables that interfere with my ability to educate my students.
 - a. Yes to a large degree
 - b. Yes to a minor degree
 - c. No
- 3) I believe that standardized tests should be a part of my annual evaluation.

- a. I agree
 - b. Neutral
 - c. I disagree
- 4) I believe that I should be compensated based on my student's performance on standardized tests.
- a. I agree
 - b. Neutral
 - c. I disagree
- 5) I believe that performance-based pay systems would allow districts to award teachers for their efforts better than the current system.
- a. Yes to a large degree
 - b. Yes to a minor degree
 - c. No

The third part of the survey was in the form of open-ended short answer survey questions designed to investigate the personal unique experiences each subject has had, as well as to determine the intensity from which the individual has experienced the phenomenon. Open-ended questions create an environment from which the subject may engage in responding in a very personal and authentic medium for communicating the phenomenon they have experienced (Moustakas, 1990). This section was used to identify participants for in-depth interviews based on their willingness to further participate in the study. Some examples of these questions are:

- 1) Describe in detail your experiences of feeling concerning performance-based pay systems.

- 2) Describe in detail your feelings concerning about being evaluated based on the performance of your students on state level standardized testing.
- 3) Where would you say you get most of your information concerning state and federal educational policies?

Interviews. Interviews were conducted after the general survey with those subjects who were selected by purposeful sampling. In-depth interviews are the backbone of the data and are designed to allow the researcher to experience with the subjects the phenomenon in a more real setting that survey questions can not provide (Moustakas, 1994). Five interviews were conducted ranging in duration from 30 minutes to one hour long. These interviews were conducted off site and required the use of open-ended questions, which provided for the subject the ability to expand upon their experience in detail Open-ended questions were presented verbally from a interview guide with questions that align with the open ended questions in the large group survey (See appendix B). Some examples of these questions are:

- 1) Describe in detail your experiences of feeling concerning performance-based pay systems.
 - a. Elaborate on these experiences and feelings.
- 2) Describe in detail your feelings concerning about being evaluated based on the performance of your students on state level standardized testing.
 - a. How are these evaluations fair
 - b. Or How are these evaluations unfair
- 3) Where would you say you get most of your information concerning state and federal educational policies?

- a. How often do you engage in news articles concerning education?
- b. How often do you engage in professional journals?

Documents. Finally, I used documents garnered from results of the Internet search results in order to complete crystallization of the phenomenon from perspectives derived from the texts, the interviews and the survey. Documents are an incredibly important source of information in a qualitative study. They tell a story and provide background and information in regards to the motives and patterns of humanistic behavior (Patton, 2002).

Document research is a fundamental pillar of qualitative research due to the permanence from which they exist within a particular context (Patton, 2002). These contexts are supported through interviews and observations. These documents could have been taken from union communications, magazine or newspaper articles, articles downloaded from the Internet or letters and correspondences from other educators. The purpose of these documents was to provide crystallization of the phenomenon in regards to experiences uncovered from the large group survey results, and in-depth interviews.

Analysis of Data

The analysis of the data progressed in several stages based on the different data collection categories that exist. The groups were divided up into three categories.

The first category that was analyzed was the large-scale quantitative information gathered from the electronic survey. This information was gathered and analyzed for patterns in responses as it relates to a teacher's own self-knowledge about performance-based pay and the relationship that it has with their own experiences, both in teaching and in performance-based pay programs. Since this data was being gathered from an

exploratory perspective, no hypothesis was being tested. Since no hypothesis was being tested there was no bivariate data collected. This all but eliminated the need for the use of correlation and regression statistical analysis procedures.

Statistical regression and correlation methods are used to compare bivariate or multivariate data over a period of time or compared between different sample groups. These measures indicated fitted lines and mathematically predict responses for further groups or responses within groups and can be used to compare between groups with a mathematical certainty of accuracy (Treiman, 2009). The data from this section of the study was compared to the themes developed from the other sets of data from this study using descriptive statistics. This data was used to inform and provide crystallization of the data collected from the open ended questions and the in-depth interviews.

The open-ended questions of the surveys were analyzed based on descriptive, patterned, and interpretive codes developed from the research on each topics from the literature review as well as my professional knowledge of the phenomena. Particular descriptive and interpretive codes were related directly to the style and type of teacher perception and analyzed for frequency (Miles, & Huberman, 1994). I employed a codebook for the keeping and assimilation of data throughout the process of conducting this study. A codebook is simply a document containing emerging themes and concepts and identifying them with a shorter, more easily accessed, coding system (Patton, 2002). As the codebook was developed, meaning behind the codes was defined and the meaning behind the interpretive codes changed as the research was in progress (Moustakas, 1990). Each interpretive code was refined based on its relationship to other interpretive codes

and this relationship was integrated and sifted into common themes that were used to define meaning to the phenomenological experience (Miles, & Huberman, 1994).

The second category of analysis was in-depth interviews that probed deeper into the phenomenon. Teachers were asked to elaborate on a series of questions concerning their feelings and beliefs about their experiences with performance-based pay and its perceived effect on their professional relationships and career logistics. This data was analyzed using transcendental phenomenological reduction techniques. I used the Van Kaam's modified method of phenomenological data as presented in *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Moustakas, 1994). I identified common themes depicted in the meaning units from five individuals selected using purposeful sampling and consent to be interviewed.

The phenomenological reduction process began by listing the group expressions relevant to the experience. This type of analysis is referred to as horizontalization. I then begin the next phase, which was the reduction and elimination phase. The purpose of this phase was to determine one of two things: is the moment of the experience potent enough to constitute an understanding of the experience, and can that experience be abstracted and labeled? If so, then it can be horizontalized? If not, it can be eliminated (Moustakas, 1994). It is during this phase that invariant constituents were identified. The third phase involved the clustering and thematizing of the invariant constituents. It was at this point that the grouping of the common themes began based on the horizontalization of the data. The fourth step was the final identification of the themes and invariant constituents. The purpose of this phase was to bring the data back to the subject or co-researcher and check for validation of the meaning behind the themes reduced from the interview (Moustakas,

1994). The fifth phase was the construction of individual structural descriptions of the meanings behind the themes, also provided to the subject to validate. After creating these textural-structural descriptions of each interview, a final composite description of the phenomenon for the entire group as a whole was created (Moustakas, 1994).

The third category of data analysis involved the analyzing of written documents in order to provide understanding in regards to the sources of information being utilized by teachers to form their perceptions of performance-based pay programs. This data, as mentioned earlier, was in the form of electronic communications, or written newspaper or magazine articles. I employed an open coding system described by Miles and Huberman to create a depiction of concepts and emergent themes and patterns between and across all document sets (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This data was also be utilized to provide triangulation between the two other data sets collected.

Limitations including Validity, Reliability and Ethical Considerations

Limitations. The limitations of any qualitative study lie in the nature of the study itself. Due to the very personal nature of qualitative research, a researcher must always work to provide plausible explanations and counter explanations of all phenomena that he or she encounters (Patton, 2002). The object of a qualitative study is to rule out all other threats to these explanations (Maxwell, 2005). There are several limitations to this study. The first being the nature of a phenomenological, heuristic study, where I am the lens from which my interpretations are made; thus, I guarded against any bias I may have had regarding perceptions of performance-based pay. One important strategy was to require the researcher to return to the participants, and having those participants review the transcriptions of interview data (Moustakas, 1990).

A second limitation of this study regarded the limiting nature of the population itself, composed mostly of white Caucasians and there were very few members of Black, Hispanic, Asian, or other people of color. Because of this limitation, the information gathered can only be used to indicate perceptions of a mostly white group of teachers. Parallel to this limitation was the social class and living conditions of the teachers. A vast majority of the teachers in the district live locally, out of the urban core, and fall into the category of middle to upper middle class. The values and issues concerning this particular group differed from those of urban or rural individuals, which were not addressed in this study, but indicate an area for future research.

A third limitation was the narrowed scope of the participant population. The population from which I was researching is composed of elementary teachers and will lack the input of secondary teachers and their experiences. Although this decision served as a limitation, the purpose of this population selection was made to insure the safety and anonymity of the research participants described earlier in the sampling section.

The final issue that may have created a limitation of this study was the trust factor established by myself as a teacher in the district who could potentially be pursuing and being offered administrative positions within and outside of the district. This undoubtedly created issues of trust based on motives between me and possibly other teachers who are participants within the study. Trust between the subjects and myself was paramount as a lack of trust can condemn a study before it begins (Moustakas, 1990). One way of gaining initial trust between the subjects and the researcher was by using an intermediary to validate the trustworthiness of the researcher (Patton, 2002). In this particular study, I

used the endorsement of the local National Educator Association (NEA) president to help bridge the gap of intention between others and myself.

The use of the large-scale survey, and the practice of going back to the participants with my results and interpretations helped to alleviate those feelings of mistrust, but they will always present an issue with members of the staff. The size of the population that the large-scale survey was being administered to was large enough that any particular participant represents one fourth of one percent of the population. Participants were allowed to feel protected by the group due to the research size. As I returned with large-scale survey results and presented them to the participants, they were then able to verify their opinions and experiences through contact by phone, interview or email. None-the-less, the subject of performance-based pay comes with it the possibility of anxiety due to change and loss, and trust was always a prominent issue (Gonring, Teske, & Jupp, 2007).

Validity and reliability. The validity of a qualitative design was ensured using different methods. According to Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001) there are four primary criteria that ensured the validity of qualitative studies. The first is credibility, which determines whether or not the meaning interpreted by the researcher matches the meaning expressed by the participants. One way to ensure credibility with participants was by using the tactic of returning to the research participants and sharing with them the meaning interpreted by the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). The data collected from interviews and surveys was used to create a crystallization between the written texts, and vice versa. It is important that the experiences of the subjects were bound within the written text as way of validating the study internally. As these written documents were

created from individuals with a sort of experience with performance-based pay, their perspectives were valid, and should be supported within the research of a heuristic nature.

The second criterion is authenticity. Authenticity was developed by making sure that all of the voices in a study are heard (Whittemore et al., 2001). In this study I used the large-scale survey to identify stratified sub groups within the population and from there, used purposeful sampling to provide a rich thick descriptions of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1990).

The third criteria was criticality which involves making sure there is a critical appraisal of the quality of the research (Whittemore et al., 2001). I made use of a critical friend or co-researcher to ensure that validity was being observed and kept in the forefront. I also took advantage of the crystallization of data gathered from interviews, and document analysis to ensure that common threads of meaning were being woven together in central themes and concepts.

The fourth and final criterion is that of integrity. Integrity involves the key researchers to be self-critical (Whittemore et al., 2001). According to Moustakas (1990) by definition a phenomenological, heuristic design requires the researcher to continue coming back to the data and analyzing it over and over again for meaning. Validity of my findings was determined based on the process of heuristic inquiry that requires me to return to my participants for agreement and validation of my findings. The use of a critical friend was used to corroborate my results (Moustakas, 1990).

Heuristic research by nature involves the researcher becoming the primary tool of investigation (Moustakas, 1990). The process of bracketing my beliefs as a member of the school district and a teacher/administrator and my beliefs about performance and

compensation as developed throughout my life helped develop the perspective from which I determined meaning as interpreted from the participants. But more importantly, it was vital to my ability to reach a point as a naïve observer. The naïve observer peers at the phenomenon with the eyes of a child, soaking up all information as if it were the first time (Moustakas, 1994). The naïve mind was necessary as it tears down previous connections to reality from a causal point of view and allows ones experience with the participants to build new relationships that can be used to construct meaning and understanding. This process was key to the validity of the study as it allows the researcher to continue move through the stages of emersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and finally creative synthesis.

Ethical considerations. The ethics of this study provided the largest single concern. The consumers of this study will be, aside from the general public, teachers and administrators nationwide as they process through a transition into a performance-based compensation system. It would not be an exaggeration to say that there are strong opinions present on all sides of the merit pay issue, some of which are most likely polarized in nature. I am currently a teacher in the Pandora school district. I have served as a union contract negotiator, and I have served more recently as a summer school administrator. There was an opportunity for a researcher to be viewed as a pawn of the administration in hopes of gaining employment, and equally so, there is the risk of appearing biased due to my past relationships with the union. The solution to these two issues required conversations with both entities and explaining my goals, and my expectations for the results of the study. I pledged full access to my data, short of

revealing information that can be used to identify specific subjects (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The results and data collection processes will be under considerable scrutiny by both sides of the merit pay issue within the Pandora school district. Protocols for reviewing the data, the recording and disclosure of conversations held by stakeholders and gatekeepers, anonymity of the research subjects, the review of data procedures, and protocols by a critical friend were supported ethical considerations.

Individual teacher trust involved following steps to ensure anonymity, even in the face of individuals who initially are unconcerned with their anonymity. The names of teachers were not recorded in the large-scale survey. During the process of this study, alternative names were used to refer to different respondents without the use of their real names. Building or district administrators were not in attendance of any meetings or interviews as a way of ensuring a retribution free safe environment for the teachers. The names and identities of single in-depth interview participants were not shared and pseudonyms were used to report findings.

Initially, my concerns of ethics revolve around the minority of teachers whose beliefs put them in a sub-category that possibly stand to lose as a result of this study. It is not to say that these individuals may be experiencing the growing pains of a district or state in transition, but my part of that was not be that of a catalyst, but a reporter and analyst of the human condition involved in the process. Ethically, I was prohibited from causing harm to the subjects I was studying, as a researcher of this phenomenon, I was observing and checking for the implications of the work that I was engaged (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I required the help of critical friends with this as well as returning to

the subjects for validation of my interpretations and the meaning that I un-earthed (Moustakas, 1994).

Institutional Review Board Expectations

The first guiding principle pertaining to subject autonomy was preserved through a process of communications. The purpose, reason, and risks for participating was communicated in the first survey as a part of the email communication, and as the first question of the survey, which will ascertain whether or not the participants agreed to the use of the survey information. I intended to use an Internet based surveying instrument that allowed me to keep subject confidentiality.

The second guiding principle described the need for the results of the survey to outweigh any possible risks. I believe that the result of a full understanding of the teachers perceptions will most definitely be used to create a system or protocol for compensation reform that will be the least painful to all members of the school community.

The third and final principle pertains to the fair selection of individuals within the population. I initially surveyed the entire population, and from there I selected interview participants based on several purposeful sampling strategies. This process provided a representational set of subgroups each with equal voice for the final analysis of the data.

I believe that this project was worthy of being researched. I believe that this study was the most valid way of honoring teachers' voices in the face of significant change. I believe that the administration will be able to use my information to structure processes that will ensure that the needs and concerns of teachers are understood and tended to appropriately. I believe that the population of teachers may become more aware of their

own personal positions concerning performance-based pay systems. I believe that I achieved an in-depth understanding of the teachers' perceptions and beliefs concerning performance-based pay.

Chapter 4

TEACHERS' VOICES

Introduction

This heuristic case study was conducted in order to answer what has become a career long question. When I began teaching, the concept of performance base pay (PBP) was introduced by a district administrator who asked if I would be interested in pursuing the idea. I was interested but the union president who was much older refused to participate. From that point forward, based on my own curiosity, I began a process of learning about PBP and other merit programs. After much studying, I came to two realizations, one that I did not know much about PBP systems, initially, and two, if I didn't know as much as I thought I did, neither did other teachers around me. From this point, began my interest in pursuing just what did teachers know, what was their experience, and how do we relate to each other? These curiosities informed my research questions.

1. What are the perceptions that teachers have about performance-based pay systems?
2. How do teachers perceive accountability in reference to performance-based pay systems?
3. How do teachers perceive equity in reference to performance-based pay systems?

It was my intent to survey and interview teachers that I worked with to ascertain their experiences with performance-based pay and report those findings in a case study. These types of questions required a qualitative design which led to my choice of a single instrumental case study which allowed me to collect multiple data for the case: documents, mixed survey, and in-depth interviews. Since I am a teacher in the district of inquiry and share distinct experiences and intensive opinions about PBP plans with teachers, the nature of this qualitative case study was also heuristic.

Reporting on the Study

This study progressed in three stages. The first stage required me to analyze possible sources of information about PBP plans. Survey results indicated that the internet was the chief independent source of information concerning PBP plans, so I pulled the twelve most recent documents from a Google search using the key words, performance-based pay, and its older more common term merit pay. From this point, a Miles and Huberman (1994) coding system was used to analyze and develop themes of understanding unique to these perspectives.

The next stage for reporting on the findings involved the analysis of a large-scale survey that was given to the entire population of elementary teachers at Pandora School District. This survey was used to collect basic information through a series of closed-ended questions, and then to expound upon their experiences through open-ended questions. This survey also acted as a tool for the selection of five volunteered teachers that formed the cases used in the final stage.

The third and final stage involved the analysis of in-depth interviews of those volunteers who were selected based on their willingness to participate and admissions

that they had strong feelings about performance-based pay (PBP) plans. This sampling strategy is referred to as intensity sampling.

The interviews were conducted in various locations chosen by the subjects and ranged from local libraries, teacher classrooms, to in-home interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was conducted with the use of a question guide developed from the literature, and subsequent survey information (see Appendix B). Due to the size of the population of Pandora School District, of the five subjects, there was only one that I knew before the beginning of the study. Although this could be a threat to validity, the fact that we do not work in the same building, nor see each other socially, eliminates the possibility that her data was skewed from the norm.

Each interview was conducted casually and time was spent at the beginning of the interview to visit and begin the process of establishing rapport. I found that spending about ten minutes letting the subject become comfortable with the process helped alleviate any nervousness that may have been present. At any time the subjects could end the interview and exit from the study. As noted earlier, analysis of both the large-scale survey and the in-depth interviews relied on the use of Miles and Huberman (1994) coding systems. The survey data, informed development of the codebook, as did the documents and interviews which were cross analyzed for common interpretive codes and themes.

Validity was achieved by use of a critical friend who repeatedly was available to read over my results, answer questions, and serve as a sounding board to ensure that I was progressing in a way that provided validity to the study (Patton, 2002). Validity was also determined by use of varied sources of data; the documents, survey data, and in-

depth interviews, that created a crystallization of meaning and a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Crystallization, being defined as a process wherein the researcher immerses themselves in the experience, and then through a structure of repeated exposure to the phenomena, is able to describe multiple viewpoints, clearly defining the overall reality of the experience (Ellingson, 2008). Each of these perspectives or viewpoints can be compared to the various planes on a crystal.

Analysis of the Mixed Survey

The closed-ended and open-ended mixed survey used in this study served multiple purposes: (1) to provide a sample from which to select subjects for case studies; (2) to create a crystalized source of data that depicts the many facets of the phenomenon; and (3) to validate the meanings gleaned from document analysis and the in-depth interviews. The population of elementary teachers was chosen because there were 372 members of this group and the size was large enough to garner a reliable set of data while at the same time providing for adequate anonymity needed to protect the identities of the five teachers who volunteered to be interviewed.

The survey (see Appendix A) comprised four sections. The first section contained the UMKC Institutional Review Board (IRB) description, which depicted the purpose of the study. The second section was a set of eleven demographic questions that sought specific information about the teacher such as gender, experience, position in the district, and other information. The third section of the survey was a set of twenty-one closed questions concerning the subjects' views and knowledge of performance-based pay procedures, ethics and programs. The final section contained six open-ended questions that allowed teachers to expand upon and express more in-depth opinions than the closed

question items allowed. The survey include language that allowed teachers to volunteer for in-depth interviews which were schedule at a later date and constituted a data source for the case study.one

The survey was presented using the internet-based tool of Surveymonkey, a large nationally based program used by many institutions. The benefits of using Surveymonkey included the ability to communicate with the population quickly and efficiently, allowing teachers to receive the survey anonymously and to respond quickly and efficiently from any computer whether they were at school or at home.

This section of the survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics. I used percentages to give a clearer view of the comparable quantities of the sections of the population that responded. As each question elicited differing percentages, it became important to show the weight of each population in a numeric and graphical representation.

Of the 372 possible respondents, there were 54 who chose to take the survey. This sample of 54 teachers represented 14.5% of the total population. This response rate falls into the average for survey result rates, which can vary widely from general public with a return of 1-20% or customers and members with a return of 5-40% (Ray, 2014). Question 1 was designated as the acceptance of the study agreement. One hundred percent of the subjects agreed to participate in the survey section of the study.

Section 2: Analysis of Demographic Information

Question 2 began the demographic portion of the survey. The objective of this section of the instrument was to determine the characteristics of the teacher population as a sample of the Pandora School District. This section of the survey was also used to

decide whether or not stratification of the data was needed to accurately represent all distinct populations within the population of the district. For question 2 of this section, 98% of the respondents reported that they were full time teachers in the Pandora school district.

Question 3 of the survey was used to indicate the grade level taught by the respondent. The results indicated that 1.96% of the respondents taught pre-kindergarten/kindergarten, 15.69% taught first grade, 11.76% taught second grade, 17.65% taught third grade, 15.69% taught fourth grade, and 37.25% taught fifth grade as seen in the graph below (see figure 4.1).

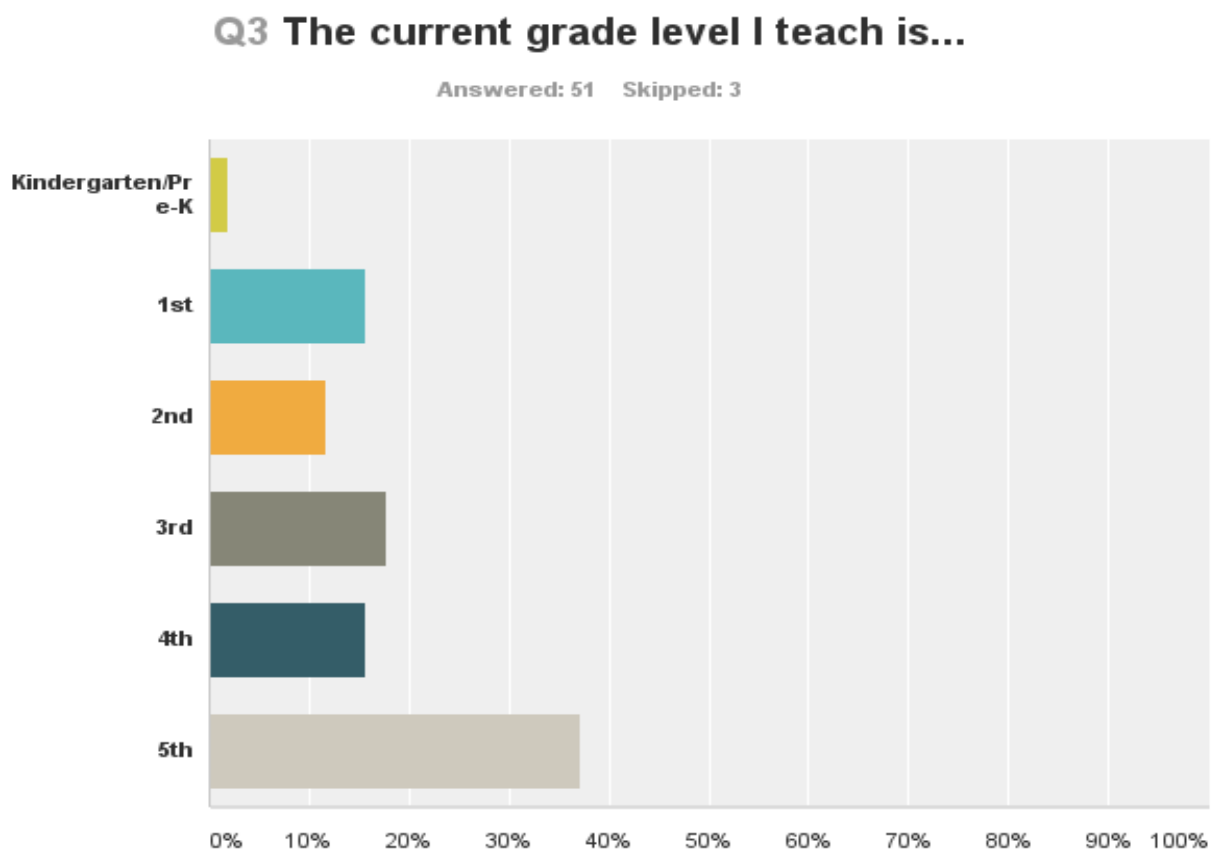


Figure 4.1. The Current Grade Level I Teach Is.

Question number four asked the respondent what their teaching role was within the district. The respondents indicated that 74.51% were core subject or classroom teachers, 3.92% indicated they were exploratory teachers (art, music, etc.) and 21.57% indicated that they were special education teachers (see figure 4.2).

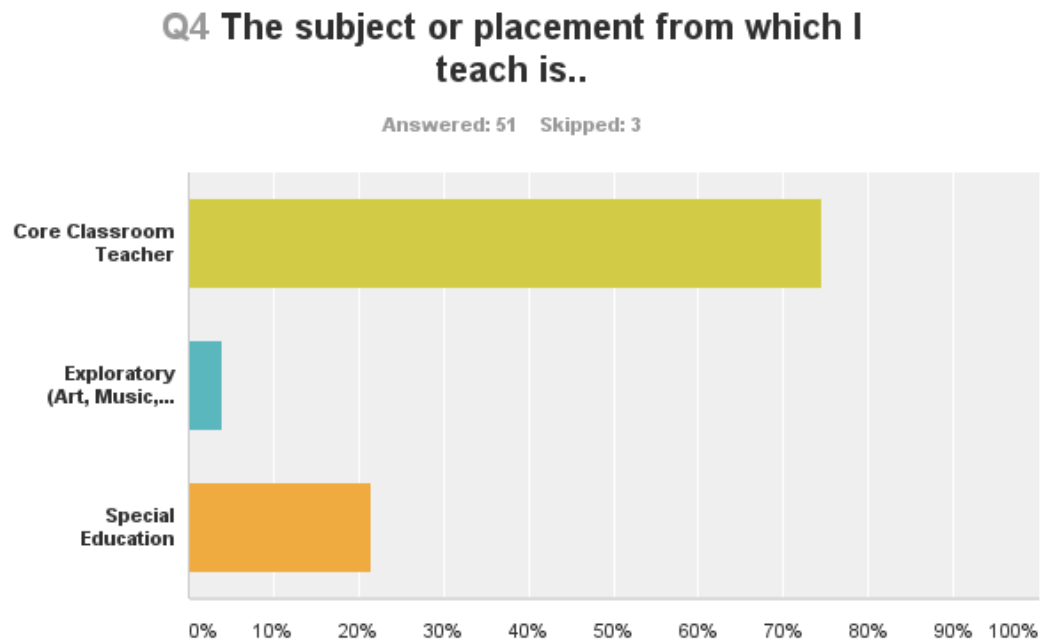


Figure 4.2. The Subject Or Placement From Which I Teach Is.

In question number five, 41.18% of the respondents indicated that they had been teaching less than 5 years, 25.49% taught between six and ten years, 11.76% between eleven and fifteen years, 7.84% between 16 and 20 years, 5.88% between 21 and 25 years, and 7.84% between 26 and 30 years.

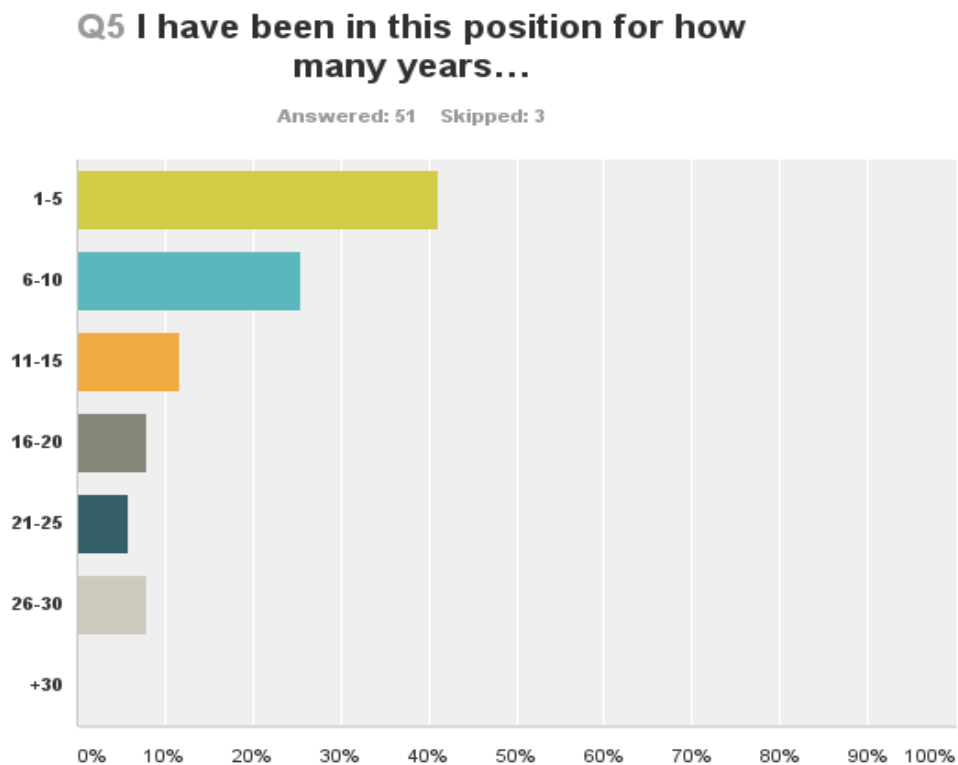


Figure 4.3. I Have Been In This Position For How Many Years?

This indicated that the vast majority of respondents were still in the beginning half of their career. This information also corresponded with district data which according to the state data collection site, reported that the Pandora district had an average of 12.4 years of teaching experience (core data, 2014). The survey results indicated that this sample had 11.76 years of teaching experience. This is 94.8% accurate and bodes well for determining a representative sample.

Question six asked the subjects to indicate their level of highest attained education. The results indicated that 11.76% had their bachelors, 68.63% had a master's degree, 13.73% had a specialist, and 5.88% had a doctorate. The sample indicated that

those responding had a higher than district average graduate education. The sample represented 88.24% with a masters or higher; where, the state data center reported that 84.63% of Pandora elementary teachers have a masters or greater (MCDS, 2014). This represents a sample that is 95.6% aligned with state data.

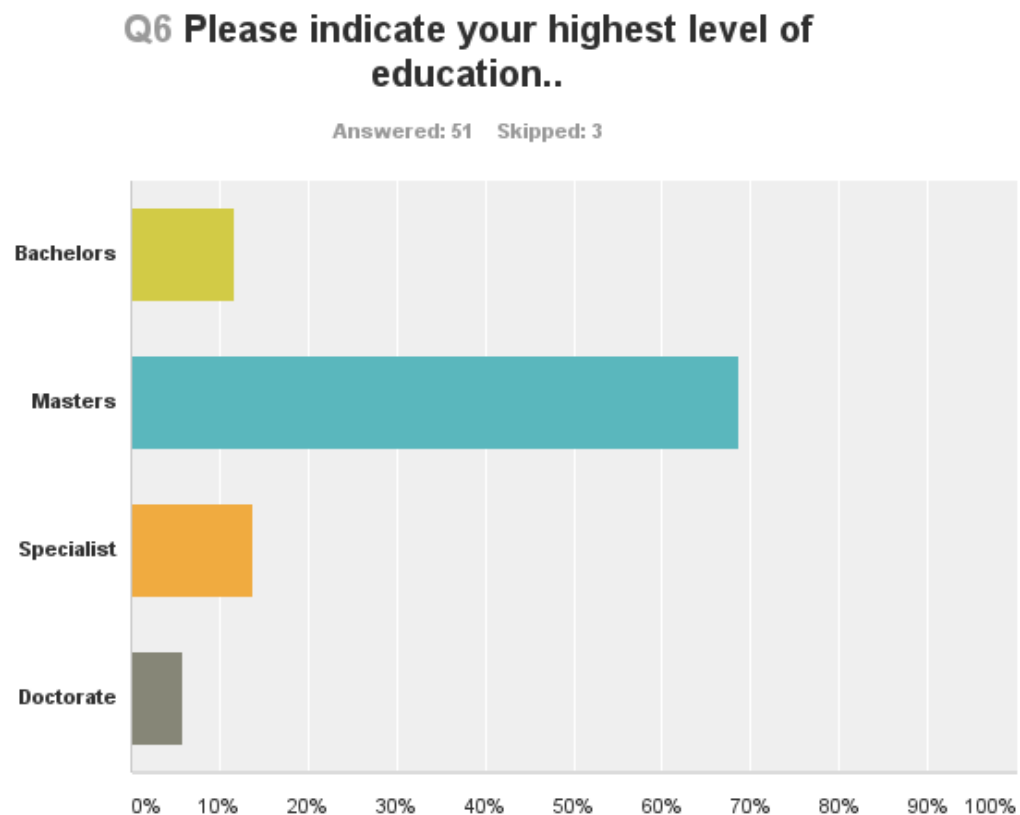


Figure 4.4. Please Indicate Your Highest Level of Education.

Question seven was used to determine that 3.92% of the respondents were male and the 96.08% of the respondents were female. The subjects that took this survey indicated that 96.08% were White, 1.96% were Black, and 1.96% were American Indian.

Question nine described the respondents as 29.41% were between the ages of 20-30, 21.57% were between the ages of 31-40, 35.29% were between the ages of 41-50, and 13.73% were between the ages of 51-60.

The results of question ten revealed that 94.12% of the subjects worked on a team or grade level group, whereas the remainder did not. Question eleven specified that 86.27% of the respondents' students participated in state level standardized testing. The final question for this section indicated that only 25.49% of the respondents were actively involved in participating in district policy making.

Conclusion

The demographic section created an image of the average teacher that participated in this study. They were classified generally as well educated white females who for the most part were within the first halves of their careers as classroom teachers who work within grade level teams. This sample matched the population of the district almost perfectly, nullifying issues that may have been created by error percentiles generated by a low response rate to the survey instrument. The homogenous nature of this population resulted in a reduction of possible stratifications, as the population was almost devoid of people of color and men. Given these results, the study provided a more concrete vision of the participants and to what degree and from whose perspectives the data were collected.

Section 3: Analysis of Closed-ended Questions

Section 3 of this survey was a set of twenty-one closed-ended questions designed to determine the subjects' knowledge and understanding of performance-based pay programs. Question one asked the subjects how they would rate their understanding of

PBP systems. Two percent responded that they had an in-depth understanding, 83% reported they had a mediocre understanding, and 15% reported they knew very little about PBP systems.

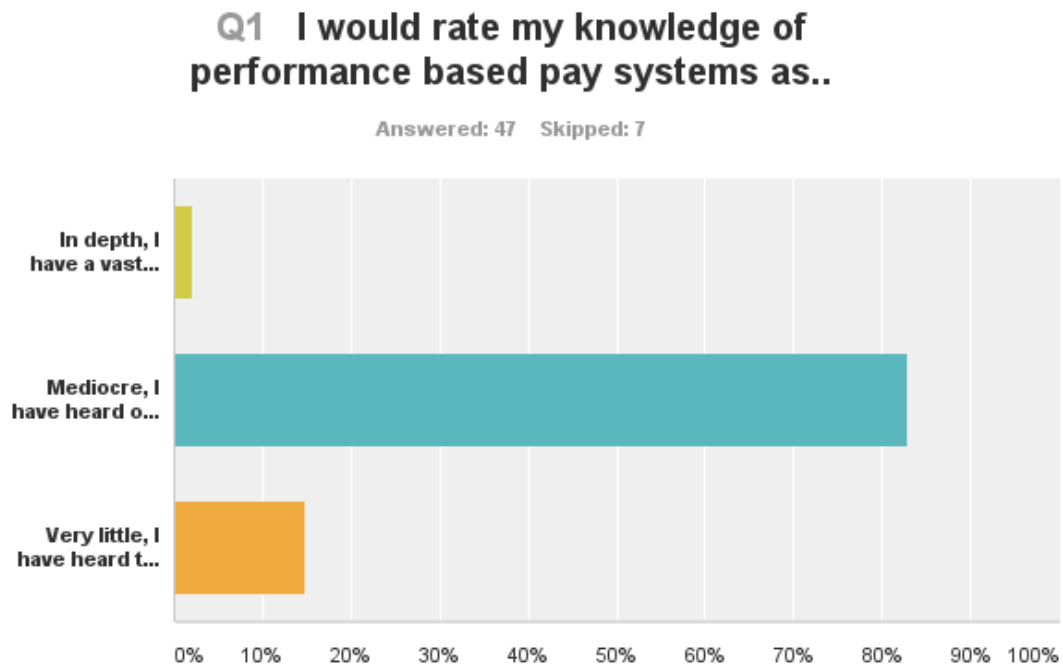


Figure 4.5. I Would Rate My Knowledge of PBP Systems as.

One hundred percent of the participants responded to question two, that they had had no experience with PBP systems. A concern mentioned in the literature that corresponded with the data and a finding of the document analysis was the concept of teacher input and understanding of PBP systems as an inherent aspect of a successful merit system (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2014).

Question three asked the respondents if they knew whether or not their state utilized standardized testing as a part of their evaluation. Forty nine percent of the respondents reported that they knew, and fifty one percent said they did not know. The

subjects were then asked whether or not they believed that student growth could be adequately measured by standardized testing. The results indicated that 4.26% believed that this could be done to a large degree, 65.96% said yes but to a minor degree, and 29.79% said no.

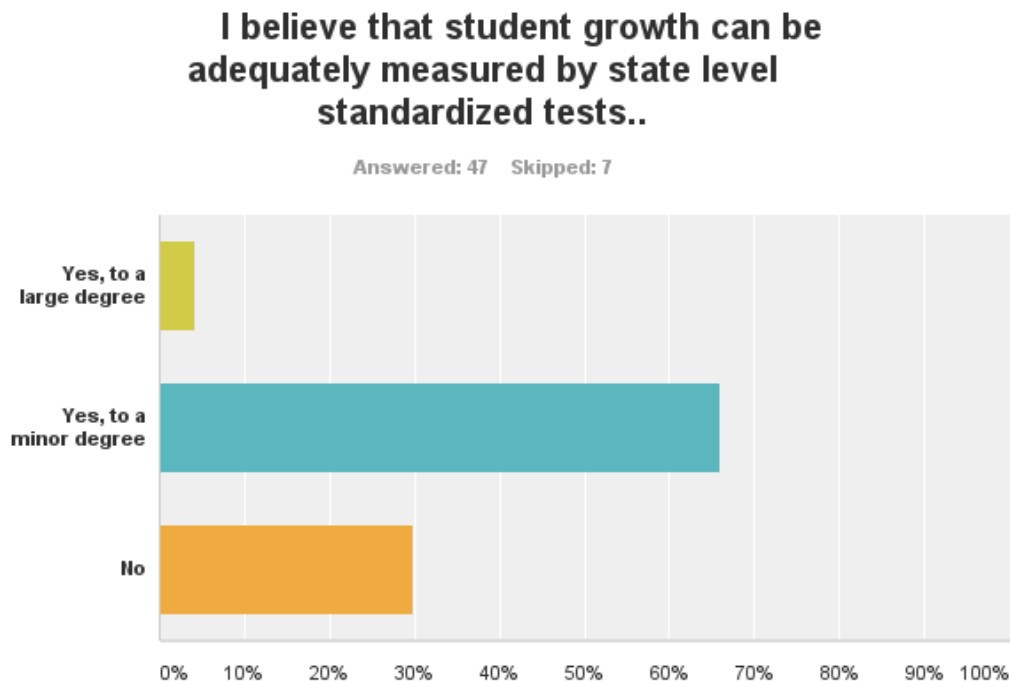


Figure 4.6. I Believe That Student Growth Can be Adequately Measured by State Level Standardized Tests.

The results were almost identical when asked if they believed that there was a direct relationship between the effectiveness of a teacher and the results of their students on standardized tests. The results indicated that 6.38% of the respondents agreed to a large degree, 57.45% agreed to a minor degree, and 36.17% reported that they did not

believe that a students' score had a direct relationship to a teacher's effectiveness.

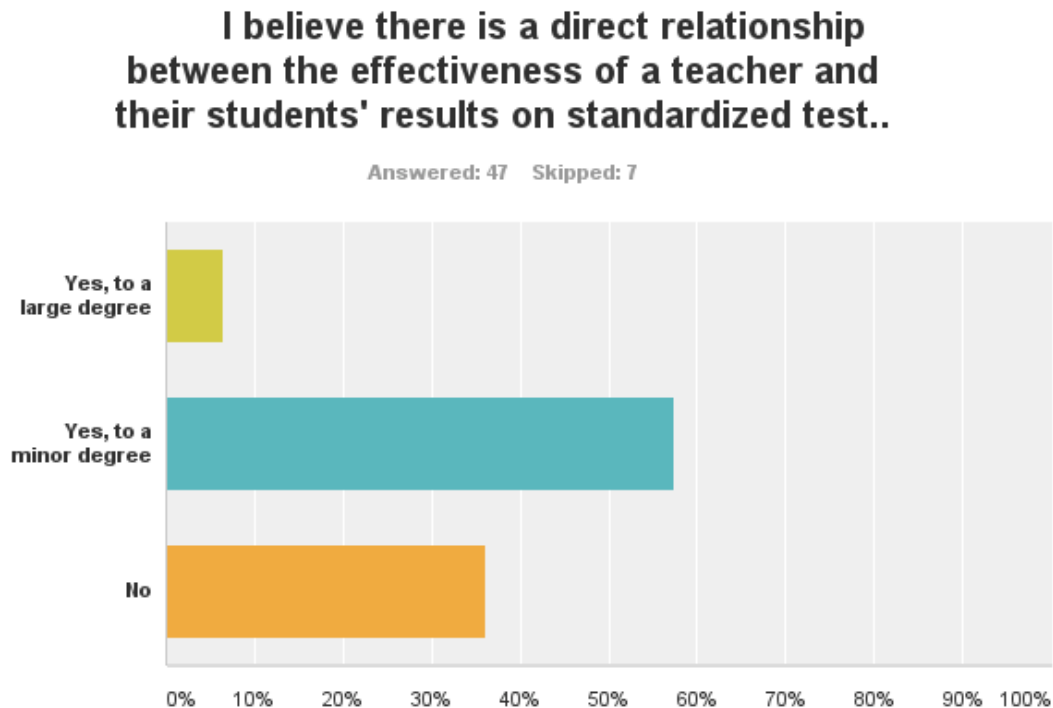


Figure 4.7. I Believe There Is a Direct Relationship Between the Effectiveness of a Teacher and Their Students' Results on There Standardized Tests.

The teachers were then asked if they felt that they would feel confident in their ability to teach students from groups of the population that have historically underperformed when compared with average white students. To their credit, 38.3% felt confident that they could teach these students; which include students of color, poor students, and special education students, but 44.68% said they would be hesitant to teach these students and 17.02% said that they would not want to teach those students if there was a possibility that their standardized test scores might negatively impact their evaluation or

compensation.

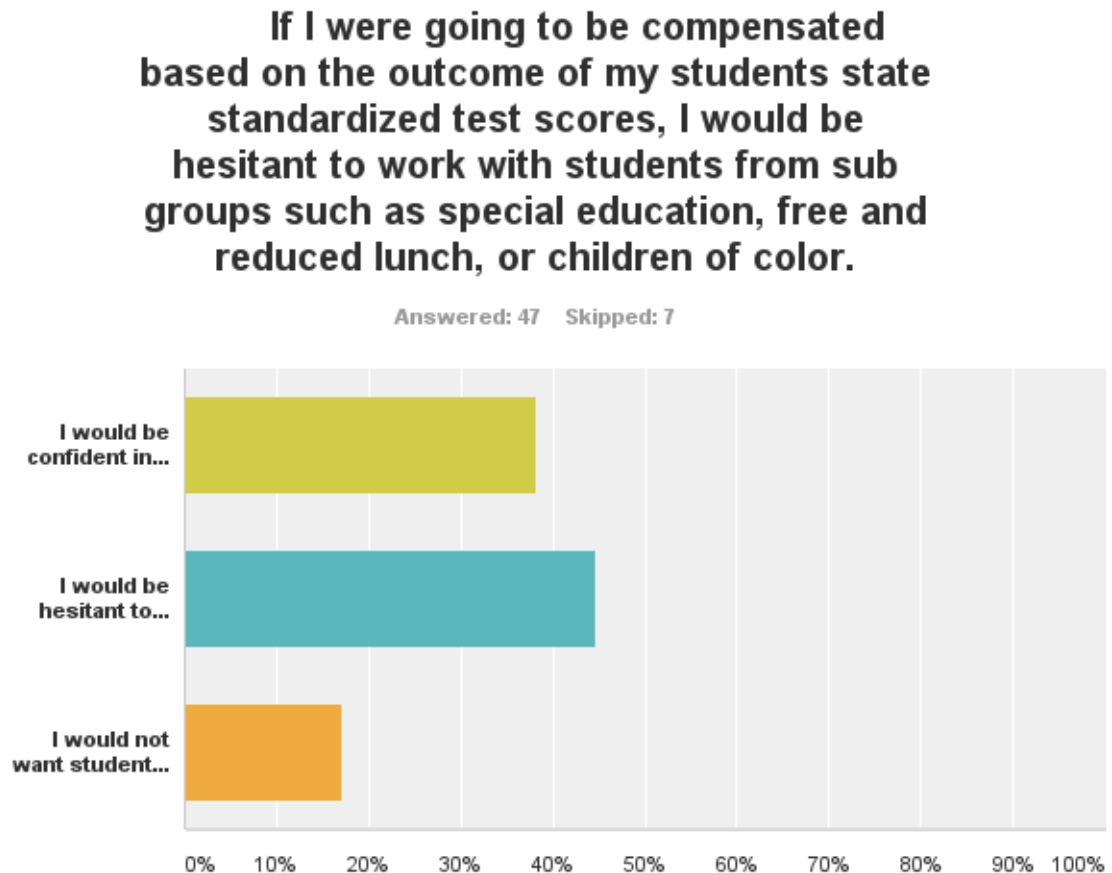


Figure 4.8. If I Were Going to be Compensated Based on the Outcomes of My Students' State Standardized Test Scores, I Would be Hesitant to Work With Students From Sub-Groups, Such As, Special Education, Free and Reduced Lunch, or Children of Color.

This commonly held fear that students of greater need may create a consequence of perception of teacher incompetence was illustrated by NEA members and described by union members as a negative impact of PBP systems (Weaver, 2003) in the documents.

The teachers were then asked if they believed that PBP systems would negatively impact collegiality between themselves and the other teachers with whom they would

compete. The teachers responded that 72.34% said yes, collegiality would suffer to a large degree, 21.28 percent said yes to a minor degree, and 6.38% said no, collegiality would not suffer.

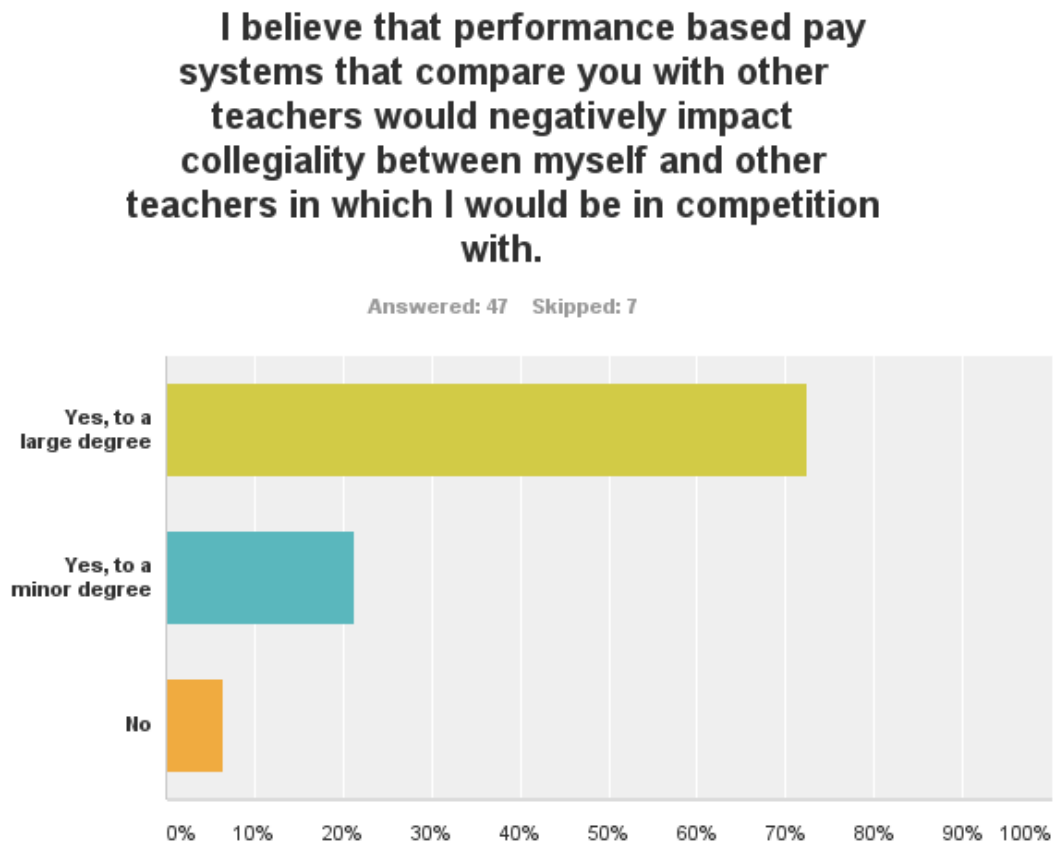


Figure 4.9. I Believe That Performance Based Pay Systems That Compare You With Other Teachers Would Negatively Impact Collegiality Between Myself and Other Teachers In Which I Would Be In Competition With.

Again, this matched the data collected from document sources that also reported that collegiality, the backbone of teacher growth and effectiveness, suffers under poorly constructed PBP systems (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2014).

Question seven asked the respondents if they believed whether there were few student-centered variables that could interfere with their ability to educate their students. The respondents specified that 4.26% believed that there were very few variables, 31.91% said yes to a minor degree, and 63.83% said that they believed that there were not just a few variables that could interfere with their ability to educate their students.

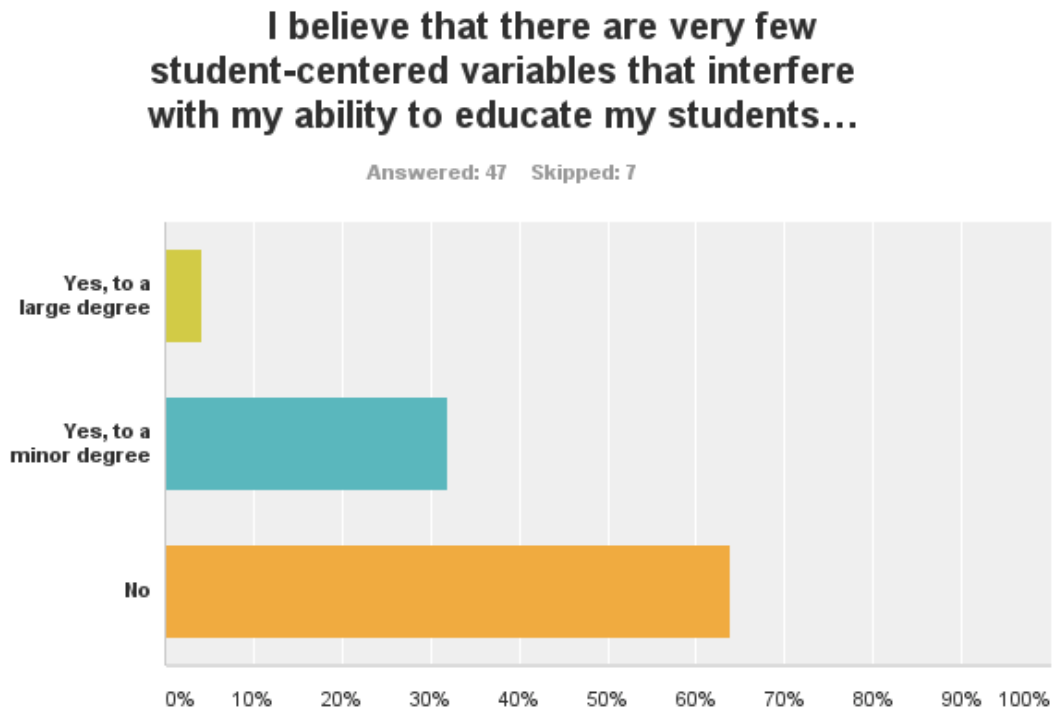


Figure 4.10. I Believe That There Are Very Few Student Centered Variables That Interfere With My Ability To Educate My Students.

This data corresponds with the literature in this area (Moulthrop et al., 2005; Odden & Kelley, 2001; Weaver, 2003). Odden & Kelly (2002) stated clearly that even in value added models which are statistically complex, there are technicalities in the design of the program that make it difficult for districts to adequately account for student mobility; a significant variable that can create havoc in interpreting growth effect of a

teacher. The following quote from an NEA document questions the validity of using growth models to determine the effectiveness of a teacher.

Fourth are issues of fairness that are associated with the technical characteristics of measuring and estimating the value-added by teachers. How accurate are the measures? Do they effectively account for the characteristics of students assigned to a teacher? Do they effectively take into account school conditions? What about unusual testing conditions? A common example is a “barking dog” outside the classroom distracting students during testing and resulting in lower test scores for which the teacher is held responsible. (Weaver, 2003 p.12)

Question eight asked if they felt that standardized tests should be a part of their annual evaluation. The responses revealed that 6.38% said yes, 23.4% were neutral, and 70.21% said that they did not believe that their evaluation should include standardized test scores. Again, this is a commonly shared and reported finding in the document analysis due to the large and unwieldy disregard for variables that are inherent in children, homes, schools, and teachers (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2014; Ballou & Podgursky, 1993). For instance, “many teachers are outraged at the idea of merit pay based on standardized testing scores” (Anonymous, 2014, para. 3).

When asked if the teacher believed that they should be compensated based on the results of their students’ scores on standardized tests, the scores shifted negatively. The results showed that only 2.13% agreed with scores being used for compensation, 17.02% were neutral, and 80.85% reported that they disagreed with the belief that standardized test scores should be used to determine compensation.

I believe that I should be compensated based on my students' performance on standardized tests..

Answered: 47 Skipped: 7

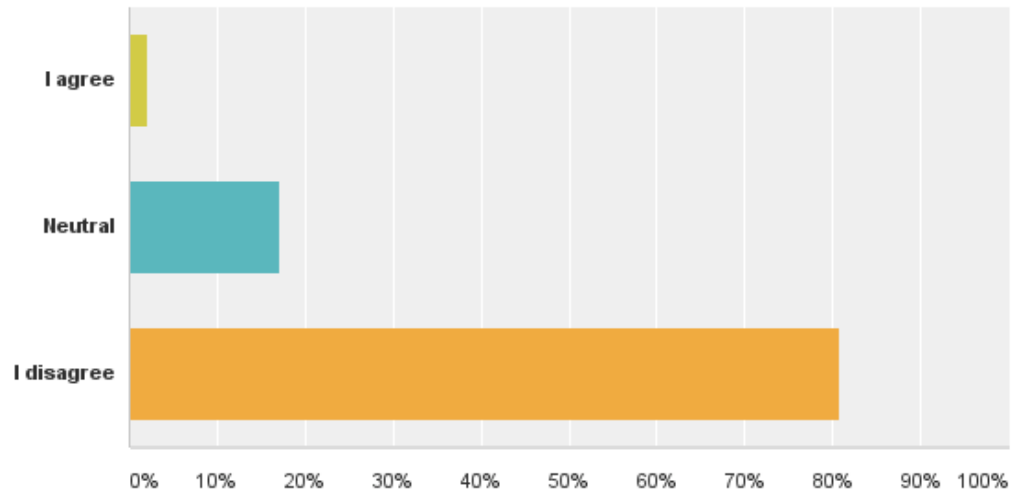


Figure 4.11. I Believe That I Should Be Compensated Based On My Students' Performance on Standardized Tests.

When asked if they believed that competition, should play a role in the evaluation system of educators, only 21.28 percent said yes, but only to a minor degree. The remaining 78.72% said that competition should not play a role.

I believe that competition, the driving force in a capitalistic society, should play a role in the evaluation system of educators.

Answered: 47 Skipped: 7

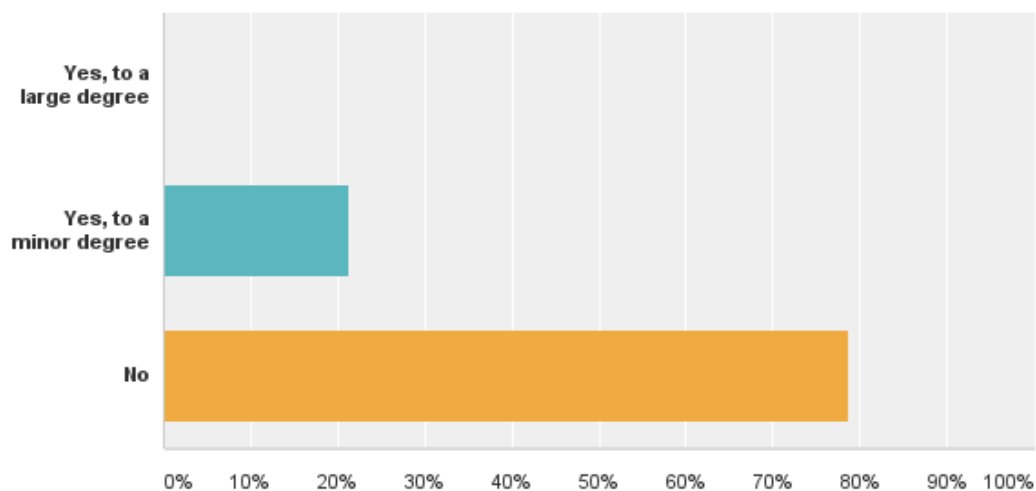


Figure 4.12. I Believe That Competition, The Driving Force in a Capitalistic Society, Should Play a Role In the Evaluation System of Educators.

The teachers were then asked if they believed that they would work harder if their compensation were directly tied to the outcome of their students on standardized test scores. Again, overwhelmingly, 80.85% said no, they would not work harder, 17.02% said yes to a minor degree and only 2.13% said yes to a large degree.

I believe that I would work harder if my compensation were directly tied to the outcome of my students on a performance base pay system.

Answered: 47 Skipped: 7

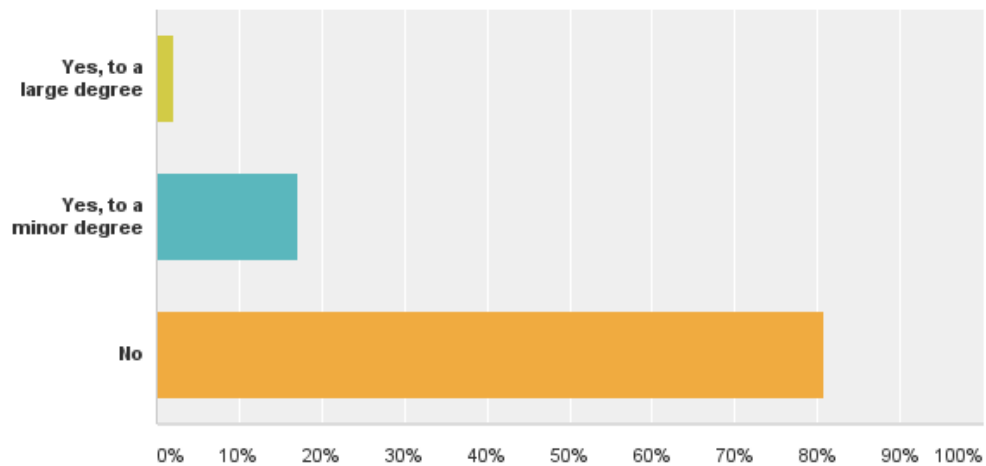


Figure 4.13. I Believe That I Would Work Harder If My Compensation Were Directly Tied to the Outcome of My Students On A PBP System.

In contrast, when asked if they believed that other teachers around them would work harder, only 55.32% reported no, 40.43% said yes to a minor degree, and 4.26% said yes to a large degree.

I believe that the other teachers around me would work harder if they knew their compensation was directly tied to performance based pay systems.

Answered: 47 Skipped: 7

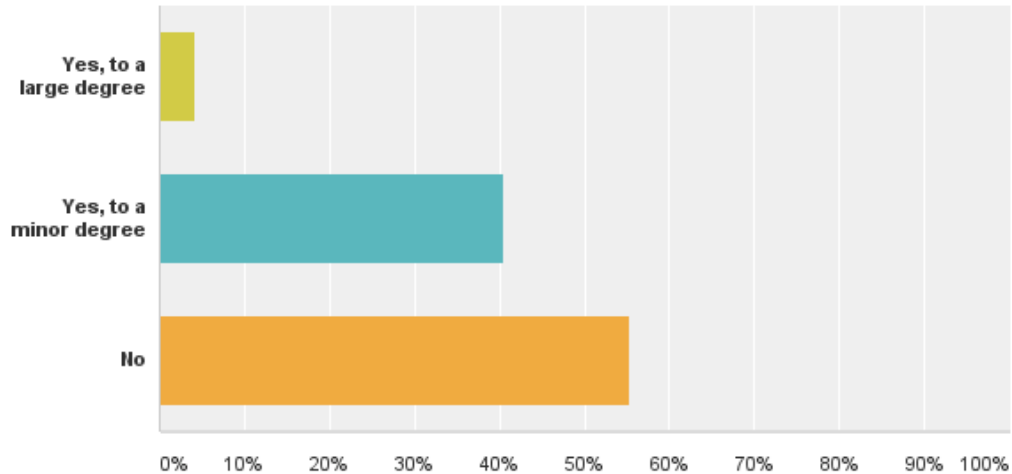


Figure 4.14. I Believe That the Other Teachers Around Me Would Work Harder If they Knew That Their Compensation Was Directly Tied To PBP Systems

When asked if they believed that performance-based pay systems could be used to reward teachers better for their efforts than the current system, still only 2.13% said yes to a large degree, 21.28 said yes but to a minor degree, and 76.6% said no.

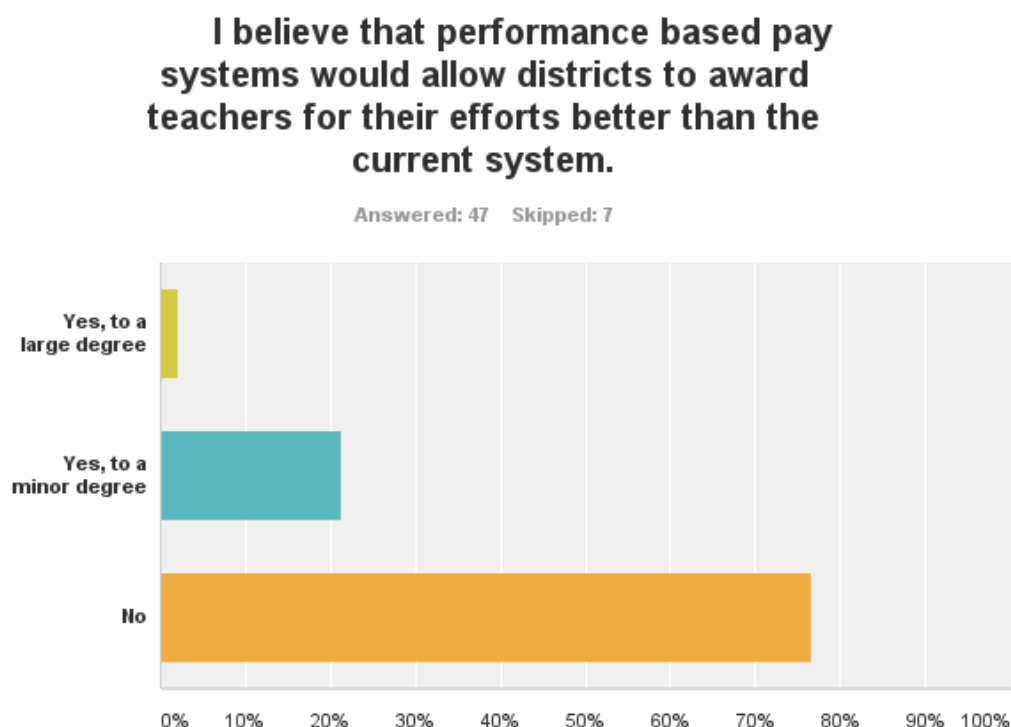


Figure 4.15. I Believe That PBP Systems Would Allow Districts to Award Teachers For Their Efforts Better Than The Current System.

This finding was supported in the research (Kelley, 1999); members of a Kentucky pay plan system reported that although the money was desirable, it rarely contributed to improvement in scores. A theory concerning this outcome is based on the assumption that teachers are not working hard enough, when there is little evidence to support that teachers have commonly held beliefs about compensation (Wrobbel, 2009).

To a much larger degree, the teachers were asked if they believed that PBP systems used elsewhere would help remedy the nations lagging international test comparisons. The teachers responded that only 2.13% said yes to a large degree, 17.02% to a minor degree, and 80.85% said no, PBP systems would not help remedy the nations lagging international test scores.

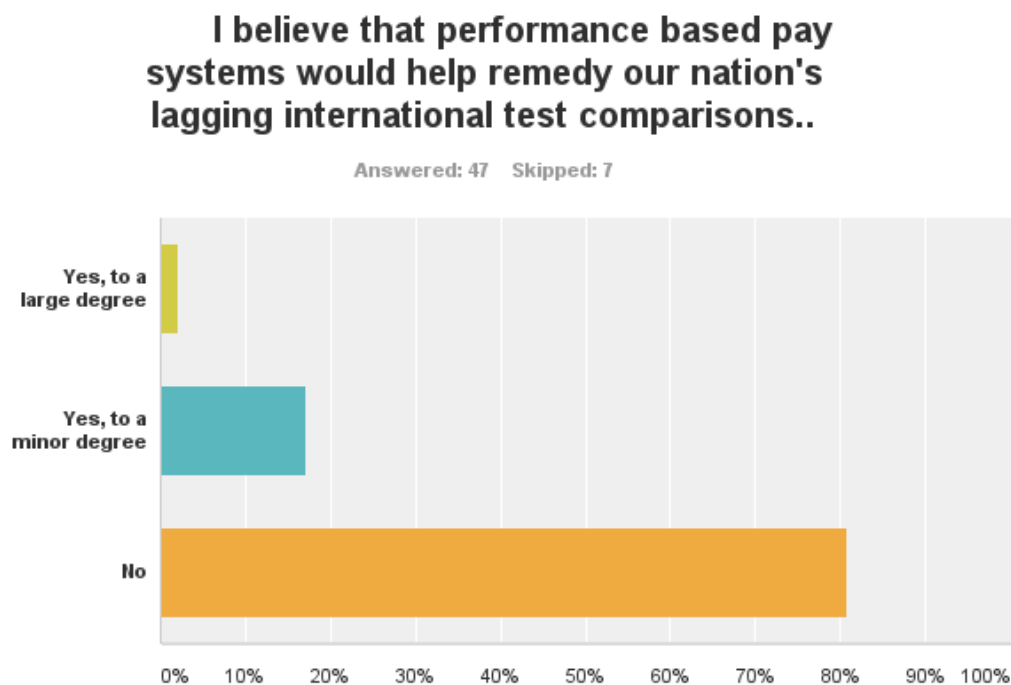


Figure 4.16. I Believe That Performance Based Pay Systems Would Help Remedy Our Nation’s Lagging International Test Comparisons.

The teachers were then asked if they believed that PBP systems would attract more teachers to the teaching profession. Overwhelmingly, 91.49% of the teachers said no, that teaching was a calling and PBP systems would not attract more teachers. The remaining 8.51% said they believed the PBP systems would attract more teachers. Again this viewpoint of teacher motivation is supported by the literature that describes teachers as unique in perspectives that are different from those held by the general public or building administrators (Allan & Williams, 2003; Bazinet, 2013; Wrobbel, 2009).

Awarding monies to teachers willing to teach hard to staff positions, a common use of PBP money, was the subject of the next question. The teachers were asked if they believed that teachers should be compensated based on the subjects that they teach. The

results indicated that 61.7% said no, 17.02% were neutral, and 21.28% said yes. The Denver school district has experienced some success with this aspect of PBP systems (Jupp, 2005) in that researchers found that teachers are willing to take on difficult teaching assignments in locations where poverty, overcrowding, and the issues that have developed over time from these conditions created a challenged set of students who were not showing adequate growth over time. These assignments are difficult, providing challenges that are extremely difficult to overcome. Simply acknowledging the willingness to take on the challenge, hold harmless has been a motivating factor for teachers (Jupp, 2005).

The teachers were then asked whether or not they believed that teaching positions exist that are inherently easier or harder to teach based on whether or not the teacher's students participate in state standardized testing. The results were that 31.91% said yes to a large degree, 44.68% said yes to a minor degree, and 23.4% said no. Again, hard to staff positions tend to also rely on state testing to evaluate growth, so there is a definite connection between what teachers indicate as hard to staff positions.

I believe that there are teaching positions that are inherently easier or harder to teach based on whether or not the teacher's students participate in state standardized testing..

Answered: 47 Skipped: 7

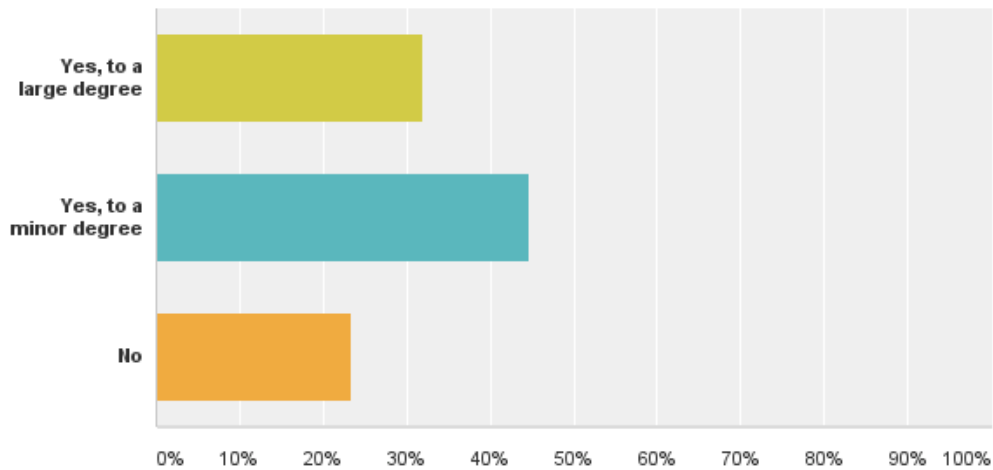


Figure 4.17. I Believe That There Are Teaching Positions That Are Inherently Easier Or Harder to Teach Based on Whether or Not Their Teacher's Students Participate in State Standardized Testing.

Given these beliefs, the teachers were then asked if they believe that they would participate in a PBP system if they had the opportunity. Only 2.13% said yes, but 42.55% said they might. The remaining 55.32% reported that they would not participate.

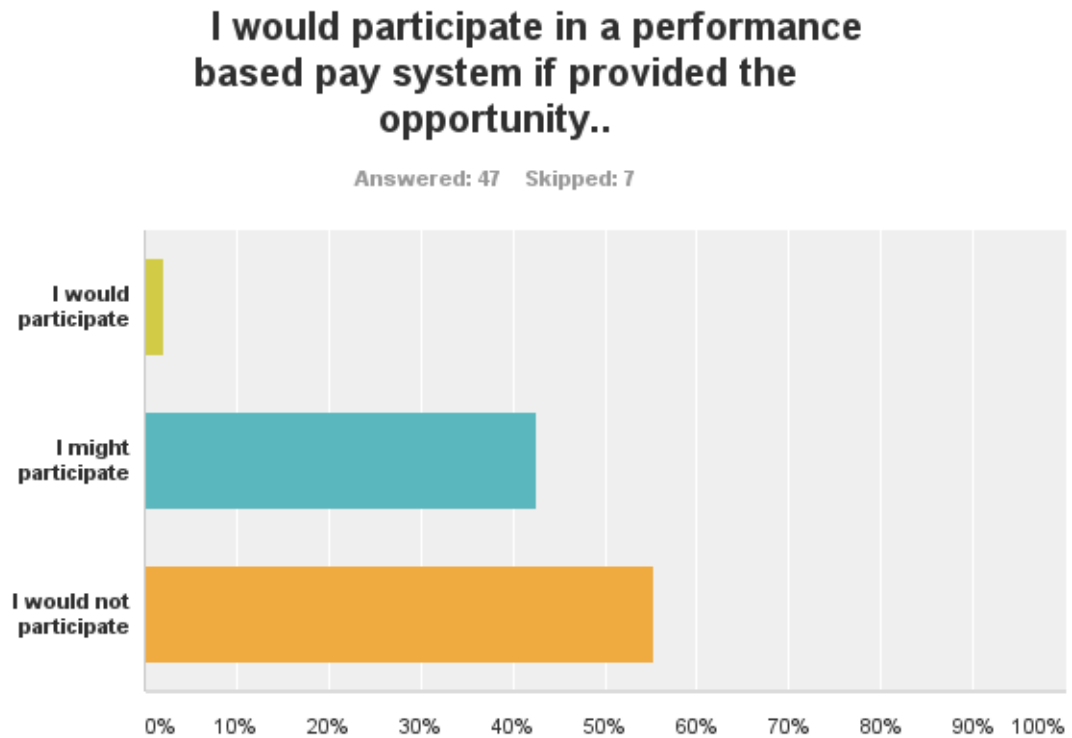


Figure 4.18. I Would Participate In a PBP System If Provided The Opportunity.

When asked if the teacher would be hesitant to participate in a PBP system unless the teachers were equally evaluated for their students' performance, 76.6% reported that they would be hesitant, 17.02% said they were neutral, and only 6.38% said that they would not be hesitant to participate.

I would be hesitant to participate in a performance based pay system unless all teachers were equally evaluated for their students' performance.

Answered: 47 Skipped: 7

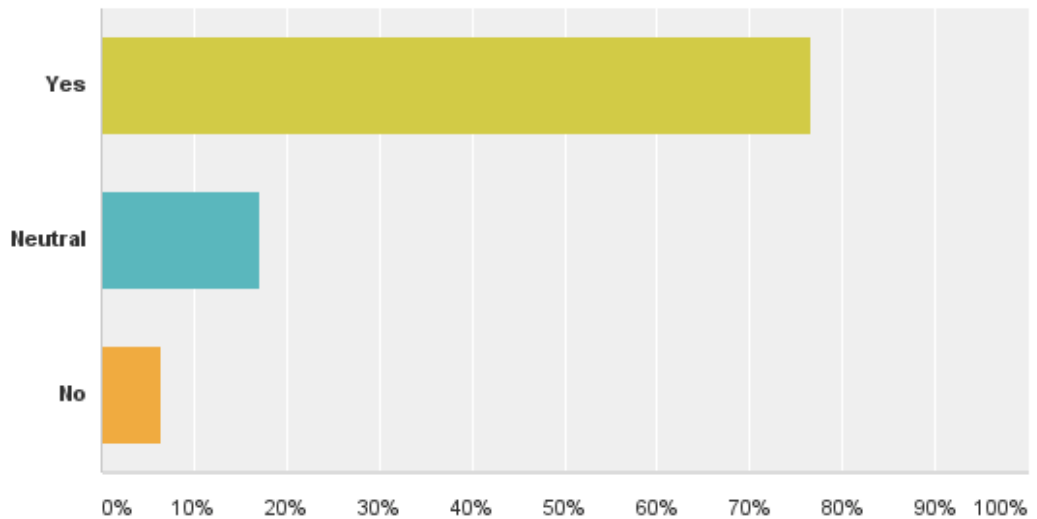


Figure 4.19. I Would Be Hesitant to Participate In a PBP System Unless All the Teachers Were Equally Evaluated For Their Students' Performance.

These fears and unwillingness to participate are aligned with commonly held perspectives and attitudes (Koppich, 2005; Mintrop, 2004). The perspectives describe a lack of reliability in the accuracy of state test scores and imply that attention to curriculum design and the use of research based strategies have a much larger impact systemically than teacher specific affect values (Mintrop, 2004). These realities of educational performance are well known by teachers, either from experience or research, and create anxiety when discussing the use of false indicators of teacher competence as a evaluative tool (Koppich, 2005). “Some teachers and unions are still fearful about Merit Pay especially how it will effect student achievement, does it fairly judge which teachers

are effective and will teachers be more willing to stay in the profession” (Koppich, 2005, para. 1).

The final question from this section asked teachers if they would remain in their current positions if forced to participate in a PBP system. Only 27.66% said that they would; whereas, 55.32% said they might stay, but 17.02% said they would not stay in their current position if they were forced to participate in a PBP system.

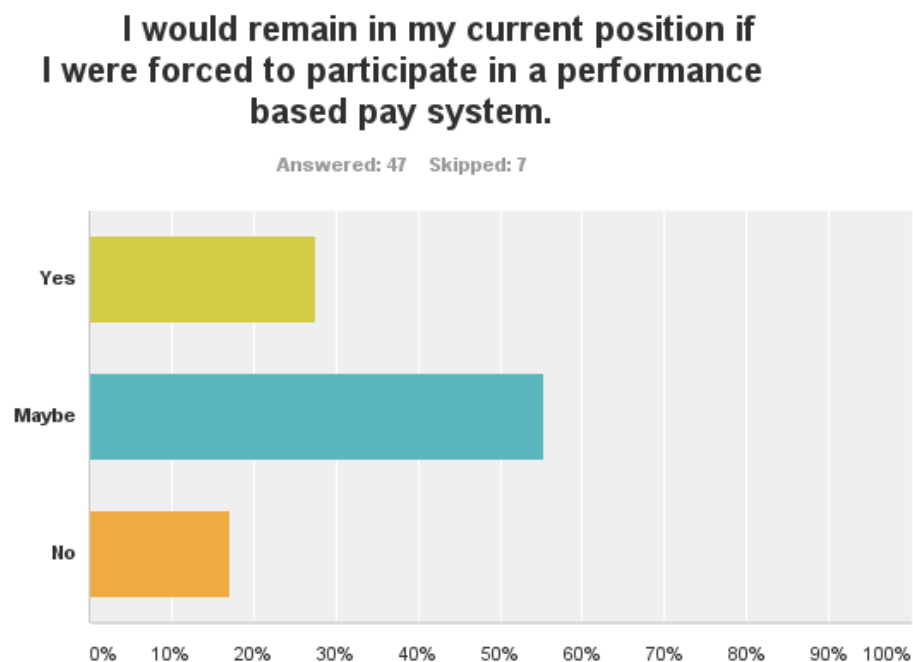


Figure 4.20. I Would Remain In My Current Position If I Were Forced To Participate in a PBP System.

This response also corresponds with current research that indicates that teachers would either consider, or definitely leave the teaching profession in the face of participating in an evaluative and compensation system such as currently purposed PBP programs (Loveless, 2000; Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005).

Conclusion

The picture presented by the analysis of the closed-ended questions revealed preliminary facets of beliefs about the relationships of standardized testing and compensation and teachers' fears and concerns about PBP systems. A significant number of teachers deemed that student data can be used to describe some degree of student growth. A little over half, 57.5% specified a direct relationship between the results of student test data and teacher effectiveness. But that confidence began to wane when the topic of students of color, students of poverty, and those with special needs are concerned. Only 38.3% of teachers felt comfortable about being evaluated with these children's test scores included in the data. Conversely, 63.8% of teachers felt that there were student-centered variables inherently out of their control that impact student test data.

When compensation is added to the discussion, percentages begin to polarize. Based on concerns about student variables and conditions, 81.8% of teachers said that pay should not be tied to student outcomes. When asked if they would work harder for performance-based pay (PBP), again 81% said that they would not. Coincidentally, about half said that other teachers might be able to work harder. The majority, 80.85% of the teachers, said that PBP systems would not help districts compete internationally.

Most of the teachers felt that competition for monies inherent in some PBP systems should not play a part in the education of a child and that PBP would not be able to better reward teachers than the current system. Seventy-six percent of teachers believed there were teaching positions that were inherently easier to teach, and the same

percentage said they would be hesitant to participate in a PBP system due to differences in teaching assignments.

Finally, only 2% of teachers responded that they would be willing to try a PBP system without reservation, and 55% said they would not participate. Only 27% of teachers said they would definitely choose to remain in education if forced to participate in a PBP compensation system.

As mentioned above, teachers believe there is a place for student data, but fear to a large degree the inherent unfair issues that are likely to arise when the nature of performance related issues are brought to the surface. These issues are explored in more detail with the open-ended questions and case studies that follow this section.

Section 4: Open-ended Questions

The final section of the survey allowed teachers to respond to six open ended questions as a method for illuminating in more detail the feelings and experiences that teachers have concerning PBP programs and philosophy. The data, which reflected anonymous responses from the survey, were analyzed in the same manner as the documents and the interviews. Interpretive codes were identified, clustered by common descriptive codes, and then further grouped by themes (Patton, 2002).

Teachers were asked to describe their state's current policy towards evaluating teachers based on standardized test scores. This question was asked in order to develop an understanding of the teacher's knowledge about the evaluative measures used to determine their effectiveness. The results indicated that there were two definable themes, *Knowledge and Ignorance*.

Knowledge as a theme was created from interpretive codes that indicated a confident knowledge of current policy. The codes that were most prevalent in this theme were that of *district decision* and *working towards*. *District decision* was created from statements that reflected that the teachers felt that the district had the option to decide. Respondent 3 states: “*We look at data continuously to drive our instruction. Beginning with the 2014-15 school year the new evaluation system for teachers will involve student growth data.*”

Working towards was the second interpretive code used to indicate a knowledge base for understanding current policies at the state and local level. Statements that informed this interpretation reflected those made by Respondent 12, “*I believe the state is poised to evaluate teachers based on test scores and is waiting for the political go ahead to do so.*”

Ignorance, as a theme, was created using interpretive codes that illustrated different perspectives of not knowing. The interpretive code, *unknown*, was taken from comments that reflected a complete lack of information about current policies. Statements that informed this interpretive code reflected comments from Respondent 11 who stated simply “*I don’t know*”, or Respondent 8, “*Not sure.*”

The interpretive code *unsure* was developed from statements that indicate a feeling or stance of not understanding the current policies related to evaluation. Respondent 1 stated, “*I am not sure how it works. I don’t know whether we are evaluated on it or not.*” Respondent 10 who appeared to think both there is a system in use and that there is not: “*So far, the state’s current teacher evaluation policy is good because it does*

NOT include students' standardized test scores in evaluation; rather, it is a growth model evaluation tool."

Teachers were asked to describe in detail their experiences or feelings concerning PBP systems and about being evaluated based on the student performance on state level standardized testing. The results indicated qualitatively that there were two themes derived from the responses: *Knowledge and Design* and *Fear and Loss*. *Knowledge and Design* were based on interpretive codes that described what teachers know or believe to be true about performance-based pay, their experiences with design and work within evaluative practices related to performance-based pay, their concerns for student accountability, and their hopes that a newer system may lead to a cleansing of education and success for all students. These phenomena formed the interpretive codes of *questioning, positive experience, student accountability, anticipation of future success, and negative opinions about performance-based pay*.

The interpretive code, *questioning*, was derived from statements that teachers had depicting a sense of curiosity and a wondering about performance-based pay. This phenomenon was reflected in such responses as, "*I think it is an interesting idea that might have merit*" (Respondent 23) and "*I have mixed feelings.... Need more knowledge on the topic*" (Respondent 25).

The interpretive code *positive experience* was derived from responses that supported earlier experiences with PBP evaluative measures, even though the pay was not yet aligned. "*I believe in using test data as a means for improvement of my performance. I learn new things every year as a direct result of trying to increase test scores*" (Respondent 15). "*I am thinking it would be based on growth, so I am not*

concerned with that as a teacher. My kids show good growth every year” (Respondent 8). Since Pandora uses the growth model, I haven’t had negative feelings about being held accountable for my students’ performance. “If I’m doing my job and working hard, my students will make growth” (Respondent 12).

Student Accountability as an interpretive code was clustered around comments that called for distinct measures to account for student effort.

I can teach my students content and curriculum, however I can't make them care or do their best on test. To base an evaluation of how a student feels or the amount of effort they are putting forth does not do a fair evaluation of the teacher’s abilities... I can align with performance based pay or incentives of this type of pay system when and only when students are also held accountable for their learning. I have seen some schools require students to attend an hour after school if not performing at proficiency. Additionally, students were held back if they could not meet mastery: real accountability for understanding/ proficiency (Respondent 8).

The interpretive code, *positive future*, was created from responses that indicated a willingness to try and a confidence in teachers’ abilities. *“I feel confident in my ability to help students grow as learners. I would be in favor of a growth model of evaluation since not all students enter the classroom at the same level but all students can learn” (Respondent 24).*

Negative opinions were voiced about performance-based pay plans as they now exist. This interpretive code detailed those feelings. *“I think that performance-based pay systems would cause teachers to avoid classrooms containing sub groups and hurt relationships among teachers working together” (Respondent 10). “I believe that performance-based pay would interfere with collaboration, sharing, and teamwork. It would create an “each man for himself” work environment” (Respondent 3). “I believe it will destroy a building’s climate” (Respondent 9).*

The theme, *Fear and Loss*, was derived from interpretive codes that dealt with teachers' concerns about unfairness, competition, and variables outside of their control. *Fear and loss* represented 75% of the codes and statements derived from the answers to the open-ended survey questions.

The theme consisted of interpretive codes of *goal mismatch*, *systemic unfairness*, *competition vs. collegiality*, *variables outside of control*, *evaluative unfairness*, and *anxiety of failure and of the unknown*.

The first interpretive code and by far the largest representing 22% of all responses was that of *variables outside of control*. “*I feel that performance-based systems are not fair at all. We are manufacturing a product. We are working with human beings. There are too many variables to make performance-based pay fair to all teachers*” (Respondent 3). “*I believe there are too many variables within students lives outside of school to base teachers pay on their performance on one test each year*” (Respondent 7).

Performance-Based Pay IS NOT a valuable or reliable form of assessment. Come watch me balance and coach students that haven't had breakfast, didn't get any sleep the night before, and only hear fighting at home. THAT should be what performance-based-pay should be on. I hate the idea, completely (Respondent 9).

The next interpretive code, *systemic unfairness*, was derived from concerns about the system being inherently unfair and structures within a school district that make evaluating a teacher with the use of test scores invalid for some if not all of the teachers.

As an (resource) teacher in grades K-5, I am concerned about judging my effectiveness as an educator by how my students perform on standardized tests. All of my students do not perform at grade level on tests, or they would not be serviced by me. Once they do perform at grade level, they are released and I no longer see them. So if I am being evaluated by their performance on the tests, it will always seems that my students are not learning if test scores alone are used (Respondent 18).

Another teacher responded with concerns about unfairness and teachers leaving

the profession:

Implementing a performance-based pay system will, unfortunately, cause many great teachers to leave the profession. Teachers, especially elementary teachers, work very hard to educate our students on a daily basis. There are many factors that go into the education of a student, many of which teachers are unable to control. Compensating a teacher based on how well her students perform on a standardized test is unfair. There are schools in our district that are comprised of wealthy, educated families, and others that are not. How can we compare apples to oranges? (Respondent 24)

Related very closely to *systemic unfairness* is the concept of *evaluative unfairness*; centered on the fear that due to the lack of perceived reliability and validity of state tests, teachers would be held accountable for scores or placed in positions that were inherently unfair to evaluate.

I generally have more special education students in my class because I am able to meet their needs. How is that fair to me if I am paid based on their test scores if they are not proficient? I am not the only teacher working with them, but am penalized for their scores while other teachers that do not have special education students are not affected (Respondent 2).

The next interpretive code was designated *competition vs. collegiality* and deals directly with teachers' fears that PBP plans would reduce collegiality and increase unhealthy competition between teachers. *"I am against performance-based pay, I feel it will only divide grade level teachers because no one will share their ideas"* (Respondent 21). *"I think-performance-based pay forces teachers to "teach to the test" instead of teaching standards. I think bringing in competition would create a hostile work environment. Many people would steer away from becoming a teacher"* (Respondent 22). *"I think competition between teachers is not good for students. Teachers work better when there's trust and when they work together, thus benefiting students. When teachers are trying to out-perform their coworkers, they will be less likely to work together"* (Respondent 11).

The interpretive code, *goal mismatch*, was created out of responses that indicated teachers were concerned about public education and they would begin to attend to only elements of the classroom experience that would garner test results in lieu of important yet untested aspects of public education. *“I work very hard and I would be very upset that my pay was based off test growth. There are so many other things in a primary classroom that are so much more important than a test score!”* (Respondent 6) *“Performance-base pay systems do not support authenticity in the classroom. It would encourage/force teachers to teach to the test. Additionally, education would lose many effective teachers who disagree with the system”* (Respondent 16).

The final interpretive code for this section was that of *anticipation of the unknown* and fear of PBP systems in general. This interpretation was derived from responses that illustrated an anxiety about the future as it relates to systematic changes to student assessment, teacher evaluation, and future compensation.

I feel worried and concerned about being evaluated based on standardized tests. Why am I the only person being held accountable for student scores? What about parents? A lot of issues students face come from the home and teachers can't be the only individuals held accountable. (Respondent 2)

I feel that performance-based pay systems will be unfair for teachers because every class is different. Teachers will be less likely to want sub-groups in their rooms. Standardized tests do not measure or celebrate the growth of students, such as ELL students. I generally have more special education students in my class because I am able to meet their needs. How is that fair to me if I am paid based on their test scores if they are not proficient? I am not the only teacher working with them, but am penalized for their scores while other teachers that do not have special education students are not affected. (Respondent 3)

Conclusion

There were four major themes derived from the open-ended questions; *Knowledge, Ignorance, Knowledge and Design*, and *Fear and Loss*. Knowledge as a theme illustrated thoughts and experiences that indicated that teachers had a knowledge

base of performance-based pay and a general idea about how performance-based pay worked in connection to test scores. These perceptions are supported by the research and throughout the document analysis as teachers are generally well- informed about what they indicated was a grave concern.

Ignorance as a theme was derived around the elements of performance-based pay such as current state or federal policy. Teachers either admitted that they were uninformed of current policy, or were incorrect about current policy at the time. Carter (2002) discussed the issues related to creating a universal understanding of performance-based pay system, noting that lack of understanding may inhibit proper induction of such a program.

Knowledge and design was based around perceptions that the teachers had concerning their own knowledge of the design of PBP systems, how they worked, and what their strengths and weaknesses were. Jupp (2005) discussed the challenges of communicating with a population the realities of PBP as a system of pay. He indicated that work within a school district is needed with union representatives to design an effective plan, and then communicate that plan to the teachers. Teachers of Pandora, have not had that communication concerning PBP plans, so they rely on information garnered from the internet that is extensive and varies widely as discussed in the review of literature and document analysis.

Fear and loss constructed meanings related to feelings of anticipation stemming from what teachers interpreted as negative consequences of performance-based pay programs. Teachers feared that they would lose control over teaching and be held responsible for results outside of their control. The end result of these losses was

perceived as a loss in collegiality as teachers retract from a cooperative professional stance to protect themselves in a competitive environment. These perceptions were reflected in the research of Hanushek & Rivkin, (2003). They pointed out that teachers would silently withdraw from collegial practice in order to protect themselves from reducing their perceived effect status while distributing advantageous strategies across the spectrum of competing teachers.

Analysis of Interviews

There were five interviews conducted as data for this single case study. These five individuals represented the group of teachers at Pandora School District in that they were all White women, which paralleled the survey participation of 96% White female. Three of the teachers had between one and six years of experience and the remaining had between 20 and 25 years of experience. One of the participants indicated that she had worked with a district previously that was in the process of instituting a PBP system, but that she had not been in that district long enough to experience the system. She was there for the preliminary design and beginning implementation, but did not stay in the district long enough to participate. The remaining four interviewees have no experience with performance-based pay systems, and together are experiencing the move of the state and the district towards performance-based evaluations, which has been a precursor to the eventual step to performance base pay plans. There is currently in their state law support for the use of PBP monies and a push to eliminate teacher tenure; again, both are precursors to the initializing of PBP plans statewide. I began the interviews with conversations that would put teachers at ease through inquiring about basic demographics and their sources for PBP information. All reported that the internet was the major source

for maintaining current knowledge about state and national policies as well the environment for PBP plans. I report on findings from the interviews using pseudonyms in place of participants' names.

Interview 1: Sally

Sally is a White middle-aged fifth grade core teacher with between six and ten years of experience in her current position. She had completed graduate education in one or more degrees and was not involved with the decision making process at Pandora School District (PSD). Sally had a lot to say about PBP as illuminated in her interview.

Sally's interview revealed a deep concern for the issues of motivation and accountability that have led to a feeling of mismatch between purpose and results of performance-based systems. These feelings related to goal distortion that stemmed from concepts of unaccountable variables among students, a lack of control of those variables, and relationship variables as directed toward student, parent, teacher and administrator accountability. The desire for more accountability, politically speaking, has created the drive needed to put in place performance related systems of compensation that Sally described as poorly created and inherently unfair, the result of which would over time result in the loss of teacher collegiality and ultimately the loss of teachers in the profession.

Three themes were identified within Sally's interview data; *Uncontrollable Factors, Issues with Systemic Change, and Fear and Loss*. *Uncontrollable factors* was a theme derived from the interpretive codes, *variables, student motivation, and accountability*. These interpretive codes describe a perception of PBP systems shared by many teachers in this study, as indicated by the mixed survey results that revealed

teachers' lack of control over aspects of PBP. *Systemic Mismatch* was a theme constructed from interpretive codes of *systemization* and *evaluation*. These interpretive codes illustrate a concern that the results of standardized testing do not adequately define the teacher's role as an educator and when applied to PBP plans, reward a very narrow aspect of the teacher's efforts. Teachers feel that this narrow window of success will have a negative impact on the results of their own evaluations as a teacher. *Fear and Loss* was a theme derived from interpretive codes of loss, and loss of collegiality. This theme is developed based on fears of the future as it relates to changes to the educational system; most importantly, in the way that teachers interact together, work as a group, and remain in the profession.

Uncontrollable factors was created using the first interpretive code, *variable*. The interpretive code *variable* was formed using descriptive statements that described a feeling of loss of control over students or systemic variables that are considered inherent among students. Sally said:

I am greatly opposed because there are the variables that we are being evaluated on that we have no control over. We have no control over the SES levels. But we also have no control over whether or not their home environment is healthy. Great dysfunction, we all know, we've studied it. They can't come to school and be ready to learn. There are many families that come from poverty and no always just isn't that, but they have, they do not have the rich language, the rich reading and the rich conversations at home. And with the income, social, economic status differences, exposure to culture, where they would get hands on experience is missing.

Sally's concern about the factors of success concerning students in poverty, students with disabilities and students of color are reflected in the literature. Pigott and Cowen (2000) stated that some teachers perceive children of color, particularly black and or poor children as having less innate ability to perform in the school setting. This

concern as it relates to socially constructed perceptions of race can result in behaviors where teachers as a population begin competing for what might be considered *better* students and ultimately create a segregated system of education. As a teacher in the district, I have experienced instances where teams of students are compared informally in teacher or administrator conversations; excuses for failure are attributed to the numbers or existence of students of color, those with disabilities, students of poverty.

Sally went on to describe variables as:

Statistically, the statistics show that we cannot overcome, [but] you do overcome those once in a great while. It's smaller percent where you overcome those inadequacies and you are successful with those students on a large scale. That just, that data has not been there, that we take those students that are in that gap... There are far too many of us doing fabulous jobs but we can't overcome all those obstacles, all those hurts and all that dysfunction and inadequacies as they come at us.

Auwarter & Aruguete (2008) conducted an experiment where hypothetical students were created based on male and female and socio-economic status (SES), high and low for each. The results indicated that teachers were likely to develop negative perceptions of potential concerning students of low SES status. Similar findings were supported with Sally's concern about certain groups of students and the perceived challenges associated with their lives, reinforcing negative perceptions and belief systems.

Student motivation was an interpretive code described by statements that communicated various attributes of students and teachers that are likely to create issues of fairness within a PBP system.

I would like to think that all learners have a passion for a certain amount of education, but I'm not naïve. I have done the job long enough to know that's not always true for everybody. It's always for different reasons, but it's, you know, we have lots of different students cross our path. Some of them have gone through

horrific abuse and already terrible home lives. That's not on the top of their list and we know that by reading the information. We understand that in child development that's horrific, and that's not the first thing on their minds when they come in. That's going to affect their performance, but yet we're gonna be evaluated on that. I know enough about math that you will have four or five of those in your room. They're going to significantly taint their scores. So you're going to pay me on that? Sorry, I didn't want them to have that horrific life.

Variables outside of the control of the teacher, more importantly, the issues regarding student accountability and the consequences related to student failure support Sally's viewpoints. Quigney (2010) discusses the effects that blanket policy and resulting tests have on children of disabilities, namely that there are aspects of each child that create variables that make evaluating for growth tenuous at best. These issues with the student as an independent variable within the context of educational experiences that lies outside of teacher control, were described as:

I do not think it would be helpful to them [students] until you hold them accountable too. I see it, it's a cliché, but I see it this way. You can lead a calf to water, but you cannot force them to drink. So the only person you're forcing to do something is the educator who does not have control of the person that you're generally trying to educate.

Descriptive codes related to variables and motivation as function of uncontrollable factors, culminate with the final interpretive code of *accountability*, based on statements related to the balance and reality of student, parent and teacher relationships.

Right now there's really nothing that holds them accountable. Only the teachers are held accountable. There's no, there's a law that says you need to, your kid has to show up to school so many days out of the year and if not a note goes home. You cannot really force those people to bring their children to school. So we do the best we can, we call and we try to do those incentives, right, to bring them in. Um, but there are, maybe there's a difference between secondary and elementary. Um, but when they're not performing you make those phone calls, you build relationships with all students whether they're the poor performers or not. But I don't see that there's anything really that you can hold students and families to as we have it right now.

Sally's use of words like "*those people*" indicates the possibility of difference that create negative assumptions of potential. Again, Sally responds in a manner that indicates the existence of preconceived notions that create a system of reinforced expectations of failure (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008).

Sally spoke more on student accountability:

And I'm not opposed to the benchmarks, but you can't just hold the teachers accountable for that. There's got to be accountability for the other end. And I don't, and I just don't, you know not every kid's in the right place to just grow and get there. Maybe this isn't their year to grow. I probably had those years myself as a child growing up through the years. I (would have) hated for that teacher to have been paid or docked because it wasn't my year to grow.

Research in Tennessee indicates that performance-based pay systems have no effect on raising student test scores. There is some validity in Sally's concern that the child may not respond in a time frame convenient for teacher evaluation (Gallagher, 2004; Milanowski, 2004; Springer et. al, 2010).

Issues with Systemic Change as a theme was developed around interpretive codes about systemization, and evaluation. These statements were diverse in nature and dealt with issues of planning, change, balance, unfairness, and false motivational assumptions about teachers. Concerns centered on changes that will likely occur due to competitiveness in the face of performance related pay programs.

Sally described her understanding of what she felt was an unstable system of compensation based around perceived issues of inadequacy about teachers when she felt that the inadequacies lay elsewhere. These issues have been voiced as concerns for educational reform as discussed by Troman, Jefferey & Raggle, (2007) who report that in schools where student performance is the driving force, creativity of students is not

valued as much as productivity. This creates a goal distortion that inevitably leads to a loss of student achievement (Troman, Jefferey & Raggie, 2007).

I think it comes from politicians that don't have a clue as to what it takes to educate. I also do not think they understand the students that come into the room. I also and some of them I think don't really want to call the problem what it really is. Because they want to get re-elected next year, or the next four years. And we have a societal issue...

When you have a limited IQ you're only truly gonna grow so much and that's just the way it is. To say you can do better than that is, is playing God. You don't have that ability. So yes, it would be an issue, but it's an issue that shouldn't be an issue. We shouldn't have performance-based pay. Either that or you, I mean are we gonna, if we start sorting then I don't think it's gonna be an issue. I don't think teachers would have as much an issue if you started sorting. We don't sort. That's not the United States education system. ...

Sally indicated a lack of confidence in the political control of educational systems. This concern about what could be considered a layperson's understanding of teaching by politicians could create issues where gross mistakes are made concerning student and teacher value. These gross mistakes may lead to teachers competing for more promising students in regards to performance related evaluations. This concern stems from misconceptions held by individuals who liken teaching to other for profit careers. The common motivational assumption is that teacher effort is driven by a desire to make money, when other theories of motivation clearly apply. Public Service Motivation Theory more clearly depicts individuals like teachers as a population driven by a philosophy and like members of our military, health care system, or religious structures, do not choose these careers due to financial gains (O'Riordan, 2013).

Sally went on to describe actions that she could take to make changes to the system to right what she felt was wrong. *"I would just go into policy to get things changed. I would become, probably, in policy and in speaking. Because it will, I feel it will, it will bankrupt education."* The concerns described in Sally's interview depicted

the nature of poorly constructed PBP plans which were unsustainable financially. Carter (2014) reported that Oklahoma City schools can no longer afford to be competitive with schools in surrounding states due to the lack of funding provided by tax revenues.

Concerns surfaced when proponents of merit pay in the Oklahoma educational system were confronted with the inability to afford a base pay system much less a costly merit system (Carter, 2014).

As an integral part of performance-based pay is the aspect of evaluating teachers based on the performances of students on standardized test scores, or systems that include standardized test scores as an element of growth. Sally said, “I’m not opposed to the benchmarks, but you can’t just hold the teachers accountable for that....I’m greatly opposed because there are the variables that we are being evaluated on that we have no control over.”

The final theme, *Fear and Loss*, was developed from Sally’s experiences that centered on the feelings of fear as it relates to loss, specifically the loss of collegiality and teachers leaving the profession. These feelings of loss are supported in the literature and through the media, where examples of changes in teacher and administrator behaviors create environments where teacher survival over-rides ethical considerations (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2003). Such situations create negative behaviors that grow and become liabilities to an institution, whether due to an isolating effect created by competition, or even worse, forms of cheating that put not only the teacher’s career on the line, but also the reputation of the district (Frysh, 2011; Jonsson, 2011). Sally speaks specifically about the loss of collegiality and teachers leaving their jobs:

My initial feeling is that performance-based pay will create silence again. Which is something we’ve worked every hard to get away from in education where

teachers are in their own room, doing their own thing instead of working collegially together and having discussions about what works well, what doesn't work well for children's success, student's success. So I see that creating a great divide and tearing down all that we've come through the last ten, fifteen years with professional learning communities and pulling teachers together... You're going to lose your good teachers. They are going to go on to other jobs where the variables are within their realm of control...

The next interview focuses on the experiences of Melody, who is younger than Sally, and fairly new to the teaching profession.

Interview 2: Melody

Melody, a young (20-30 years old) white fifth grade core classroom teacher, has between one and five years of experience. As a beginning teacher, Melody was not involved with policy and decision-making at Pandora School District (PSD). The themes apprehended from Melody's experience were similar to Sally's but took on a different texture of understanding as reflected in different interpretations. Although Melody had been through the beginning of this process before, she retained a conflicted perspective concerning the value and legitimacy of PBP programs and their impact. Melody's interview mingled thoughts and ideas that were collected into three distinct themes: *Uncontrollable Factors*, *Issues of Systemic Change*, and the corresponding consequences of *Fear and Loss*.

Uncontrollable Factors was a theme derived from interpretive codes of *developing accountability*, *motivation to protect*, and *uncontrolled variables*. Although, the interpretive codes were also similar, the direction that these took differed from Sally's experiences. Melody has a definite willingness to believe that state test scores can be used to accurately measure the effectiveness of the teacher (Jupp, 2007; Sturman, Trevor,

Boudreau & Gerhart, 2003). At the same, time she makes contradictory remarks about her belief in the system to define her as a teacher.

Beginning with *developing accountability*, Melody stated that:

I do disagree with them because I think the shift and the way teachers will come across in the classroom. I think it will shift the way teachers look at curriculum, look at students and stuff like that. Um, my experience with it was looking at one way to assess performance. Um, so we looked at like every kid performing in the 65th percentile in third grade on the standardized test this year. Would then be compared together as a group the next year. So a kid that scored 65th percentile in third grade and fourth grade compared to the other kids scoring, 65th percentile, did that kid go up compared to them, stayed the same compared to them or go down? So I do like that. It makes it more fair. It holds teachers accountable, not only for the low group but also the high group of kids. Because can the 99 percentile can go down compared to its peers if you're not pushing that kid. Um, yeah I just, I think it would be a negative shift in teachers though. So... I do see some fairness in it. In the one that I've experienced.

Contrarily, Melody states “I've been teaching long enough to know that there are groups that are stronger and groups that are weaker. Um, and truly I don't, I don't put a lot of stock in the standardized testing.” It is at this point that she become contradictory about the value-added system of using standardized testing. She continues:

I take very little stock in the standardized tests and more so in what I see from the kids from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. And um, I do sometimes use that to reflect on my areas of weakness as a teacher, though. Because if they all score low and um, summarizing, that's an area where I need to focus the next year in.

Teachers have historically not given much credence to the validity of standardized test scores (Moulthrop et al., (2005) and tend to describe teacher perceptions of performance-based pay propositions with animosity due to issues with the reliability of standardized tests. Odden & Kelley (2002) remarked:

The value-added model also has a number of important limitations. Student mobility causes considerable problems with the model because students that move cannot be adequately tracked over time... Furthermore, the statistical and measurement technicalities that, in large part, contribute to the advantages of the

value-added model may be beyond the capacity of many districts and are likely to make it difficult for stakeholders to understand the system. (p. 138):

The contradictions found in Melody's experiences as compared with her older more mature counterparts could be due to a lack of experience in the field of education. This lack of a complete view of education corresponds with William Huitt's (2011) description of the development of the whole individual and ties together with Burr's (1995) concepts of the socially constructed individual. An individual is a construction of the realities of those around them; and at the same time, the completion of this individual, holistically speaking, only happens over time.

When asked about the possibility of moving towards a PBP plan within our state and the district using state test scores, Melody stated *"Um, we could be moving in the wrong direction."* But also stated that measuring teachers based on test scores was "fair". "Um, because they're really looking at growth of kids and expectations from year to year."

The next interpretive code revolved around the idea of *motivation to protect*. *Motivation to protect* in Melody's case involved the concepts of game playing, or cheating that may occur as stress on test scores became critical. Teachers and administrators have submitted to dishonest manipulation of testing standards or environments to gain an educational advantage. Both have participated in cheating, even in the form of changing test answers on test documents (Frysh, 2011; Jonsson, 2011).

Oh, I'd like to think that that [cheating] wouldn't. Um, yeah, I'd like to think that that would not occur. Don't know a hundred percent sure, though...Um, cause I already see several weeks before the [state standardized test] test, some teachers spending all their time prepping. And I think that's the group of teachers that probably would push the grey area. Um, they place a lot of importance on it. And so then, when our evaluation is, places a lot of importance on it, it just would exaggerate that.

When asked if Melody would engage in practices that might fall into the category of game playing or test prepping she replied *“Um, probably. It probably would be more like, well, I'd rather do this than this, but I'm going to do this because it will help.”* Melody’s experiences mirror my own with several different administrators at the building and district level where a certain level of game playing within the system is expected and encouraged. Test prep, can though, become a gray area where it is not long before the boundaries between preparation and cheating become blurred. She may have been looking for more assurance that these behaviors, test prep, or more, may be expected behaviors in education.

These topics are sensitive areas reflected in growing numbers of media articles that report teacher and administrator cheating, as in the case of the Atlanta, Georgia school district (Frysh, 2011; Jonsson, 2011). In the Washington D.C. School District, Islam (2014) found violations occurred where teachers had erased wrong answers and written in correct answers. The number of wrong erasures to right erasures that occurred over a population were examined along with the number of times this fell outside the predicted norm. Out of 195 schools, 45 were flagged for suspicious answer behaviors, and seventeen were investigated for significant evidence of tampering. Of the seventeen groups investigated, four were found to have had critical occurrences of test tampering that forced the schools to invalidate their scores for that year (Islam, 2014).

Student variables, connected to the theme of *developing accountability*, was mentioned by Melody, *“I've seen too many times kids that can demonstrate something to me and cannot answer a test question correctly that basically asks the exact same thing.”* Highlighting a concern expressed by many teachers, that students may make mistakes or

alter the test scores whether intentionally or not; and, in turn, the results of the growth related to the teacher's performance are altered (Jupp, 2010; Sturman, Trevor, Boudreau & Gerhart, 2003).

The theme, *Issues of Systemic Change*, had two interpretive codes, systemization and evaluation. Systemization dealt with issues of change and goal mismatch that appeared to become the normal work of teachers as they evaluated student learning.

Melody expressed:

Um, I think we're gonna, teachers will have a tendency to then become obsessed with that as the end game instead of the daily instruction and interactions with the kids... Um, I do think teaching test taking strategies will need to become part of the curriculum, so that that's not standing in students way to show what they actually can do...cause I already see several weeks before the [state standardized test], some teachers spending all their time prepping.

This phenomenon referred to as *gaming the system* is a process where test scores or evaluations are artificially inflated by manipulating elements of the testing environment or test subject. These manipulations include but are not limited to teaching to the test, ignoring school board sanctioned curriculum in favor for those found on the test, eliminating poor performing students from the population, creating categories of students who take the test and those that do not. (Odden & Kelley, 2002; Ravitch, 2014)

Gaming the system was found to be a significant issue in the study conducted by Figlio and Getzler (2014) that examined over 4 million students in Florida. Findings determined that many behaviors were apparent such as reclassifying students and manipulating records of students with disabilities in order to garner higher scores. These were just a few of the behaviors that support the perception that teachers and administrators are willing to push the boundaries of ethical behaviors in regards to evaluation and maintaining security in the school setting.

Test taking strategies and related preparation for standardized tests was a topic that Melody continued to come back to during the interview. She expressed some concerns about the final theme of *Fear and Loss* with interpretations based on statements concerning collegiality, competition and teacher leaving the profession. In contrast to Sally's meaning of *Fear and Loss*, Melody viewed loss as a positive in some cases and the hopes of PBP systems changing instructional practices.

Well, one positive might be we will get rid of several weak teachers. I do think we will get rid of some strong teachers who just, you know, maybe have been in it long enough that their like, "I'm not gonna deal with it." Um, I think we will be more geared toward the standardized prep and stuff like that. Um, yeah, I think it will change some of the practices in the classroom.

When discussing the aspect of an increase in teacher competition, Melody stated that competition would not play a positive role in education, when effecting teacher collaboration. Teachers are often unwilling to participate in the sharing of effective strategies (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2003). June, a teacher with much more experience than Melody, was the third teacher interviewed for this study.

Interview 3: June

June (pseudonym) is a middle-aged white special education teacher with 20-25 years of experience. She has completed graduate education in one or more degrees and is also not involved with policy or decision-making at PSD. June's experiences garnered the same previous themes as Melody's interview; *Uncontrollable Factors*, *Issues of Systemic Change*, and the corresponding consequences of *Fear and Loss*; but also a new theme of *Determining Value* was identified.

Uncontrollable Factors was derived from statements during the interview with June that were based around *student-controlled variables* and *motivation to prepare for*

tests. Student-controlled variables as an interpretive code, or more importantly issues with variables outside the locus of teacher control, was developed from statements about the impact of standardized testing as it relates to June's particular population of students. Teachers are initially fine with the idea and philosophy behind PBP plans which is not uncommon (Jupp, 2010; Sturman, Trevor, Boudreau & Gerhart, 2003), especially if they know students are fairly assessed. June described the nature of her population of students and the challenges of testing:

I'm, I don't have a problem with it, if you're going to use the standardized test scores that work for my students. Meaning, you can't really evaluate my students using [State Standardized Test], because the [State Standardized Test] rules as they currently are, if the student comes into this country from another, they've been here a day, they still have to take the [State Standardized Test] Mathematics test, which is a ridiculous rule...

Her frustration with the possibility that she might be evaluated based on the failures of the students coupled with the fact that even her successes might actually be used to determine her as failure were evident.

The unique positions teachers find themselves and the inability of PBP systems to adjust to their lived experiences could create issues with motivation. *Motivation to prepare for tests* as an interpretive code was developed from statements that dealt with an increased feeling or need to prepare students for a standardized test, and how that preparation impacted teachers' feelings of worth. These issues illuminated a problem with PBP plans, in that they do not align well with teacher specific levels of motivation (Loveless, 2000; Odden, 2004). June felt the pressure of preparing English as a Second Language (ESL) students for success in learning, but her over-riding concerns were about what type of tests would be used to evaluate her students and how she would be compensated if they did not show growth:

What comes to mind is that it's problematic. It's problematic on a whole variety of levels and it, it's kind of how I feel when they talk about education reform. Yes, it sounds like a good idea, but how in the world are you going to implement it? And it's the same with this, which is, yes we want to get rid of teachers who are tenured and who are not doing their job. And yes, of course, that sounds wonderful. You want to get rid of the teachers who are not performing, but is this really the best way to go about doing that?

...We never quite fit the mold, you know where the, with the square peg in the round hole. You know, we're always slightly different, so when they start talking about that, it makes me very, very nervous. Because I think, "How are you going to evaluate my students?" You know, what do you use to evaluate my students and their growth? Are you going to use the [state standardized test] because then I will not ever get a paycheck...

As this narrative developed June went on to describe concerns and fears about cheating. June reinforces concerns about teacher motivation that stems from the results or actions that could be taken in regards to protecting themselves from perceived unfairness or conditions outside of their control.

I mean you hear stories, you hear absolutely ridiculous stories I think about teachers cheating for the [State Standardized Test]. Or um, I mean it sounds so crazy the things that teachers supposedly do or will do. Um, it, and here's an example that I'll give. I have national board certification. It pays a fairly good stipend in Pandora. But several years ago when I first got my certification, it paid, it paid like an additional \$10,000 a year if you had your national board certification. That's a sizeable sum and they were experiencing a lot of cheating down there on the national board tests because of it. So it, are people going to cheat because of it? If the stakes are high enough, probably. Would I? No, because I cheated on a fourth grade test and I've never cheated since. Cause I learned my lesson. Um, but is it possible? Yeah, I would like to think that it's not in Pandora. Um, but the cynic in me says, "Nah, it probably, that temptation would be there."

This concern is well documented in current media sources (Frysh, 2011; Jonsson, 2011). Issues of cheating arise due to a perception of unfairness related to procedural justice. The issue of procedural justice and its relationship to the valance associated with a performance-based pay plan could create issues that would lead to the failure of a new

PBP plan (Lawler, 1990). June brings up questions that may require more research. PBP plans have typically only been implemented in districts with poor test scores and high teacher turnover. Would a district like Pandora, with high ratios of high performing students and high performing teachers see any gains?

June describes her concerns about a perceived goal of PBP systems that she interprets as a way of getting rid of poor teachers. She relates her concern about how one could do that fairly. She illustrates a lack of confidence in political leaders to understand the underpinnings of education. June related the theme of systemic change through interpretive codes of systemization and evaluation. These codes were developed through statements that indicated concern on many levels.

Systemization as an interpretive code was developed through the understanding of statements based around the changes that may occur due to the implementation of performance related evaluations and pay. June indicates that she would hope that the system could be created holistically, but lacks the confidence that such a system could be created successfully. Loveless (2000) claimed that there are things that teachers do within the school structure that contribute to the whole child developmentally but cannot be easily attributed to a test score. June is not confident that systemization and evaluation are workable solutions for teachers who are already excelling and districts should take more time exploring PBP plans.

I think they could, if done, very thoughtfully, if done right. If every single, you know, employee has been looked at thoroughly and this is how we're going to do it and nobody rushes into things. My fear is that in education, we often rush into trying something new without having really explored everything we need to before we try to do

I think most of them [teachers] think there would be a negative affect. I think, a part of me thinks that for a few who need a little push, it would be a positive

thing. But for those who are already, you know, excelling at what they're doing, it would be possibly annoying, unneeded...

June described the change that would come with performance-based pay programs; competition would create a loss in collegiality linked to the theme of *Fear and Loss*, not only for her but peers as well.

Yeah, we have a lot women, to be quite honest. Sometimes the competition already at that level is not friendly. Uh, I don't understand that. I don't know why, but it's not. Um, and I think there's, there's, you would be at odds, too, because you want a collaborative effort between your teachers. There's been a great focus on, you know, collaborative teams, and working together as a team, to help all students to perform. So is introducing that competition gonna then be a problem or is it going to make the team more collaborative to work together? I think its gonna, that might depend on how its introduced in each building and how the administrators decide to implement that.

June was asked whether she would consider withholding information or strategies from her cohorts if she felt that she was going to be in competition with them.

I'd like to think that I would, however.... However, with some I definitely would. And in given the right setting, you know, our department doesn't work very well together, to be quite honest. And so, um, my gosh, I don't know. I really don't know the answer to that. It would depend. It would depend on, I think, a lot of factors and how open other people would be to sharing information and right now there are a couple of individuals who are not willing to share information at all. If I had a tool that would make me look better, if I hadn't performed well in the past. I don't know, though. I don't think... No, I would probably still share it with certain key individuals who have helped me in my growth as a teacher as well. But that gets hard, cause, you know, your past evaluations that I... That's a tough question. I'm not sure I know the answer... Because it gets more difficult, again its that competitive piece. That's.... I'm not sure that's a good piece of that idea.

Her response informs collegiality which clusters with the theme of *Fear and Loss*. She is not sure that she would be as sharing if she had to compete with other teachers but would share with people who helped her grow professionally. This presents the possibility that as teachers respond to a system where competition has become dominant, they may further isolate themselves and maintain professional relationships

with a trusted few.

The final theme derived from June's interview was that of *Determining Value*. This particular theme differed from the other themes in that it was composed almost entirely of one interpretive code, also called questioning. As her interview progressed it became apparent that her questions were deep and appeared to be due to a more mature experience with education and her understanding that very few problems in education are simple and can be fixed with simple solutions. Her questions also reinforced *Uncontrollable Factors* and reflected Sally's concerns about issues with understanding teacher value as determined by standardized testing. During the interview, June found herself questioning her beliefs about teacher value and how that value can be determined.

Sure, it makes me wonder if they'll come up with some kind of a way to evaluate them. Well, but they might have um, what do you call it, end of course exams or something like that that would show growth from pre-test to post-test. Um, that's still not the means to an end test score. That's a problem, something I've never thought about. And I think that would be a major problem for the teachers who are being evaluated. They're not going to like that at all. It's gonna be... That would be a big problem. I mean, because if I'm being evaluated on my test scores and you're not being evaluated on any of that stuff, and if the potential is, you know, you could possibly earn bonuses and that sort of thing...

Weaver (2003) affirms that teaching in general is multifaceted and that the development of evaluations systems based on test scores leave many elements considered important unevaluated due to their complex nature.

As a part of June's need to question the process, she expressed concerns or fears that others around her have voiced. Although these were clearly questions, they also were connected very deeply to her fears of loss.

Yeah. And again, I think it scares everybody because it's so undefined. And that we keep, you know we talk about it...

...Every time I do I start to get really mad and I'm like, "Oh man, I don't want to

look at this. I can't deal with this today." So because of the what if's, you know, "What if it's this? What if it's this? What if it's this?" So um, yeah I think it's just one step at a time for me to see what our district continues to do, see what other districts continue to do. But when I can when it comes to those kinds of things, you know write to our congressmen if appropriate. But I, really truly, I'm not set on an opinion I don't think. I mean I'm not for it at this point because I haven't, it hasn't been proved to me how it would be done official, I guess.

June describes her concerns about the implantation of performance related plans; and although at the time of this dissertation, the state and the district were not incorporating standardized test scores into a teachers evaluation, the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) system being implemented this year, will collect test scores and compares the teacher to all of the other teachers in the same position in the state. This information is then used to determine teacher effectiveness (Network for Educator Effectiveness, 2014).

June also describes a sense of fear, and as new legislation has been added to the November 2014 ballot (Ballotpedia, 2014) concerning changing the state constitution to eliminate teacher tenure and force districts to implement severe PBP plans, June's concern turns to anger. This may likely create motivation to illicit protection for herself in the face of this uncertainty.

Interview 4: Sara

Sara (pseudonym), a White teacher, is fairly new to the profession; a second grade core classroom teacher with between one and five years of experience. She has a bachelor's degree and is currently not involved with policy or decision-making at PSD. Sara's interview gleaned themes not unlike the more experienced teachers who participated in this study. She admitted before the interview began that she did a little research into performance-based pay plans so that she might be more prepared for the

interview. I believe this may have significantly and artificially impacted her experience and knowledge about PBP, causing a shift in her perceptions beyond her age and experience. This may have allowed her to become more aligned with teachers who have been in the profession longer. Sara's themes were that of *Uncontrollable Factors*, *Issues of Systemic Change*, and finally *Fear and Loss*. These themes paralleled that of the other teachers interviewed.

The theme *Uncontrollable Factors* was formed from interpretive codes of *uncontrolled variables, accountability, and student motivation*. These three interpretive codes matched other cases in this study, but differed in textural depictions meaning that the statements that formed this theme were unique to Sara's perspective about PBP plans.

Uncontrolled variables as an interpretative code was most disturbing to Sara and a recurring theme throughout the interview.

I feel like that (a PBP Plan) can be validated. But when it's based on kind of student assessment, (but) there's components and factors that are out of your control. And I know that they kind of measure student's growth and kind of where they're at and where they're going. But I think, too, there's also situational things going on in students' life that change from year to year. And I don't, I mean my per...my feelings on that are, it could be a little bit unfair. I look at their scores and their inability to maybe focus or how they get overwhelmed by testing. It doesn't always show who they truly are. I think the majority of the time, it gives a pretty accurate description, but um, look I know there've been issues in one grade level where a bunch of students' scores were low and they act... The district found out they'd skipped a couple pages that were stuck together. And so that doesn't accurately measure what a kid knows.

Sara went on to describe her feelings about accountability within this type of system in regards to parents and students.

...Home is a huge part of it. And like if teachers are being held accountable, it's like, so needs...parents need to be held accountable and student's themselves need to be held accountable. Because if parents aren't being the parents they should be, why is it just me that's being evaluated on their test results? Because if they're not trying to help them at home, if they're not being supportive or even

emotionally there for them. So if they don't even have food on the table, why am I the only that's held accountable? And what does that mean for other teachers that aren't testing? Is it just us that are held accountable? And the younger grades? Because I'm not the only teacher students have had. I hate to say that because I love having um, just a variety of students in my class. That's what, that's what I don't like about...if it creates teachers to not want certain kids in their class that's not right. Education shouldn't be that way. I would hate to say, like I would still be accepting and I would want them in my room, but I would be really concerned that it would affect my job. Um, but I would want, I would still want them in my room, I guess if that makes sense. But it would be concerning.

Sara has introduced a component of accountability that was not an intended focus of this study. Parent accountability, or more precisely parent involvement in their own child's education is largely ignored in recent years as school districts are attempting to make gains on standardized test scores. Research conducted by Desimone (1999) indicated that parent involvement was crucial and represented significant gains on 8th grade mathematics tests.

The final interpretation consistent with Sara's experience was *student motivation*. Motivation of the student to do well on the test and the impact on overall scores, as well as locus of control (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008) are factors to consider. Sara notes:

I have some students that don't work as hard, but I've had other teachers talk about students. I mean, I had one that was deciding to doodle on their book. So, I don't think always because most kids want to please and they want to do well. But there are especially like sometimes when you get older, there are some that just don't care.

The theme of *Issues of Systemic Change* was derived from interpretive codes of *evaluative unfairness* and *questioning knowledge*. *Evaluative unfairness* involved the teacher being judged based on elements outside of their control and resulting feelings of anxiety. Expectancy Theory is aligned to evaluative unfairness as the theory specifies that there must be a specific outcome that can be directly attributed to the employee, an

attribution that statistically is weak to show (Springer et al, 2010) and difficult to reward (Krietner & Kinicki, 2008). Contrarily and as discussed earlier, Public Service Motivation Theory, more explicitly details the reality behind teacher motivation (O’Riordan, 2013). Sara says:

Um, but my feelings are it kind of depends on this...how they set it up. Because I know sometimes for performance-based it can be, you know, your involvement in other activities or leadership roles in the school. Or how much education you've received. Like whether you get your masters and I think those things are acceptable, cause it's not necessarily situational. It's work that you're doing, I feel like that can be validated. But when it's based on kind of student assessment, there's components and factors that are out of your control... Um, I don't, I don't like it because I already work hard regardless of like, test results. I, by nature, challenge and push myself. But just worrying about a test, um that causes...that's gonna cause way more anxiety for me and I think it's gonna actually cause me to not do my job as well. Cause I know when I'm stressed about just this one test, when they could skip a page and their score could be worse. I mean they're fifth graders.

Not an uncommon view of support for the current step and lane salary schedule as discussed in chapter two, provided teachers with an objective and fair way to make professional and financial gains throughout their careers, namely through experience and professional development in the form of post graduate hours earned (Odden and Kelley (2002). As state and federal policy shifts away from rewarding teachers for professional development, it is possible that fewer teachers will continue their education outside of district provided courses. It is unknown what long-term effects the “devaluing” of education at the instructor level will have over time as it relates to student achievement. It does seem counter intuitive to value education at the student level, but not at the educator level.

Questioning knowledge was the final code in this theme and dealt with Sara's unease associated with not fully understanding performance related objectives and the idea that these procedures could be related to compensation (Odden and Kellwy, 2002).

Um, I guess I'm not fully familiar with it. I think it, um, I yeah, I guess I couldn't give enough information to really have an opinion on it. Cause I know, I don't really know how they evaluate because I know, I don't really know how to explain it. Cause like, I, we don't hear a lot about it. We know how our kids do, but I've never...I don't know. I think it could affect it greatly, in that, I think what concerns me is, how does that apply to all grade levels? Because it seems like there's this heavy focus on state testing, third through fifth. And how does that apply to K through two? ...I don't know, I think I would if it became too stressful or overwhelming.

Sara indicates that were teaching to become too stressful or demeaning she would look to other sources of income, and eventually move on to another career. This fear of loss has been discussed in other interviews and continues in the following analysis.

The theme of *Fear and Loss* was developed from interpretive codes, *loss of collegiality*, and *loss of teachers*. Sara explains loss of collegiality:

... I feel like the teachers that truly want to do well are going to continue doing well and those may be don't as much you kind of figure that out through other ways. Um, I think it would be harder to trust one another and it would just, I think, sometimes people would say, you know..."I created this. I want to hold on to it." But I think it would just cause a lot more tension. And you want to be able to work together and know that we're doing this for the good of all of our students versus, "I want the best." Cause I think that's good like when it comes to sports and things like that. But our goal's the same thing, to help children, not to compete against one another. We're here to help each other.

Sara speaks to a deeper more ingrained concern that teachers have about the effects of goal distortion as it relates to the development of the whole child. Goal distortion is the phenomenon where important aspects of an organization, falter and fail due to a lack of recognition or accountability. The concern shared by many researchers pertaining to growth models and PBP plans is that important aspects of developing a child, holistically,

may dissipate as organizations tend to prioritize their efforts around what is being measured.

Loss of collegiality in Sara's data involved a concern about the ramifications that could develop concerning typically disadvantaged students such as special education, poor students, or students of color. Sara was asked if there would be any hesitation to welcome special education students and students of color into her classroom. These are fears shared by teachers across the country and voiced recently in teacher strikes in Chicago School District (Payne, 2012).

Sara responded:

If I knew that was a huge part of my evaluation, I would. And I hate to say that because I, generally I have quite a few special education students in my class. It is like how my classroom's structured and how I get directions. It's usually beneficial to them. It would worry me a lot more. Cause if you're having those conversations and sometimes you're like you know "Well, why aren't they doing well?" Sometimes you don't, like on a test, sometimes it's because the test is hard for them because they're struggling in reading or things like that and it's hard to explain that for, yeah. I hate to say that because I love having um, just a variety of students in my class. That's what, that's what I don't like about...if it creates teachers to not want certain kids in their class that's not right. Education shouldn't be that way. I would hate to say, like I would still be accepting and I would want them in my room, but I would be really concerned that it would affect my job. Um, but I would want, I would still want them in my room, I guess if that makes sense. But it would be concerning.

Like Sally, Sara has revealed issues of diversity related to the challenges of teaching students of color, poor students, and students with disabilities. These attitudes reveal certain belief systems that are constructed socially and take an inordinate amount of time to overturn if ever, and in the meantime have an overwhelming impact on those students that they teach (Marshall & Olivia, 2010). Complicate the situation by placing the results of the students that do not perform well in a position of determining a teacher's evaluation or compensation, and the results could be disastrous. The final

teacher that comprised this group was a more experience teacher, Francis.

Interview 5: Francis

Francis (pseudonym) is a middle-aged White, 4th grade core classroom teacher with between 20 and 25 years experience. She has completed graduate education with one or more degrees and is currently not involved with policy or decision making at PSD.

Francis expressed similar themes as the other subjects within the study. She expressed concerns and communicated themes of *Uncontrolled Variables*, *Issues of Systemic Change*, and *Fear and Loss*.

The theme, *Uncontrolled Variables* was determined based on interpretations of *student controlled variables*, and *student accountability*. These interpretive codes were present in the other interviews and are supported through the literature (Milanski, 2004; Hardin, 2010). *Student controlled variables* represent statements of experience by Francis that depicted her reaction to underlying issues with teacher scope of control over what she felt were inherent difference between children. Francis revealed:

I think there's a lot of gray areas, which is where the flaws are. Um, in the programs that I've seen or read about, I think kids as a subject as to how to, how teachers are paid is too difficult to do because the kids are different from year to year. Um, your socioeconomic areas are different. Which influences, can influence kids academic levels and that type of thing and that will throw, throw off any performance from, from year to year. Um, well I think, from, from the level of kids that I teach that in standardized testing a lot of it has to do with maturity and ability to listen more than what they've learned. And um, how to fill in a bubble and not skip a problem. And there's just too many factors in that. Also, again you have varying kids and you know, my class may be the low class of that grade that year whereas another teacher might have a higher performing class and so you're going to see discrepancies there. I think that it would be unfair because there's too many different variables that go into, um the standardized testing and the students. Um, because I....again I think there's just too many factors that go into what makes a good student and what shows growth and you have children coming in that um, don't come in with the same knowledge as other students. And you have to take them from where they're at and increase them as much as you can but that child may not end at the same level as another child who's been given

everything educationally from birth and is way ahead when they come in.

These issues are supported by Milanski's (2004) findings in Cincinnati schools that there were competing opinions about whether or not student socio-economic status (SES) or race should be included as factors in assessment. Hardin, (2010) corroborated concerns that SES or race accounted for variability in test scores in Cincinnati, Vaughn, and Washoe schools. These discrepancies admittedly, were low with effect size differences at .2 or less, but worthy of attention and further study.

Student accountability was developed from statements that depicted a lack of students accurately representing their knowledge on a test. The occurrence of miss answered questions that are more of a reflection of testing error than a lack of content knowledge.

Um, and I think you know, when I think about some of the questions that I have retained over the years, I still um... they still would mark them... Kids still mark them incorrectly because they're just so new at testing and um, you know you can beat into their head that George Washington is the first president of the United States. It doesn't mean that they're really gonna actually mark it on the test correctly.

The issue of testing reliability is discussed in the literature as measurement error.

Boudett, City, & Murnane, (2006) describe this type of error as errors that arise due to inconsistencies in people's behavior that have nothing to do with the test. Measurement error as it relates to student accountability creates issues with teachers' locus of control over their evaluation.

The theme, *Issues of Systemic Change*, was determined using interpretive codes knowledge, systemization, and evaluation. This theme aligned itself with the other subjects' perceptions of systemic change which also paralleled Francis's perceptions. The interpretive code knowledge related to this theme was developed from statements and descriptions that indicated a base for understanding performance-based pay and performance related evaluations that are used to determine pay. It has been determined that teacher buy-in is paramount to a successful system, and that success is determined by the amount of accurate information that teachers receive (Jupp, 2005). This finding correlates with the survey data depicting that a majority of knowledge or information about PBP and other performance related issues come directly from the administration at PSD. Francis attempts to understand how PBP plans would work in a district:

When the, when you talk about performance-based for teachers, you're saying...are you saying that they would take, let's say 10 teachers and whoever's performing the best out of those 10 would be paid the most? Or that there's a standard score and if a teacher's not meeting that then they get.... When I think of it, I think of it as a...there being some sort of set goal and if you're not meeting that goal then you don't receive that pay. Which is not good I don't think. But if they're pitting you against....if they're basing you on teachers, I think that's crazy. But I don't know....I don't know. I don't think that would change how I felt in my school community. But I could see how it could get ugly if it was based on, you know. I just think there's too many factors that would go into that because I don't think an administrator can fairly evaluate one teacher over another without there being subjective things coming in. Yeah.

She questions the ability of administrator's to fairly evaluate teachers and the effects on the larger system.

Systemization illustrated the changes that might occur system-wide in response to PBP plans put into place. Francis describes system-wide changes that need to take place in curriculum for students to perform well:

Um, and the standardized testing at this point that we use at our level doesn't

match up curriculum. So it's not even based on, if they're using the standardized test to say how I'm doing as a teacher then it should fit exactly what I'm teaching. That's what I'm required to teach.

I would say I try and focus more on the idea of what it's like to take a test. Because it's really the first time they're taking standardized tests and I feel like kids miss....even those really high-achieving kids miss silly things because they don't understand the way the question's asked or um, they don't follow the print and fill in a bubble in the wrong place. Um, but um, you know you can have kids score really low in a science or social studies area but it's full of information and things that they've not really been taught because it's not part of our curriculum. Um, if I, if I retain that information as to what those questions are. I'm so busy trying to make sure everybody's attempted the best they can to fill in an actual bubble that um, I don't necessarily always remember what all the questions are. Plus I feel like that might take away some of the, the validity of the test if I'm, if I'm reading the questions and then you know, curtailing my...trying to change my curriculum....go away from what my GLEEs are for the district to match the test.

Francis expresses concern that other variables outside of teacher control exist will not be taken in consideration with the systemization of PBP plans. This fear and concern is supported in the literature and a fundamental point made by researchers when indicating that high stakes testing should never be used to promote, retain, or compensate a teacher (Koppich, 2005). This perspective has been shared with me by teachers that I work with. “If Amendment 3 passes, I’m done. There are easier ways of making money” (Personal Communication, August 18, 2014). This concerns me, because this younger teacher is arguably one of the best teachers in the district.

The final interpretive code of evaluation was created to capture issues with evaluation performance related experiences, including the use of standardized tests, student variables, and social economic status.

Um, well I just, I think there's too many other things that go into um, what a good teacher is and how a student progresses in a school year to just base it on standardized tests. Because there's more to a kid than just how they score on 'em, just how they score on them. From what I've read, or what I've seen no. Um, because I....again I think there's just too many factors that go into what makes a good student and what shows growth and you have children coming in that um,

don't come in with the same knowledge as other students. And you have to take them from where they're at and increase them as much as you can but that child may not end at the same level as another child who's been given everything educationally from birth and is way ahead when they come in.

The final theme, *fear and loss*, was developed using interpretive codes that supported an anxiety based on a sense of unfairness and resulting actions with teachers such as loss of collegiality and motivation to game play as demonstrated in behaviors documented in the media (Frysh, 2011; Jonsson, 2011).

...I think also it could create some unhealthy type competition where it's more about um...maybe being sneaky about things. Such as...I don't...maybe telling kids answers or, or guiding them in the correct direction on answers. Maybe specifically teaching to the tests and not covering other curriculum because they're spending more time teaching specifically to the test. And maybe even in some cases kind of sabotaging other people's success. Or being unfair about things to try and out do the other person. Um, and I think you know, when I think about some of the questions that I have retained over the years, I still um....they still would mark them....

Francis raises questions about the possibility that PBP plans lack consistency across the full spectrum of the student learning effects, and not necessarily the teacher or school effects. The evaluative tool measures the student's performance and not a teacher's performance. This creates issues with equity, and as described earlier in Krietner & Kinicki, (2008), threats to equity can create a rift in teacher support, dooming a PBP plan from the start (Odden & Kelley, 2002).

Francis depicted one last concern different from the other interviewees. She spoke about concerns about the subjectivity and possible unfairness of PBP systems as they relate to the possibility that an administrator may unfairly use the system to favor certain teachers over others based on non-school related preferences.

I just think there's too many factors that would go into that because I don't think an administrator can fairly evaluate one teacher over another without there being subjective things coming in. Yeah. Um...I like to think she would be. But I, you know I've worked with several different administrators all who are...have been

great. And have been great in different ways. And um...but one thing, most of them I've seen have kind of always developed a clique of teachers, socially...which is fine, but if that ever came into play, as a teacher... That's what I would worry about, is that social group would influence how they were graded as a teacher. Cause I..I feel like now in my experience with administrators they've all been very fair. And had a good report with their staff but I could see there being major issues between the staff and administrators if that were to come into play. For sure.

This concern is prevalent in the literature and is discussed at length by those who oppose PBP systems. Currently, the strength of the salary schedule is viewed as objective for rewarding teachers (Odden & Kelley, 2002). Those who oppose PBP systems, feel that schools would return to a time when teachers were rewarded based on favoritism (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2014). A sense of administrator trust is evident in the open-ended survey and interview data in that teachers responded they get most of their information from district administrators and appear to trust them as an adequate source. This may be due to perceptions of administrators having high levels of ethical behavior in regards to teacher treatment. Never the less, administrator mistrust was uniquely downplayed or completely absent in the interview and open-ended survey data.

The following section brings together the themes from the five participants, providing a sense of common meanings in the interviews which served as one of the data sources of the single instrumental case study. The synthesis of interview data contributed to a holistic understanding of the other data sources of documents and the mixed survey.

Synthesis of Interview Data

The synthesis of interview data determined themes of understanding shared between the five teachers, Sally, Melody, June, Sara, and Francis, as compared and grouped in Table 2. These comparisons convey three themes, *Issues with Systemic Change*, *Uncontrollable Factors*, and *Fear and Loss* within the interview data.

Determining Value was a theme present in only one of the interviews, and largely centered itself around questions in an effort to determine if there were differences between teachers or teaching positions that made them inherently unfair.

Issues with Systemic Change was created from phenomena derived from feelings or experiences that indicate that the underlying goals or philosophies of education are often not aligned with the implementation of Performance-Based Programs (PBP). Francis spoke more about issues with the design of the system and concerns about implementation; whereas, Sally spoke about a lack of confidence in the existing political structures that create these programs. *“I think it comes from politicians that don’t have a clue as to what it takes to educate....”* All of the interview subjects spoke to issues with testing and test errors and how these might impact education. The teachers also described the positive and negative aspects of results driven educational systems. Mintrop (2004) suggested that the various indicators of teacher success and their effect on teaching and learning must be taken into consideration for an evaluation system to be considered equitable by the teachers.

Interviewees recounted the implications of systemic change related to PBP programs. Melody stated: *“Um, I think we’re gonna, teachers will have a tendency to then become obsessed with that as the end game instead of the daily instruction and interactions with the kids....”* This was a shared concern by other interviewees who espoused concerns about the ramifications of this systemic change expressing phenomena of *Fear and Loss*. Closely related to *Issues with Systemic Change* were the assumptions tethered to these issues, namely what was voiced as concerns outside of teacher control. These perceptions created the second theme, *Uncontrollable Factors*, that indicated

significant elements of standardized testing which create a tenuous chain of *if then* assumptions, connecting student performance with teacher effectiveness.

Table 4.
Synthesis of Common Themes Across Interviews

	Issues of Systemic Change	Uncontrollabl e Factors	Determinin g Value	Fear and Loss
Sally	x	x		x
Melody	x	x		x
June	x	x	x	x
Sara	x	x		x
Francis	x	x		x

Assumptions vary from teacher to teacher, but all shared a sense that certain variables were outside of their control and could lead to negative influences of personal disposition and attitudes toward education. Sara described her feelings:

...there's components and factors that are out of your control. And I know that they kind of measure student's growth and kind of where they're at and where they're going. But I think, too, there's also situational things going on in students' life that change from year to year.

These variables included but are not limited to, student motivation to do well, issues with test procedures and aligned curriculum, and perceived innate characteristics of the students themselves. Such variables are discussed at length by researchers who attempt to for these complex statistical programs with little success (Betebenner, 2008; Gallagher, 2004; Milanowski, 2004) indicated that statistical errors were prevalent in evaluating teachers due to the extremely small sample size used to evaluate teachers in general.

These issues were complicated by participants' perceptions and beliefs about the

students themselves. Questions were brought forth about whether or not SES data or student race should be used to create the evaluative model (Milanowski, 2004). One view indicated data exist to support that students of color, or students living in poverty are underprepared for school; and therefore growth models should reflect these student discrepancies (Milanowski, 2004). Another view exist that purports learning goals for all students should be on a level plane and there need not be a lowered bar for those who are deemed less able (Milanowski, 2004). These variables have created a real sense of concern and fear for teachers who are subjected to these evaluative measures.

The final theme shared amongst the interviewees was that of *Fear and Loss*. This shared theme was created from a sense of impending loss that would accompany a receding wave of collaborative efforts made by colleagues as they were compared with one another on end of year test scores, and a general sense of anxiety about the unknown. June described her anxiety:

Every time I do I start to get really mad and I'm like, "Oh man, I don't want to look at this. I can't deal with this today." So because of the what if's, you know, "What if it's this? What if it's this? What if it's this?"

The final theme shared amongst the interviewees was that of *Fear and Loss*. This shared theme was created from a sense of impending loss that would accompany a receding wave of collaborative efforts made by colleagues as they were compared with one another on end of year test scores, and a general sense of anxiety about the unknown. June described her anxiety:

Every time I do I start to get really mad and I'm like, "Oh man, I don't want to look at this. I can't deal with this today." So because of the what if's, you know, "What if it's this? What if it's this? What if it's this?"

Sally spoke of this loss:

...So I see that creating a great divide and tearing down all that we've come through the last ten, fifteen years with professional learning communities and pulling teachers together... You're going to lose your good teachers. They are going to go on to other jobs where the variables are within their realm of control....

This concern about feelings of loss and a pulling away from the group are supported by Hardin (2010) who conveyed the need to maintain collegiality and a sense of team or group mission among teachers. Moreover, Kennedy (2005) views a lack of philosophical buy-in as a major contributor to reform failure. Odden & Kelley (2002) predicted the failure of future PBP programs by citing the mistakes of former merit programs and a failure to address teacher concerns about competition which will create a competitive element within structures designed to promote cooperation between teachers as they work collaboratively to achieve academic success for all students.

Conclusion

These dominant themes within the interview data, -- *Issues with Systemic Change*, *Uncontrollable Factors*, and *Fear and Loss* --, indicates that issues with systemic design will lead to goal distortion which will inevitably lead to game playing which is the defining element of Campbell's Law (Campbell, 1976).

Teachers indicated that they were aware of these mismatched designs and through experience with school politics understood that the behaviors of teachers as a group and independently would change in regards to these new designs. Amey & VanDerLinden,

(2014) indicated that these issues were prevalent within teacher groups who were moving through the process of engaging in PBP systems.

Teachers indicated that they were acutely aware of variables whether perceived or in reality that could impact their students performance outcomes in a way that the teachers felt was out of their control These variables and motivations were closely related as reflected in themes and corresponded with the literature in this area. Hardin (2010), described the effects of teacher concerns and what they believed were innate characteristics of students that limited the potential of student outcomes.

Finally, teachers had an acute sense of impending loss based on their understandings of PBP as reflected in themes of *Issues with Systemic Design* and *Uncontrolled Factors*. These themes are the defining elements in understanding the perspective of loss linked to teachers' concerns that collegiality will suffer and the time spent by the district developing strong team and group dynamics will dissolve into what was mentioned as a previous era of isolation. This phenomena of isolation are described in the literature as consequences of poorly designed, high-risk merit systems. Concerns about *Fear and Loss* have been described as a defining characteristics of philosophical mis-alignment by Odden and Kelley, (2002), fundamental elements of reform failure.

Analysis of Documents

The first set of documents that I began with came from the search engine on the National Education Association (NEA) web site. My purpose was to begin with an open codebook with possible descriptive codes developed from my framework and my research of previous studies conducted on teacher perceptions of merit systems. Using the descriptive codes, I clustered them together in common sets of meaning called

interpretive codes. The final stage required me to look at the interpretive codes and by use of phenomenological reduction, cluster these into common themes of understanding. I chose to analyze all documents on the first page of results garnered from the search phrase “performance-based pay” I then searched “merit pay” and came up with twelve documents shared by both searches and included all documents that were unique to each phrase, but still presented on the first page of results for each. Performance-based pay, and merit pay are terms that in my experience and through conversations with other teachers, are used most often to describe the system of basing a teacher’s compensation on student standardized test scores.

My results yielded a variety of documents. These documents ranged from basic articles or editorials by NEA officers, to scientific studies describing performance-based pay results. The first document was entitled “Pay Based on Test Scores?: What Educators Need to Know about Linking Teacher Pay to Student Achievement” by John Rosales (2014). This document was a two page NEA produced document written to inform teachers and NEA members about performance-based pay. It describes the pitfalls of performance-based pay (PBP) systems and several current systems highlighting their failures and a few of their success.

The second document by Cynthia McCabe (2010) was entitled “New Study: Merit Pay Does Not Boost Student Achievement.” This one page document briefly describes a study conducted by Vanderbilt University and the RAND Corporation that followed 300 students from Nashville’s Public Schools. The article depicts performance-based pay and President Obama’s Race to the Top program as a failure in support of teachers and a

program that has no positive impact on test scores. The article highlights the information from the study that supports this perspective.

The third document that was yielded by both searches was entitled “Merit Pay, Market Conditions, Equity, and Faculty Compensation” by Marilyn Amey and Kim VanDerLinden, (2014). This eleven page document was a scholarly article that describes a more neutral position from the standpoint of performance-based pay, but highlights more logistical issues concerning the development of PBP systems, the larger picture of what drives the educational market place, and the effects of pay as a motivator.

The fourth was an anonymous document entitled “Myths and Facts about Educator Pay” (2014). The NEA produced four-page document depicts unique aspects and teacher based perspectives of the logistics of an educational career, and compares those aspects to different careers.

The fifth document, entitled “Chicago Study Throws Cold Water on Merit Pay,” was authored by Colin Berglund (2010). This one page document depicted a 2006 merit plan piloted in the Chicago School District that showed no results from performance-based plans. The article cited evidence that merit systems have never produced adequate results, if any.

The sixth document was entitled “Alternative Compensation Models and our Members, Voices from the Field: Stories from Seven Districts” by Linda Davin and Sarah Ferguson, (2014). This thirty five page NEA article described a qualitative study of teacher experiences with current PBP plans, their benefits and drawbacks. The document discussed seven different districts, listed pro’s and con’s of their programs, communicated survey results, and summarized each district’s plan.

The seventh anonymous document was entitled “Fact Sheet on NEA’s View Regarding Mandated Performance Pay for Educators” (2014). This one page document details NEA views and talking points that can be used to refute the use of PBP plans.

The eighth document was entitled “Without Merit Pay and Gold Stars: A Connecticut NEA Affiliate Heads off a ‘Divisive’ Merit Pay Plan Through Solid Organizing, Research and Political Actions --*There’s merit in that!*” by Dave Winans (2014), an NEA collective bargaining and member advocate. This three-page document describes the actions taken by teachers who organized politically to put a stop to PBP programs in the Hamden, Connecticut school district. By utilizing the political system and supportive sympathetic school board members, the Hamden Educators Association successfully blocked the program.

The ninth anonymous document was entitled “Researchers Say Merit Pay Does Not Improve Student Test Scores” (2014). This one page NEA produced document depicts the findings of a study conducted by the National Center on Performance Incentives at Vanderbilt’s Peabody College of Education and Human Development, which concluded that over a three year period PBP plans did not result in improving test scores. This article does not depict what the study was, where the study took place, the participants, and a rigorous discussion of findings.

The tenth document entitled, ‘Teachers Sound Off on Tenure and Merit Pay on NBC’s Education Nation,’ was written by Tim Walker (2011). This one page document interviewed two NEA members who were featured on NBC’s Education Nation program; the members described their misgivings about PBP plans, highlighted their weakness, and outlined aspects of student performance beyond their control.

The eleventh document in the search was entitled “Merit Pay and High Performing Nations” by Tim Walker (2011). This one page document was a rebuttal to an Education Next report that portrayed a 2009 international study supporting PBP plans as successful in producing higher test scores. Walker listed several reasons why the study was flawed and therefore invalid.

The final document was entitled “Merit Pay: Sanguine Sardines and Sanctimonious Salesmen” by Dave Reber (2010). This one page article illustrated the ways politics have transformed words and manipulated language to achieve agendas. The article provided examples of how terms involving merit pay have evolved to create a feeling of acceptability or language has been developed that makes debating a policy equal to denouncing a public good.

Each document was coded down to the paragraph or sentence based on the descriptive code each sentence or paragraph yielded. A descriptive code is a code that simply describes the meaning of that particular segment (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The beginning analysis resulted in 37 different descriptive codes. In the next step of the analysis descriptive codes were clustered to form interpretive codes, leading to patterns of common meanings for thematic development. Some codes lacking consistency were set aside and codes that were frequently noted in the documents were grouped into common ideas. Due to the fact that some documents were considerably larger than others, it was easy for a code common assigned to that document to significantly outweigh codes from much smaller documents. For instance, the document entitled, “Alternative Compensation Models and our Members” (Davin & Ferguson, 2014), was over 35 pages long in comparison to the document entitled, “New Study: Merit Pay Does Not Boost

Student Achievement” (McCabe, 2010), which only had two pages. This created a significant issue where one document could alter the results simply by being large and repetitive, at the same time, the purpose of this type of analysis is to investigate developing themes in quantity and over time. To that end, there were actually two distinct issues at play: themes developing in quantity and themes developing over time. In order to determine a baseline for analysis, I cross-compared documents based on two criteria: the first, whether or not the descriptive code existed in a significant percentage of documents; and the second, the percentage of descriptive codes registered overall regardless of the number of documents.

The graph below (see Figure 1) compares descriptive codes that were comprised of more than four percent of the total data. This narrowed the field of codes to nine descriptive codes. From these descriptive codes, it became possible to create initial interpretive codes that could be used with the multitude of smaller descriptive codes that had previously been set aside. I was able to reorganize these codes into a newer set of interpretive codes and subsequently develop themes of understanding. This process of returning to the data and the text follows a pattern of analysis known as the hermeneutic circle. The circular process helps filter and refine the results of meaning within the interpretation of meaning until themes of understanding develop. As the circle narrows and saturation of meaning is determined, the themes of understanding solidify and become finalized.

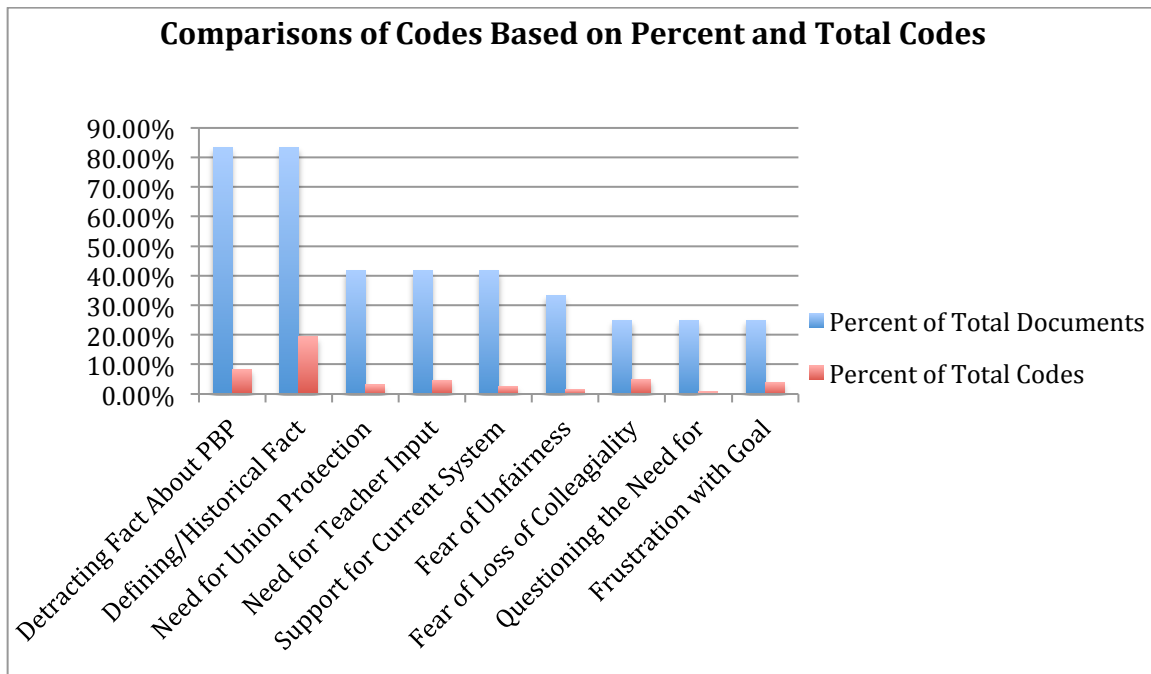


Figure 4.1. Comparisons of Codes Based on Percent and Total Codes.

This analysis resulted in nine interpretive codes that were categorized into three themes of understanding.

The first theme was identified as *Truth and Belief*. This theme stems from the recurring ideas around reported knowledge and experience as it exists in its neutral or detracting state. “Critics of merit pay say that is unsupported by research, and that evaluating an individual teacher’s performance-based on the student standardized testing is extremely difficult, given the many factors outside the classroom that can affect student achievement” (McCabe, 2010, para. 7). Amey and VanDerLinden (2014) support this perspective:

Merit pay, some argue, is pay for future- as well as current or recent-performance. Merit notes one analyst, appears in four guises: reward for what was done recently, a remedy for what was done a while ago; a remedy for what is expect in the future; and ‘predator control’ for what the administration does not want done at another institution. (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2014, p. 23)

There were three developed interpretive codes, knowledge, opinion, and questioning linked to *Truth and Belief*. Additionally, this theme was formed based on a macro social constructivist perspective of the core knowledge that teachers use to develop feelings and experiences. This theory maintains that knowing is developed in a communal structure where the population as a whole determines what information is real and not real based on relative experiences that align with the group (Burr, 1995). This particular theory is key to understanding this theme as the information does not necessarily have to be factual, but can lie in the domain of opinion and interpreted experience.

Regardless of the source, the strength of the belief determines the reality of the truth, so a relatively small number of strong, but supportive irrational fears can sway the group. This catalyst of change within the population is referred to as micro social constructivist theory, where the individual acting as his or her own agent of power and change can alter direction of the group, even if their viewpoint is contrary to the current reality viewpoint of the macro constructivist theory (Burr, 1995).

This particular theme is a potent mixture of ideas, thoughts, experiences and beliefs that help define the phenomenon at this point in time. At this point in time, the theme of *Truth and Belief*, represents a general negative, fearful, and despairing viewpoint of performance-based pay plans. This polarized negativity about PBP systems creates an immediate sense of hesitation in the teacher, which causes the development of useful programs to stagnate and fail.

The interpretive code knowledge came from statements that reflected supporting facts about PBP systems, historical and defining facts about PBP systems, detracting facts

about PBP systems, supporting facts about the teaching experiences, historical and defining facts about the experience of teaching, and detracting facts about the experience of teaching. Examples from the text that helped define this category: “Faculty who give their careers to a single institution usually suffer salary compression; they have less purchasing power than new, junior colleagues” (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2014, p. 26). “Merit systems force teachers to compete, rather than cooperate. They create a disincentive for teachers to share information and teaching techniques. This is especially true because there is always a limited pool of money for merit pay” (Anonymous, 2014, para. 31).

Supportive comments were identified in this particular interpretive code, but only represented three percent of the number of comments used to define this code. The few that existed were in response to successful programs that rewarded teachers for participating in a teacher advancement program where they earned extra monies by taking district designed or approved courses. As reflected in Davin and Ferguson (2014), “I have been able to go to workshops and bring curriculum back to my school, and this is what changes my practice.” These statements and others that described increases in collegiality did occur in the research and represented districts who attempted to use merit pay funding to design a system closely related to the current step and lane system that compensates teachers for the education, knowledge and skills that they have obtained and not based on the scores generated by students.

The interpretive code “opinion” was the result of categorical statements that reflected unsupported opinions in the texts. These statements, although unsupported, provided emotion and bias in an uncontrolled manner. These statements were categorized

as either supporting or detracting of PBP systems. Although strong, these statements only made up 10.7% of all statements. In the document, “Myths and Facts about Educator Pay” (Anonymous, 2014), the author relates this opinion:

New teachers are often unable to pay off their loans or afford houses in the communities where they teach. Teachers and education support professionals often work two and three jobs to make ends meet. The stress and exhaustion can become unbearable, forcing people out of the profession to more lucrative positions. (para. 34)

This may be true, but the author did not cite a source of this statement, which falls into the category of opinion. None-the-less, the statement promotes a powerful statement about teaching as a profession.

The interpretive code “questioning” was derived from statements based around the idea that the document questioned the validity of information supporting PBP systems. For example Walker (2011) wrote “Woessman throws out so many caveats, the reader is immediately left wondering how he could ultimately draw a straight line between merit pay and student achievement...” (para.4).

The second theme that developed from the documents was described as *Fear and Loss*. This particular theme was developed around the expectation of future experience of the teacher based on the information garnered from the first theme *Truth and Belief*, the base of information used to form patterns and predictions based on previous experience. The perspective of PBP or merit systems has a long history of failure which helped to form *Truth and Belief*. Again, theories of social construction use macro and micro versions to inform the group and develop the group knowledge and feelings towards PBP. These group beliefs about PBP systems create fears based on negative past experiences.

The interpretive codes used to define *Fear and Loss* were professional experience, judgment, resistance and evaluation. These interpretive codes were developed from several different examples of statements and experiences of loss reflected in the documents and the resulting statements of related to fear of the future.

The interpretive code *professional experience* was derived from statements that focused on examples where teachers felt a loss of collegiality, security, and frustration with goal misalignment between assessment and philosophy of teaching due to experiences with PBP programs. In Davin and Ferguson (2014), a teacher was quoted as saying “As a first year teacher, I am looking toward another district. I would rather do that than jump through hoops to get a raise. It takes my focus away from the kids.” Also in Davin and Ferguson (2014, p. 10) frustration with goal alignment between assessment of the philosophy of teaching is expressed:

Most people do not understand the test score evaluation on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). No one understands the value-added method of determining student growth on CSAP...No one should do pay for performance as it is being done here... If anyone wants to see how to do everything wrong, come to Eagle County. (p. 10)

Amey and VanDerLinden (2014) wrote, “other concerns center on whether faculty really respond to extrinsic rewards, and the impact on morale of close differentiation among colleagues” (p, 22). “I’m a finalist for the teacher of the year... so I guess I’d do pretty well under a merit pay system. But I still don’t like it. It’s not fair and breeds too much competition among teachers. That’s not a good idea” (Walker, 2011, para. 12). These statements and other like them define the interpretive code, loss of collegiality, and forms a central fear, one represented repeatedly in over 25% of all documents coded.

Loss of security is a potent yet vague interpretive code and was nebulous in its development. The documents noted security from various standpoints such as job, status, compensation, and tenure. These fears resonate on multiple levels of Maslows's Needs Theory from safety to self-actualization (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008). Amey and VanDerLinden (2014) stated:

Rewarding stronger institutional or departmental performance may reduce the perceived unfairness of merit pay systems and hostility among colleagues. But across-the-board rewards ignore individual and departmental differences that may result in inequities and inefficiencies as the connection between salary and productivity is compromised. (p. 24)

Winans (2014, para. 32) showed that NEA affiliates espoused that they were preparing to fight "... threats such as privatization, unsound evaluation systems, layoffs, budget cuts, or salary/benefits take backs...." Also in Winans (2014, para. 31) a local politically involved teacher was quoted as saying, "our members saw the merit pay piece of Project Opening Doors as insulting and divisive...." This article depicted a significant support for teachers who were willing to organize and defend policy deemed unpopular by the NEA.

Goal mismatch was an interpretive code derived around statements that regarded PBP system's results as unaligned with intentions or institutional philosophy. Amey and VanDerLinden in the following quote discuss the repercussions of instituting a PBP system where goals of teacher improvement are likely to collide with negative teacher perception.

The "superstar" aspect of some merit schemes, coupled with the annuity feature for past performance, undermines collegiality and institutional values while increasing faculty resistance to evaluation. Faculty reactions to merit pay ranged from skepticism to distrust to open resistance in one study... Gravitating toward the mean- often the case in merit systems- may create a negative climate, feeling of disenfranchisement due to lack of recognition and rewards, and often faculty departures. (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2014, p. 23)

These coupled interpretations of loss of collegiality, security and institutional goal mismatch can contribute to intense feelings of loss and fear.

Judgment was an interpretive code derived from two distinct feeling of loss of fairness and objectivity based from the standpoint of system design and implementation. These feelings of loss centered on a concern associated with loss of control over systemic changes and the direction that a teacher's district might be heading. "A federal mandate that requires test scores or student performance be used as an element of a compensation system undermines local autonomy and decision making, including educators' rights under collective bargaining" ("Fact Sheet on NEA's Views Regarding Mandated Performance Pay for Educators," 2014, para. 18).

The interpretive code "resistance" was created in response to statements that supported the current system of compensation and evaluation, misalignment in philosophy, resistance to new initiatives, and simply the fear of change and subsequent consequences. In Winans (2014), statements concerning organized union members concerned the following:

One CEA local, the 547 member Hamden Education Association (HEA), has kept out Project Opening Doors entirely through a different strategy, involving member organizing, research, and smart political action. And better yet: HEA has joined forces with this district, in the urban Hew Haven region, to create an intelligent alternative to POD, without those bonuses and gold stars. (para. 14)

Other statements related to impending fear and change as described in Rosales (2014, para. 2): "How were your students' scores? Some districts (perhaps yours) want to reward educators on the basis on student test scores. Some already do." Rosalas' (2014) document further illustrates this phenomenon, "we all must be wary of any system that creates a climate where students are viewed as part of the pay equation, rather than you

people who deserve a high quality education that prepares them for their future....” (para. 7).

The final interpretive code for the theme *Fear and Loss* was evaluation.

Evaluation was created from statements related to the fear of subjectivity and unfairness about aspects of evaluation and consequently compensation.

Faculty concerns about merit pay often reflect minimal collegial involvement in designing or evaluation the process that serves as the basis for merit increases. The award of merit pay is usually an administrative decision, even in unionized institutions where a faculty committee conducts evaluations. Lack of participation can lead to faculty suspicion of administrative manipulation, disempowerment, and suppressed ideas outside the ideological mainstream. Suspicions that office politics or administrative agendas influence salary decisions may continue unless faculty involvement increases, clear criteria are established, and processes are communicated clearly. (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2014, p. 24)

Amey and VanDerLinden (2014) further emphasize the dilemma of perceived unfairness as it relates to the fundamental differences between populations of teachers within an educational institution.

Other aspects of academic culture confound identification of pay inequity and its redress. One aspect: the lack of generic definitions of “faculty” and of academic profession. Departments place different language, labels, and emphasis on categories of work. Institutional missions mediate the priorities for faculty time and effort. Addressing comparable worth requires separating what an academic job is from what a faculty member does. Promotion and tenure policies germane to each institution also confound meaningful analysis of pay equity. (Amey and VanDerLinden, 2014, p.27)

In Davin & Ferguson (2014), a more intimate statement quoted from a member of the Eagle County School District was, “there is a lack of transparency. [Evaluations] do not want to give the top score [of five], or the lowest score [of one]. Therefore, scores tend to be judgmental.” (p. 10). Reported by another member in the same document, “It is impossible to have inter-rater reliability. I was trained as a Mentor, and I still see the differences [among evaluators]” (Davin & Ferguson, 2014). Finally in Davin and

Ferguson (2014), “A new higher comes in with no record and gets \$3,000 more than a veteran teacher with the same credentials” (p. 11). These fears and concerns are substantiated by the research conducted by Milanowski (2004), whose research into performance related evaluations resulted in no improvements in math and only a 0.13 correlation in reading. This study was conducted in Coventry Rhode Island, utilizing the standardized test scores of second, third, and sixth graders and their 172 teachers.

The third and final theme I identified in the documents section was that of *Safety and Protection*, identified based on the interpretive codes of systemization and protection, which were uniquely defined around statements that teacher unions and teacher solidarity could alleviate fears and concerns through a process of instituting models of teacher input, balance and support for professional development, and intense political participation in program design and approval.

The first interpretive code was called systemization due to the nature of the statements that all centered on the facet of program design connected to teacher empowerment. Davin and Ferguson (2014) reported teacher statements, “without the contentiousness [around bargaining], the association and the district can work on other issues in the district to improve student achievement” (p. 17). Amey and VanDerLinden (2014) stated that “a successful merit pay system requires faculty involvement from implementation to evaluation” (p. 24).

Statements concerning the need for balance and a sense of planning were also identified to form this interpretive code. These statements centered on the concept that planning for long-term issues, and inserting a sense of balance was mandatory in a PBP system. “Given the right number of resources, you can do anything... [ProComp] may be

too complicated in some areas [of the program]” (Davin & Ferguson, 2014, p. 6). “The money for hard-to-staff schools averages \$85 a month, and I don’t think that’s enough” (Davin & Ferguson, 2014, p. 7). Feasibility of a program discussed in Odden and Kelley (2002) pointed to the community’s responsibility to provide fiscal support for any compensation system in place. The community would also have to plan for a continued growth over time, and to have planned financially for that outcome. Odden and Kelley (2002) continued by stating that when communities fail to plan effectively, or to try and base a reward system on the current outlay for teacher salaries, the result is a negative effect on teacher confidence in community support.

Professional development, one of the two key features of the current single salary schedule, is still heralded as the best indicator of teacher improvement and the feature supported heavily by the NEA and other teacher support groups (Davin and Ferguson, 2014). The Portland School District created a new system of performance-based on the actual performance of the teacher as determined by the integration of research based strategies garnered through directed professional development (Davin and Ferguson, 2014). Interestingly, the inclusion of professional development was not connected to the theme systemization.

Amey and VanDerLinden (2014) stated “Regular step increases in salaries, common in unionized institutions, may require a demonstration of “merit,” such as professional development” (p. 22). “This is an opportunity to advance your professionalism and get compensated for it at the same time. Now I get compensated salary-wise for what I would do anyway” (Davin & Ferguson, 2014, p. 24). McCabe (2010) stated, “extra money is not a silver bullet, it must be part of a comprehensive

system that invests in things that make a difference in teaching and learning such as experience, knowledge and skills” (para. 6).

The second interpretative code was that of protection that drew from statements that formed a sense of protection either from union or teacher political actions. Davin and Ferguson (2014) stated:

The Denver Classroom Teachers Association did a good job of representing all member in its negotiations. The association ensured that experienced teachers could choose when, during a seven-year period, it was most financially advantageous for them to opt-in and made allowances for those who decided to remain on the single salary schedule for the rest of their careers. (p.7)

These statements are supported in the literature of (Kennedy, 2005) and (Koppich, 2005), both of which indicated that teacher protection often comes from a concerted effort from the teachers unions, and only through their support can a PBP system be created.

Conclusion

The three themes, *Truth and Belief*, *Fear and Loss*, and *Safety and Protection*, formed a cycle of experience reflected in the documents and related to past experiences of performance-based pay and merit programs which continue to inform the current knowledge base. The following sections share other phenomena connected to this single case study of performance-based pay and merit programs captured in the survey administered to elementary teachers of the Pandora District and in-depth interviews conducted with five elementary teachers.

Answering the Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions that teachers have about the phenomenon of pursuing a performance-based pay system as it exists in its

natural setting. The rationale for this study emerged from a career long question about the validity and truth behind performance-based pay systems, as well as a corresponding initiative on state and federal fronts to engage in performance base pay systems for teachers.

My research questions were derived from my initial experiences with trying to understand performance-based pay, and determining my own place as an educator within such a system. As I learned more myself my questions became focused on the perceptions of the teachers around me and led to the development of three related research questions.

1. What are the perceptions that teachers have about performance-based pay systems?
2. How do teachers perceive accountability in reference to performance-based pay systems?
3. How do teachers perceive equity in reference to performance-based pay systems?

Synthesis of the data collected in this study created a crystallization of understanding concerning the perceptions that teachers had about performance-based pay programs. This crystallization reaches its full potential through a process where multiple perspectives were observed, coded and grouped by common themes. These multiple facets of understanding exist together and in tandem as the full realization of the phenomenon in its entirety is understood. These themes are depicted in table 5.

Table 5.

Synthesis of Themes Across Sources

	Truth and Belief	Knowledge and Design	Safety and Protection	Issues of Systemic Change	Uncontrollable Factors	Determining Value	Fear and Loss
Documents	x		x				x
Open Ended Questions		x					x
Interviews				x	x	x	x

These facets of understanding have provided a basis of knowledge necessary to answer the questions of this study. Question one asked how the teachers perceived performance-based pay systems, an over-arching question that is supported by questions two and three.

Overwhelmingly, all data sources confirmed a sense of *Fear and Loss*, feelings of anxiety about PBP as it relates to a fear of change, and a belief that the accompanying competition between teachers for higher test scores will create isolation. Teachers also responded that their perceptions of performance-based pay programs were inherently unfair, designed with perceived false assumptions about student and teacher motivations, and were lacking in their ability to control for the variables inherent in social systems that create school and classroom environments. These supporting beliefs were described within the context of the themes *Truth and Belief*, *Knowledge and Design*, *Issues of Systemic Change*, and *Uncontrollable Factors*, each describing a different aspect of PBP as it relates to the overall experience.

Truth and Belief was identified through document analysis and related espoused beliefs from society about the value of PBP. Documents were gathered through an Internet search results which represented a basic source of information teachers used to

define their beliefs. During the interviews, I asked teachers where they obtain information about PBP plans, all of them reported the internet. The closed-question section of the survey asked subjects whether or not they believed that student growth could be adequately measured by standardized testing. The results indicated that 4.26% believed that this could be done to a large degree, 65.96% said yes but to a minor degree, and 29.79% said no. Interview data confirmed this finding. Sally stated:

I am greatly opposed because there are the variables that we are being evaluated on that we have no control over. We have no control over the SES levels. But we also have no control over whether or not their home environment is healthy...

Knowledge and Design was a theme captured in the open-ended survey data that illuminated a base of knowledge by the teachers in the Pandora School District and was informed by information from Truth and Belief. *Issues of Systemic Change* were determined from the interview data, and represented a synthesis of the information from the themes truth and belief and knowledge and design. This synthesis on behalf of the teachers was created from a sense of what PBP was, combined with their own experiences in the classroom. *"I think performance-based pay forces teachers to "teach to the test" instead of teaching standards. I think bringing in competition would create a hostile work environment. Many people would steer away from becoming a teacher"* (Respondent 22, open-ended survey).

Uncontrollable Factors, the final informing theme for question one, supported the concerns about systemic change due to the belief that there are factors outside of the teacher's locus of control. These factors included inherent student ability, effects of poverty, and assumptions about race as depicted in deficit theory about the achievement of certain groups of students (Valencia, 1997).

I can teach my students content and curriculum, however I can't make them care or do their best on test. To base an evaluation of how a student feels or the amount of effort they are putting forth does not do a fair evaluation of the teacher's abilities.... (Respondent 8, open-ended survey)

Deficit theory was also depicted in the interviews of the majority of the participants.

These four themes, although not shared across data sets, constructed social belief system about the nature of PBP plans. This process is outlined and predicted by social constructivism and constructionism that portray the creation of social systems from a micro (teacher to teacher) and macro (society to teacher) of social interaction (Burr, 1995). These constructivist theories define a reinforcing pattern of social truth as it relates to PBP and determines the final reaction to PBP as defined in the theme *Fear and Loss*, the only theme apparent in all data sets and by far the most powerful. All of the other themes, although different based on the data set, reinforce feelings of loss. The perceptions of the teachers of the Pandora School District are based around the belief that performance-based pay will ultimately divide the teacher teachers, create isolation, and destroy systems of collegiality.

In the Davin & Ferguson (2014) document, a more intimate statement quoted from a member of the Eagle County School District that revealed *Fear and Loss* was, “*there is a lack of transparency. [Evaluations] do not want to give the top score [of five], or the lowest score [of one]. Therefore, scores tend to be judgmental.*” (p. 10).

Respondent 3 in the open-ended survey stated, “*I believe that performance-based pay would interfere with collaboration, sharing, and teamwork. It would create an “each man for himself” work environment.*” Sara explains loss of collegiality:

It could if it's based on one person, whoever does the best get's this. Or whoever does this gets paid more. I think if its, uh, dog eat dog, like only one person. I think that causes separation a little bit. Um, if it's kind of a accumulation of

things, it may be kind of your education, your involvement, like that's all part of your evaluation. Maybe not. But if it's kind of like, "Well you get paid more if you do this. Or if your students do this well. Or only one person in your grade level has the best test scores." I think that would cause issues.

Question two asked how teachers perceived accountability in reference to PBP plans. This question developed many facets, however, the theme *Uncontrollable Factors* was the most compelling of the data that addressed question two. These concerns were captured in the open-ended survey and interviews. Respondent 2 said:

I generally have more special education students in my class because I am able to meet their needs. How is that fair to me if I am paid based on their test scores if they are not proficient? I am not the only teacher working with them, but am penalized for their scores while other teachers that do not have special education students are not affected.

June did not have problem with being held accountable if students were assessed fairly, she pointed out:

I'm, I don't have a problem with it, if you're going to use the standardized test scores that work for my students. Meaning, you can't really evaluate my students using [State Standardized Test], because the [State Standardized Test] rules as they currently are, if the student comes into this country from another, they've been here a day, they still have to take the [State Standardized Test] Mathematics test, which is a ridiculous rule.

Teachers spoke from a belief that there were inherent abilities and variable within children that made the use of children's test scores invalid. These beliefs about children are reinforced at the state and national levels with the creation of pejorative language that determines certain children to be subgroups of children as a whole (Anonymous, 2012). The closed ended survey gave a picture of the teachers of Pandora School District lack of commitment to teach marginalized students over 60% stated they were either hesitant to teach this students or would not want to teach them, leaving approximately 40% who were willing to teach these groups.

The teachers were then asked if they felt that they would feel confident in their ability to teach students from groups of the population that have historically underperformed when compared with average white students. To their credit, 38.3% felt confident that they could teach these students; which include students of color, poor students, and special education students, but 44.68% said they would be hesitant to teach these students and 17.02% said that they would not want to teach those students if there was a possibility that their standardized test scores might negatively impact their evaluation or compensation.

Teachers are were also sensitive to the variables inherent in standardized testing.

They believe that there are issues related to testing that can interfere with their own evaluations such as the testing errors depicted by Boudett, City, & Murnane (2006).

The teachers in both the open-ended survey and interview were opposed to being evaluated on variables they could not control.

Performance-Based Pay IS NOT a valuable or reliable form of assessment. Come watch me balance and coach students that haven't had breakfast, didn't get any sleep the night before, and only hear fighting at home. THAT should be what performance-based-pay should be on. I hate the idea, completely (Respondent 9, open-ended survey).

Sally states:

I am greatly opposed because there are the variables that we are being evaluated on that we have no control over. We have no control over the SES levels. But we also have no control over whether or not their home environment is healthy. Great dysfunction, we all know, we've studied it. They can't come to school and be ready to learn. There are many families that come from poverty and no always just isn't that, but they have, they do not have the rich language, the rich reading and the rich conversations at home. And with the income, social, economic status differences, exposure to culture, where they would get hands on experience is missing.

Question number three asked how teachers perceive equity in reference to performance-based-pay systems. The results indicated that equity between teachers was lacking. The themes of *Truth and Belief*, *Knowledge and Design*, and *Issues with Systemic Change* all informed the responses to this question as depicted in question one, but the theme *Uncontrollable Factors* was the most persuasive.

Uncontrollable Factors was determined in part based on experiences with accountability that informed a sense of unfairness and equity between teachers. Sara was the most adamant in describing a sense of equity:

... why am I the only that's held accountable? And what does that mean for other teachers that aren't testing? Is it just us that are held accountable? And the younger grades? Because I'm not the only teacher students have had....

Teachers perceived that there were positions more likely to be effected by PBP plans, and others that were not. These feeling of inequity was supported in the internet documents Amey and VanDerLinden (2014):

Rewarding institutional or departmental performance may reduce the perceived unfairness of merit pay systems and hostility among colleagues. But across-the-board rewards ignore individual and departmental differences that may result in inequities and inefficiencies as the connection between salary and productivity is compromised. (p. 24)

Additionally, survey data supported this facet:

The teachers were then asked if there were teaching positions inherently easier or harder to teach based on whether or not the teacher's students participate in state standardized testing. The results were that 31.91% said yes to a large degree, 44.68% said yes to a minor degree, and 23.4% said no.

Hard to staff positions tend to also rely on state testing to evaluate growth, so there is a definite connection between what teachers indicate as a hard to staff position. This was also discussed in the open-end questions of the survey, *"I feel that performance-based pay systems will be unfair for teachers because every class is different"*(Respondent 2).

Interview data supported document and survey data as revealed in June's concerns about the differences between teaching assignments:

...And I think that would be a major problem for the teachers who are being evaluated. They're not going to like that at all. It's gonna be... That would be a big problem. I mean, because if I'm being evaluated on my test scores and you're

not being evaluated on any of that stuff, You're not, you're not like apples to oranges, but it still doesn't, it doesn't seem like a fair comparison.... Should there be different salary schedules for different positions...?

Conclusion

This study began with a set of overarching questions about teachers' perceptions of performance-based pay. Through the methodology of a single instrumental case study, based on heuristic inquiry, I was able to apprehend meanings of performance-based pay plans as portrayed in internet documents teachers are likely to use in gaining basic information about these plans, a mixed survey consisting of closed and open-ended questions, and in-depth interviews with five teachers of the Pandora School District.

Analysis of multiple data formed a crystallization of experience, which enable me to understand the meanings these teachers attributed to the phenomenon performance-based pay systems. Data set were analyzed through coding for interpretations and clustering into themes of meaning to produce a creative synthesis of the data.

Each of the methods used presented facets or viewpoints of understanding developed from the macro setting of social opinion to the micro setting of single subject experience (Burr, 1995). This study also illuminates an understanding of how teachers' perceptions of performance-based pay plans have existed in the past and present as well as how these meaning will inform and predict future experiences.

Findings expose an overall distrust of performance-based pay programs, supported through social communications both at the macro and micro levels. This mistrust was born in earlier documented failures of merit systems, and lingers in the minds of teachers as they are beginning to experience another effort to bring merit pay

back into mainstream politics as a solution to perceived issues of accountability with teachers.

The themes depicted in this study answered my questions about teacher perceptions related to equity and accountability, name only that the teachers believe that there are variables outside of their locus of control that that make it difficult to hold students accountable for student achievement outcomes as well as equity issues based on a teacher's unique teaching assignment.

Chapter five will discuss the implications and areas of future research concerning teacher's perceptions of PBP, as well as describe a cycle of reaction that emerged from the crystallization of meaning depicted in this chapter. I will conclude with final reflections on my journey to understand the notions my peers have about PBP systems and how this study has impacted my life as a teacher in the Pandora School District.

CHAPTER 5

CYLE OF REACTION: IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions teachers have about performance-based pay in a natural setting. My rationale for such an endeavor began many years ago; as a young teacher, I was confronted with questions about what performance base pay was, how it operated, and to what benefit it might have for me and my colleagues.

As a doctoral student, I had the opportunity to finally investigate performance-based pay (PBP). I learned early on in my research that I did not understand much about performance-based pay. What had seemed simple was in fact very complex and left me with more questions than answers. The realization that if I did not have a solid grasp on the reality and implications of PBP systems, led me to conclude it was likely that other teachers were also clueless about this phenomenon, so was born my research questions that led to the design of an instrumental single case study of the Pandora school District.

1. What are the perceptions that teachers have about performance-based pay systems?
2. How do teachers perceive accountability in reference to performance-based pay systems?
3. How do teachers perceive equity in reference to performance-based pay systems?

Findings indicate that teachers' perceive performance-based pay (PBP) systems as rife with problems that create systems of unfair accountability between teachers and fear

and loss about issues related to collegiality and teachers leaving the profession. The participants in this study also indicated that accountability is difficult to describe because multiple variables related to students, parents, and the environment cannot be completely accounted for in PBP systems. These findings are supported by districts that have implemented such plans. Mintrop (2004) examined the use of an outcome-based accountability system in California that was unable to close the achievement gap. Reasoning behind this inability was established when variables outside the control of the schools were attributed to teacher effectiveness. Essentially, the state discovered that there were many aspects of education that cannot be accounted for on standardized testing. Given these aspects, teachers feel that there are issues with equity tied to the perceived inherent unfairness of the PBP system, and these issues will likely result in unfair compensation and evaluative measures. As discussed earlier, Gallagher (2004), and Loveless (2000) indicate that more successful systems downplay the effects of standardized test scores by adding in elements of a more comprehensive evaluation system, such as teacher observations, and other forms of qualitative data.

In this chapter, I report on a cycle of reaction as teachers begin to know, to experience, and then to protect themselves from perceived or real threats related to performance-based pay or merit systems. Secondly, implications of findings are discussed followed by recommendations for future research. I conclude with my final thoughts and reflections as a result of this journey.

The Cycle of Reaction

In the process of answering research questions, certain themes emerged from the data sets that formed a holistic *cycle of reaction* by teachers to performance-based pay

initiatives. This cycle, which contained three stages, *to know*, *to experience*, and *to protect* was discovered and compared across the three distinct sources of data (See table 6).

Table 6.
Synthesis of Themes Across Sources and Grouped by Cycle of Reaction

	To Know		To Experience		To Protect	
	Truth and Belief	Knowledge and Design	Issues of Systemic Change	Uncontrollable Factors	Fear and Loss	Safety and Protection
Documents	x				x	x
Open Ended Questions		x			x	
Interviews			x	x	x	

Each of the three parts work together simultaneously as elements of the cycle and, in this study, communicated the need to return to the status quo. These themes as discovered through the analysis of documents, survey data, and in-depth interviews were determined to be as follows:

- Document analysis portrayed three dominant themes of *Truth and Belief*, *Fear and Loss*, and *Safety and Protection*
- Open-ended survey analysis revealed themes of *Knowledge and Design* and *Fear and Loss*
- Interview cross case analysis identified three major themes of *Uncontrollable Factors*, *Issues with Systemic Change*, and *Fear of Loss*

These themes not only existed in the now, but also universally from an aspect of past, present, and future. Although the themes of understanding, *Truth and Belief* and *Knowledge and Design* did not exist for all teachers at the same time, viewing these themes over time indicated that teachers will or already have experienced this phenomenon. The stage of the cycle, *to know*, integrated knowledge about past and current PBP and merit pay design with knowledge about the driving assumptions about teacher and student motivation and accountability. These themes represent socially constructed knowledge about the truth behind educational value and accountability and vary depending on an individual's position in the larger society. To know something is the result of a complex mix of socially driven mores and values, facts, and perceived truths about occurrences within the world (Burr, 1995). Teachers come from a unique subset of the population of a community both locally and nationally. As predicted by theories of social constructivism and constructionism, the teachers of Pandora School District have feelings and knowledge about performance-based pay that align with their peers and with the population of teachers at large. These perceptions were reflected across the sample of teachers that responded to the survey, the documents derived from Internet searches, and the in-depth interviews of five teachers. Knowledge about PBP systems was voiced in the documents in examples such as:

Most people do not understand the test score evaluation on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). No one understands the value-added method of determining student growth on CSAP...No one should do pay for performance as it is being done here... If anyone wants to see how to do everything wrong, come to Eagle County (Davin and Ferguson, 2014, p. 10).

This form of knowledge was supported in the survey questions with teachers who acknowledge that their information about PBP was limited, or that they did not

understand PBP systems, “*I have mixed feelings.... Need more knowledge on the topic*”

(Respondent 25). These feelings were reported by the teachers who participated in the interviews, such as Melody who stated:

Um, but I think they're thinking, you know, my school's lower than these five elementary schools...So it's going to be harder for us to move the kids up. And so I do think that there is a lot of still misunderstanding about it.

The aspect of knowing about PBP is a challenging topic. Teachers and especially their unions are very vocal in their opinions about what they know and believe about PBP plans. They categorize them as a source of merit that becomes subjective and can be used capriciously against them (Odden & Kelley, 2002).

The stage of the cycle, *to experience*, integrated themes related to *Issues with Systemic Change* based on perceived false student and educator motivational assumptions, and *Uncontrollable Factors* that entailed teachers’ perceptions about student variables that may result in unfair evaluations. *Issues with Systemic Change* reflected in documents portrayed that limited involvement will not motivate teachers to embrace change. An excerpt from an internet document paints such a picture:

Faculty concerns about merit pay often reflect minimal collegial involvement in designing or evaluation the process that serves as the basis for merit increases. The award of merit pay is usually an administrative decision, even in unionized institutions where a faculty committee conducts evaluations. Lack of participation can lead to faculty suspicion of administrative manipulation, disempowerment, and suppressed ideas outside the ideological mainstream. Suspicions that office politics or administrative agendas influence salary decisions may continue unless faculty involvement increases, clear criteria are established, and processes are communicated clearly (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2014 p. 24).

Perceptions about *Uncontrollable Factors* were reflected in the open ended surveys with statements such as:

I feel that performance-based pay systems will be unfair for teachers because every class is different. Teachers will be less likely to want sub-groups in their

rooms. Standardized tests do not measure or celebrate the growth of students, such as ELL students (Respondent 2).

Interview data provided many examples unfairness as noted in a segment of

June's interview:

. . . . I mean, because if I'm being evaluated on my test scores and you're not being evaluated on any of that stuff, and if the potential is, you know, you could possibly earn bonuses and that sort of thing. From my understanding it's not, of course you're not measuring the same thing. You're not, you're not like apples to oranges, but it still doesn't, it doesn't seem like a fair comparison. Because at this point the teachers are all, you know, were all on one pay scale. So that brings up the question... "Should there be different salary schedules for different positions.

The stage of the cycle, *to protect*, as portrayed in the themes of *Safety and Protection* and *Fear and Loss* was developed from the many facets of teacher reactions to perceived issues of unfairness and lack of control over their profession. These issues included but were not limited to, pursuing union or legal action, pursuing political change (Sampson, Silva, & Marshall, 2010), engaging in data and environment manipulation (Frysh, 2011), withdrawing from collegial behavior, cheating in the form of altering student answers to test questions, or unethically preparing the students for the test by giving them questions in advance. This evidence is supported in the literature through examples reported by Frysh (2011) and Jonsson (2011) that indicated that teachers will engage in unethical behaviors when job security is threatened.

The theme of *Safety and Protection* was identified in internet documents that described the role of unions as a form of protection for teachers. Davin and Ferguson (2014) render efforts of teacher associations to advocate for teachers.

The Denver Classroom Teachers Association did a good job of representing all member in its negotiations. The association ensured that experienced teachers could choose when, during a seven-year period, it was most financially advantageous for them to opt-in and made allowances for those who decided to remain on the single salary schedule for the rest of their careers. (p.7)

Kennedy (2005) and Koppich (2005) indicated that teacher protection often comes from a concerted effort from the teachers unions, and only through their support can a PBP system be created.

Statements related to *Fear and Loss* resonated in the survey and in-depth interviews of the five teachers, ranging from unfair evaluation to loss of collegiality and teachers leaving the profession. June in response to *Fear and Loss* relayed in her interview: “*You know I might consider moving to English Language Arts at the high school instead of elementary. I might consider looking for jobs elsewhere, outside of education.*” Sally reacts to *Fear and Loss* in order to protect:

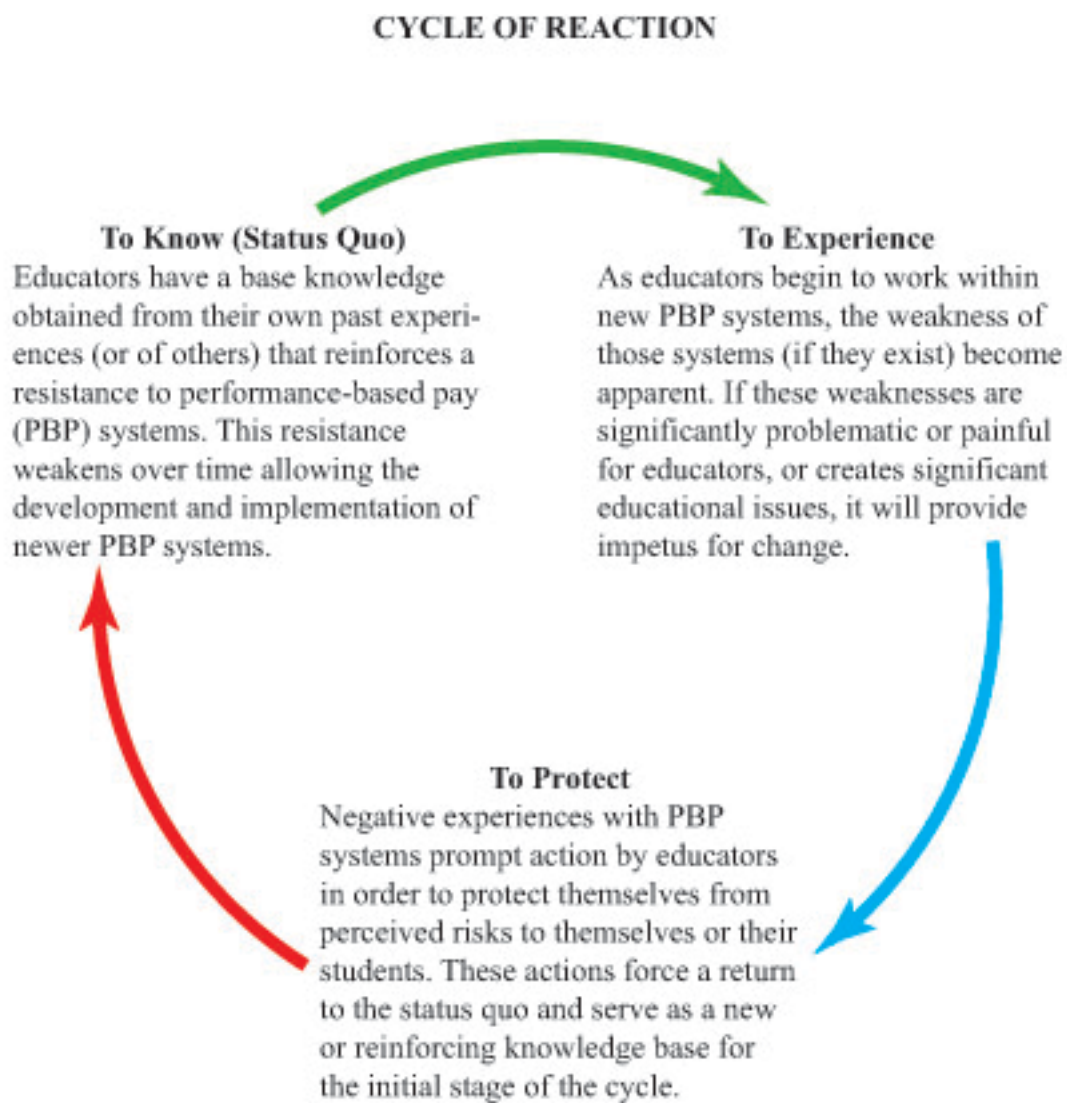
More for the principle, I'd just go into policy to get things changed. I would become, probably, in policy and in speaking. Because it will, I feel it will, bankrupt education. You are going to have groves of teachers leave. It's more for the principle of the matter. Its wrong, wrong on so many levels.

“Merit systems force teachers to compete, rather than cooperate. They create a disincentive for teachers to share information and teaching techniques. This is especially true because there is always a limited pool of money for merit pay” (Anonymous, 2014. Para. 31).

These three stages not only stand alone as distinct experiences of the phenomenon, but also form a cycle of reaction as teachers begin to know, to experience, and then to protect themselves from perceived or real threats related to performance-based pay or merit systems. (See figure 5.1.) Furthermore, historical and research based evidence clearly supports that merit pay and PBP systems rarely work; they collapse due to issues with equity, financial solubility, and the immense political leverage that teachers hold as a group when interacting with the public (Koppich, 2005; Sampson, Silva, & Marshall, 2010). For instance, the Colorado School District spent inordinate amounts of

money lobbying district teachers in an attempt to sway political favor in support of their new TAP initiative (Jupp, 2005). Issues related to PBP systems create and sustain this cycle (Milanowski, 2004; Rothstein, 2005; and Weaver, 2003). Yet, teachers are willing to engage in a program with new aspects (Jupp, 2005) if the allusion to equity can be supported, or if teacher evaluation is eliminated or minimalized from the program (Koppich, 2005).

Figure 5.1.



My research of PBP systems suggest that the first stage of the cycle is the longest stage, lasting for years or decades and represent a time frame of relative stability, but the knowledge base may change over time as newer ideas or systems evolve or are introduced. Findings from my inquiry suggest that the chief source of new information garnered by teachers comes from their own building administrators and if teachers feel that they need more information, they will then turn to the Internet. The building administrator as a source of information may influence teachers to engage in a plan or make rash decisions about PBP systems or merit systems if most of their knowledge base is incomplete and their experiences with PBP systems are not first hand.

My findings also indicate that mature teachers have experienced enough variation in their own test scores to be apprehensive of an evaluation system and more likely to be non-supportive or to engage in protection-based behaviors. As the Pandora School District is in the process of implementing performance-base evaluations (the first step towards moving towards performance-based pay program), teachers are now beginning the second state of the cycle, *to experience*.

The final stage of the cycle, *to protect*, has not yet begun at Pandora, but is evident in schools around the nation as different states are further along the process such as in Chicago (Sampson, Silva, & Marshall, 2010), or Florida (Troman, Jefferey & Raggle, 2007), where teacher strikes or the threat therein had distinct consequences for both sides of the issue. As discussed earlier, thoughts on protection are already in the minds of teachers, but their reactions will be determined by the actions of the state or federal government and subsequently the programs designed by Pandora stakeholders.

The cycle of reaction portrays the experiences of teachers in the Pandora School District with the phenomenon of performance-based plans as apprehended in the documents, a mixed survey and in-depth interviews with five teachers.

The purpose of this heuristic case study was to understand the perceptions teachers have about performance-based pay in its natural setting. The *cycle of reaction*, which reflected teachers' perceptions of the phenomenon, was used to illustrate how teachers of Pandora School District might experience the implementation of PBP. The following section provides a discussion of their current status with such plans and the environment for their support.

The Current Status of Pandora Teachers with PBP. Teachers at Pandora School District have emerged from the first segment of the cycle. They have expressed through survey data and in-depth interviews a concern for the impending systemic failure that PBP systems generally bring, whether through a lack of planning, the statistically impossible attempts to use standardized test scores to evaluate teachers, or the financial unfeasibility to actually maintain such a program. The three more tenured teachers, Sally, June, and Francis were more likely to voice concerns based on their knowledge base of PBP plans and were more hesitant to embrace them. Sarah and Melody, the younger teachers were more conflicted, although Sarah, who was less conflicted, was the only one of the subjects to extend her knowledge base by researching the experiences of others.

As these teachers are beginning the process of being evaluated annually through performance-based assessments, Sally, June, and Francis were more forthcoming in their beliefs that PBP would be unfair due to student variables outside their locus of control; years of service informed them that PBP systems were not a good idea. Again Sarah and

Melody, expressed concern that there was a possibility of unfairness inherent in the system and were conflicted based on the trust they had in their administrators; believing that PBP would not be harmful to them.

Although these teachers were beginning to experience the process they were more focused on planning their own protection. Pandora School District as a result of state policy making, has not yet required PBP plans to be put in place. As states such as Missouri are pursuing legislation linking student test scores to teacher evaluation, retention and pay (Ballotpedia 2014), teachers are becoming more aware of possible avenues of change. This reaction was indicated in the large-scale survey as 17%, one out of six teachers, reported that they would definitely leave teaching if forced to participate in a PBP plan.

Given the findings of this study, and the willingness of federal and state governments to put performance-based pay programs into effect, it would behoove a district to proactively create contingency plans in the eventuality that PBP policies may come into effect. The state of Missouri added Amendment 3 to their November 2014 ballot, which would have effectively removed all teacher protections by eliminating teacher tenure, base pay exclusively on the results of standardized testing for all teachers, and require school districts to retain or remove teachers based on standardized test scores (Kander, 2014). The ballot text read:

Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended to:

- Require teachers to be evaluated by a standards based performance evaluation system for which each local school district must receive state approval to continue receiving state and local funding;
- Require teachers to be dismissed, retained, demoted, promoted and paid primarily using quantifiable student performance data as part of the evaluation system;
- Require teachers to enter into contracts of three years or fewer with public

- school districts; and
- Prohibit teachers from organizing or collectively bargaining regarding the design and implementation of the teacher evaluation system?

Decisions by school districts regarding provisions allowed or required by this proposal and their implementation will influence the potential costs or savings impacting each district. Significant potential costs may be incurred by the state and/or the districts if new/additional evaluation instruments must be developed to satisfy the proposal's performance evaluation requirements. (Kander, 2014)

The results of the November 4th election illuminated a lack of support by the citizens of Missouri. The amendment failed overwhelmingly 24% to 76%. There were several issues at play concerning the overall control of district personnel, and the projected costs should the amendment pass, but the reported reasons in the media voiced opinions about the perceived unfairness of high stakes evaluations (Associated Press, 2014).

In Pandora School District, findings of this single case study indicated that teachers' perceptions of performance-based pay (PBP) systems are overwhelmingly negative in that they view them as rife with problems that create systems of unfair accountability between teachers and fear and loss about issues related to collegiality and teachers leaving the profession. They also do not want to be held accountable for uncontrollable student variables and most do not want to teach students of poverty, students of color, and students with special needs. Given the growing support for such plans and the resurgence in their interests, implications of the findings for the district are discussed in the next section.

Implications of Findings

This study indicates that the question of whether or not, mainstream theories of motivation are incomplete in regards to teachers, when accounting for individuals who are engaged in a life calling, and not necessarily a simple job or task related work

opportunity. This perspective is supported by Public Service Motivation Theory that claims public service employees are more altruistically aligned than their private sector counterparts (O’Riordan, 2013). This theory contradicts a belief that by incentivizing teachers with small amounts of money would improve teaching. This contradiction could explain a consistent failure of performance related programs in education, which can be predicted given that the motivation for career choice and affection for a system cannot be accounted for financially.

State and federal law may make performance base pay a reality for districts in many states. Implementing those laws within a district may be a difficult, if not an impossible task, if not done properly. History is replete with examples of districts that put ill-conceived plans into place just to watch them implode within a matter of months or several years. For instance, in the state of Missouri the Teach Great Campaign, funded by Rex Sinquefeld, has successfully added Amendment 3 to the November 4th election (Ballotpedia, 2014); however, supporters for Amendment 3 pulled their support of the amendment due to a lack of public support, and staunch resistance by teacher unions, school boards, and administrations. This waning support has not been able to dissuade the state of Missouri from creating a new evaluation system which has been written in the language provisions for student performance as an indicator of teacher success (NEE, 2014).

Research has indicated that teacher support is paramount in the implantation of such a plan, and that support can be fleeting in the face of poorly executed systems (Collom & Ogawa, 2000). Avoiding pitfalls requires the interruption of the cycle of reaction at the experiential level. Performance-based pay can have positive effects on

district improvement goals depending on the definition that is employed concerning performance. For instance, when teacher evaluations are based almost entirely on actions taken within the classroom or school setting, there is more perceived control, and correspondingly, more perceived ownership and validity of the system. Performance related programs of this type have been in existence, rather successfully. Career ladder is an example of a performance related bonus program that compensates teachers based on extra duties performed within the school setting.

Other school districts, such as in Denver Colorado, have used monies to compensate teachers for performing in a hard to staff position for years (Jupp, 2005). In large suburban districts with difficult populations to serve, the use of performance related money to attract and retain teachers in hard to staff positions have led to an increase in state test scores, if for no other reason, but to slow down the revolving door of teachers beginning or unfortunately ending their careers in education (Mouthrop et al., 2005).

When performance of a teacher becomes dependent on the performance of a student, validity of the system declines both statistically and perceptually for the teacher. In the event that test scores play a part in the evaluation and then eventually the compensation of a teacher, it would be in a district's best interest to limit the impact that those scores have on that evaluation or compensation system (Loveless, 2000). In the event that a performance related system is introduced into a district, large suburban districts like Pandora will need to come to terms with the inevitable plateau of scores related to the maxing out of an implantation curve related to the institutionalization of the program. An implantation curve implies two things: when a significant change to a program is initiated, a dip in outcomes may occur and be expected, and change implies

that over time as effort in the new system stabilizes, so does the outcome growth.

Depending on how long the duration of the recovery from the implantation dip lasts, the architects of the program may choose to alter or abandon a new system too soon (Lee & Min, 2014).

The issue for larger high performing districts, such as Pandora, the room for growth may not statistically allow for success to be determined before support of the PBP system wanes. Research indicates that the amount of systemic change needed to move a district one standard deviation above the norm would require more effort and public support than generally is available for that initiative. It would behoove a district to set significant goals of student improvement based on PBP systems. In all reality, school districts like Pandora are more likely to weather the change in political opinion concerning PBP plans by neither embracing them nor condemning them.

Districts like Pandora would do best to create systems related to performance without compromising the research supported benefits of teacher improvement and professional development; altering the current pay structure in such a way that returning to the inevitable status quo will occur easily, maintaining a perception of a higher level of integrity as it relates to the evaluation and compensation of its teachers. For instance, districts like Pandora can support their already successful students and teachers by vocally rewarding current levels of success and using monies to create professional development opportunities for teachers that would enhance the teachers' current skill sets and maintain more balanced growth curve while supporting local initiatives. These monies would technically be used for performance, but can be tied to an action under the control of teachers and administrators.

Sometimes, what is *not said* speaks louder than what *is said*. There was one element of surprise that was discovered in the conduct of this case study of the Pandora school district. Not once, in any interview or survey response did any teacher voice a concern about the amount of pay they receive, or might receive in regards to PBP systems. In every single case, without exception, every teacher responded that their greatest concerns revolved around the loss of relationships with those around them. Pay was never an issue, an increase in teacher hostility or isolation represented the single greatest fear.

As stated in the methodology a limitation of this study regarded the limiting nature of the district population and broader community, composed mostly of Whites with very few Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, or other people of color. Because of this limitation, the information gathered can only be used to indicate perceptions of a mostly middle and upper middle class group of White teachers which suggest other areas for future research.

Future Research

Future research in any topic provides a larger more critically validated base of knowledge from which to act. In this particular study, I answered questions about my colleagues' perceived perceptions about PBP plans, but recognized that more research in this area is needed. This study was a clear view of the perspectives of middle to upper middle class white females in an upwardly mobile school district that performs very well on state exams. This narrow slice of American education provides many opportunities for future research in multiple locations, which would contribute to a more comprehensive

body of knowledge. People of color and males were almost entirely silent in this study, so were those individuals who teach in the rural and urban sectors of our society.

- Future research could be conducted in rural and urban areas and with a more diverse population.
- Studies might investigate if males are more supportive of compensation systems than females.

Jupp (2005) suggests that performance-based pay provides an impetus for qualified teachers to teach in hard to staff positions, and extra pay for difficult teaching assignments such as teaching in high poverty urban environments which has the effect of retaining teachers longer, leading to an increase in achievement (Loveless (2000; Moulthrop et al., 2005). This particular study illustrates the phenomenon of teachers who have students who are already performing at the upper tier on state tests and are recognized as such.

- Future research could be conducted for determining if compensating teachers for would indeed lead to the retention of teachers in urban areas.
- Likewise, future research could pursue the extent to which extra pay would attract and retain teachers in rural communities.

In my experience, finding articles in the media promoting new PBP plans were not hard to find. School districts as political organizations, tend to publicize PBP plans with much effort (Jupp, 2005). When asked about how certain programs fared, information can be difficult to find especially if the plan did not fair well.

- Future research could also be conducted to put in place expo facto studies that would scientifically analyze the causes of PBP failures.

Although it did not manifest in all aspects of this study, there were indicators that younger teachers might be more willing to engage in a riskier compensation system even at the possible loss of long term benefits, such as job or compensation security. This result seems to have been noticed by proponents for PBP plans who allow tenured teachers to remain in their current track, while forcing younger teachers to adhere to the new system (Jupp, 2005).

- Future research could investigate if younger teachers are more likely to be attracted to PBP systems than older teachers.

Questions concerning the possibility that education as a social system will never adequately meet the needs of the population of a country so completely dependent on a capitalistic, competition driven philosophy. I base this argument on successes held by democratic countries like Finland who have embraced more liberal or socially progressive policies since World War II. Finland boasts some of the highest international test scores, and the reasons that have been attributed to this success are in complete contradiction with current American educational values (Sahlberg, 2010). Finnish schools provide medical, dental, and breakfast and lunch to all students. These schools prohibit a new teacher from having sole control over a classroom until they have spent years working directly under a master teacher (Sahlberg, 2010). Most controversially, Finnish schools give no standardized tests to their students. Accountability is managed through effective leader practices and demonstrated proficiency by the teacher (Sahlberg, 2010).

- Future studies might pursue the use of long term mentoring with a master teacher to improve the quality of teaching, supporting teachers fairly for such arrangements.

- Longitudinal studies are needed to assess learning outcomes of students with alternatives other than standardized testing.

As I pursue areas for future research, it is impossible not to reflect on a long term career of questions about performance-based pay, its effects, conditions, possibilities, and implications for success and self-worth. I look back on four years of research and study. I look back on myself, my colleagues, my school, state and a country in a climate that seems to have become increasingly more hostile towards public education. Thus, reflections and final notes enable me to place my study in a broader perspective of student learning and reflect on what really matters, making a difference for students.

Reflection and Final Notes

What I have learned, and experienced is that teacher accountability, the heart and soul of PBP systems, is an extremely complex concept with many tentacles that extend deep into the underpinnings of American society, writhing and tugging at us in ways we do not expect. At this point, it becomes impossible to truly separate the teacher from the student, grown together and symbiotic, one does not exist or act without the other. Ultimately, I believe that the success of teachers can be judged by the success of their students, and to a degree, I believe that is true. At the same time, I can not rule out the concept of choice. A student has choice in participation, unlike any other living thing on this planet. It is my experience that children do not often react with their own best interests in mind. Their actions are based on complex interactions and experiences of which all children have distinctly unique lives couched within a range of what is considered normal. But what is normal? Can normal in something as complex as a human child truly be quantified?

My experience in the classroom tells me that our jobs are defined more philosophically than what could ever be expressed in terms of a contract or statement of tenure. I agree with one of the teachers who likened teachers to nuns or monks. Our commitment to our profession transcends a paycheck, and systems like performance-based pay are likely as insulting to me, as it might be to others who follow a calling. Accountability is of course vital in education, but we should be careful of what we are holding evident and choosing to reward.

I look back on this letter sent to me by a former student. This student was troubled and although quite intelligent, came from a disturbing home environment where the mother, a single parent, burned his clothes and tore up his homework when he misbehaved. This student struggled with allowing adults to be in charge and expressed, what could be considered, radical comments in the face of the very recent World Trade Center attacks. These comments did not endear him to his classmates, or teachers.

Although his classwork was not always the best, and likely his test scores were not up to his ability level in all of his classes, this student made incredible amounts of growth in an environment that valued his own personal perspective but held him accountable for his behavior. When this student transferred to another building within the district, I also had the opportunity to move buildings advance to the next grade level. Before the next year started, I went into the office administrator, explained this student's unique needs, and asked for this student to be placed on my team. The administrator acquiesced and I earned another opportunity to help this student deal with vital important personal issues. As his 8th grade year drew to a close, I learned that he did not have a

yearbook (due to a lack of money, or another one of his mother's incomprehensible disciplinary strategies). I purchased one for him and left him a message.

As time moved on, and this student moved on to high school, I kept my eye on him from a distance, communicating with his current teachers. He ended up transferring districts and as Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act made it difficult to keep tabs on him, I eventually lost complete track of him. In May of 2007, I received this letter.

Mr. Marsh!

It's your favorite detention-ee, _____. This may sound weird to you but a few weeks ago I was cleaning out my room and I came across the only yearbook of my academic experiences and it happened to be the 2003 8th grade yearbook you so generously gave to me. I read your message and thought long and hard about what you attempted to get across to me, it seemed odd that I'd have to wait a good four years to truly comprehend what you intended to install in me. Not sure if you remember but your words were encouraging and almost desperate in diction, you genuinely wanted me to succeed and overcome any obstacles that may stand in my way.

The impact of that paragraph may have looked insignificant but the two years that I spent with you molded me and my maturation process. At the time of my 7/8th grade year, I might have actually preferred a different teacher for Life Ed, Math/Algebra, and Reading (I guess detention isn't a class). Little did I know that I'd look fondly back on those courses and realize that they have affected me in a remarkably beneficial way. I'll soon be graduating from _____ High School, tomorrow actually at Municipal. I've ran into a lot of hurdles and tough times which is something that I think you anticipated for me but regardless I think I've had a decent experience. I actually won a scholarship a few weeks back where I saw Mrs. _____ and it made me think about how much your rationale in your classes shaped who I am today. Probably not to your surprise, I joined debate in the short time I was at Pandora and continued that at _____

_____ and I've qualified to Nationals 3 years in a row luckily.

Myself and a teammate placed 2nd in FBLA at the state tournament. I've won a few local scholarships but by far my greatest accomplishment has been winning the "prestigious" Horatio Alger National Scholarship which was for a handsome amount of \$20,000 and a free trip to D.C. where I've met some of the nation's most influential people (I'm talking more than just politicians, it was an amazing journey). I've maintained a 3.76 GPA and I've been active in volunteer groups and other extra-curriculars while working.

I'm honestly not trying to brag, I just want you to be able to potentially take something away from my minimal to mediocre achievements. As cheesy as it may sound, I owe a lot of my success to you and your individual efforts and concern for my well being...

It's totally been worth the detentions....

I look back on the effect that my concern for him had on his self-perception and later successes, and although I know that many other influential teachers impacted this young man, I worry that the changing tides of educational accountability will have the end result of turning students into commodities to be traded or sold. I worry that these students will be minimized in order to provide a teacher with the best possible crop of test scores that will result in the best opportunity for job retention and financial security.

These concerns are mirrored in issues mentioned by teachers like Sally who openly admitted that she would have concerns teaching students who she regarded as inherently below average as compared with their white counterparts. I believe there is room in the expanding body of knowledge concerning PBP systems to attend to possible negative ramifications that could impact students of color, disabled students, or students who have experienced other educational set-backs.

Deficit theory is based on the perceptions that a person can have concerning the abilities of students who come from poverty. The theory states that there is a belief system in place that defines students of poverty as having less potential than their counterparts due to specific attributes associated with their demographics. This theory extends to all students of color, and those who suffer mental, emotional, or physical disabilities (Valencia, 1997). Issues of deficient thinking reinforce a belief in continued failure that can be shared by all members in an educational system from parents, students, teachers, and administrators (Valencia, 1997).

More attention needs to be given to researching deficit theories and their impact on laws such as No Child Left Behind, or Race to the Top. Accountability in these

programs seem to have become a reinforcing aspect of standardized testing and have ceased to be a goal, and also appear to have become an excuse for failure. These aspects of student characteristics, I fear, have led to the development of tracking systems and other such detrimental behaviors that have determined the value and ability levels of students at Pandora School District.

Certainly there are many aspects of performance-based pay systems that need to be investigated. This study is but just a beginning in understanding the complex issues at play in attempting to ascertain the value a teacher has, the value that his or her students have, and how those values can be accounted for. In a society that places accountability of other people above all else, significant changes in our own paradigms may be needed to overcome the obstacles that face our students, parents, and communities.

Appendix: A

Large Scale Survey

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH

STUDY PERFORMANCE BASED PAY:

Introduction

This study is part of a dissertation project whose design is to understand the perceptions that elementary teachers have concerning performance based pay programs. You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. This study is being conducted at Pandora School District. The researcher in charge of this study is Scott Marsh. While the study will be run by him, other qualified persons who work with him may act for him. As this is a dissertation, my committee chair, also listed as the principal investigator, is Dr. Loyce Caruthers.

The study team is asking you to take part in this research study because you are an elementary teacher at Pandora. Research studies only include people who choose to take part. Please read this consent form carefully and take your time making your decision. The study doctor or staff will go over this consent form with you. Ask him/her to explain anything that you do not understand. Think about it and talk it over with your family and friends before you decide if you want to take part in this research study. This consent form explains what to expect: the risks, discomforts, and benefits, if any, if you consent to be in the study. As a subject of this study you will participate in a questionnaire, and possibly an in-depth interview.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to understand teacher perceptions of performance base pay programs. Research has indicated that programs are considerably more successful if there is teacher cooperation in the design of such a study. Research also indicates that successful implementation of such a program depends on understanding these perceptions in order such that the district and its teachers are able to make accurate decisions concerning performance based pay programs before these plans can be initiated. Although there are many quantitative studies detailing the effectiveness of these programs, there are very few that illuminate qualitatively the perceptions that teachers have concerning performance based pay programs.

This study is designed to add to the body of knowledge concerning performance based pay programs. You will be one of about 400 subjects in the study at Park Hill. Although most of those 400 will likely complete the survey, only about 5-10 subjects total will be selected to take part in the in-depth interview phase of the study.

Study Procedures and Treatments

This study will be conducted in two phases. The first phase is an electronic questionnaire, and the second phase will be an in-depth interview. Questionnaire: Survey questions will be emailed to all of the elementary teachers in the Pandora School district. This email communication will detail the purpose and rationale for the study. Teachers may choose to participate in phase one of the study and decide later if they wish to volunteer for phase two. The survey will ask eleven basic questions about the demographics of the teacher including teaching responsibilities. The survey will continue

by asking twenty forced choice questions concerning their background knowledge of performance based pay programs.

The final part of the survey will ask the teacher to respond to six open answer questions concerning their experiences with performance-based pay programs. At the end of the questionnaire, subjects will be asked if they are willing to participate in an in-depth interview concerning their experiences. This survey should take no more than twenty minutes to complete.

In-Depth Interview: The in-depth interview will take place at a location of the subject's choosing. This may include their home, library, local public area, or even their classroom. The interview will proceed with a series of questions identifying characteristics of the teachers and then proceed to questions concerning their experiences with performance based pay systems.

I have thoroughly read the consent form listed in the question and agree to participate in the survey section of this study. I understand that this does not obligate me to participate in the interview section, but I have the option to participate if I choose to at the end of the survey.

(electronic signature)

Part 1

- 1) I would describe my position within the school district as....
 - a. Part time teacher or assistant teacher

- b. Full time teacher
- 2) The current grade level I teach is....
- a. Kindergarten/Pre-K
 - b. First
 - c. Second
 - d. Third
 - e. Fourth
 - f. Fifth
- 3) The subject or placement from which I teach is
- a. Core Classroom Teacher
 - b. Exploratory (Art, music, PE)
 - c. Special Education
- 4) I have been in this position for how many years..
- a. 1-5
 - b. 6-10
 - c. 11-15
 - d. 16-20
 - e. 21-25
 - f. 25-30
 - g. 30+
- 5) Please indicate your highest level of education...
- a. Bachelors

- b. Masters
 - c. Specialist
 - d. Doctorate
- 6) Please indicate your gender...
- a. Male
 - b. Female
- 7) Please indicate your race...
- a. White (Caucasian)
 - b. Hispanic
 - c. Black
 - d. American Indian
 - e. Asian
 - f. Middle Eastern
- 8) Please indicate your age...
- a.
- 9) I work with a team or grade level group.
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 10) My students participate in state level standardized testing...
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 11) I would describe my involvement with district policy as...
- a. I am directly involved in district decisions

- b. I am not involved in district decisions

Part 2

12) I would rate my knowledge of performance based pay systems as...

- a. In depth, I have a vast experience with performance-based pay.
- b. Mediocre. I have heard of these systems but don't know much about them.
- c. Very little. I have heard the term but have no knowledge about such things.

13) During my career as an educator, I have participated in performance based pay systems...

- a. Yes
- b. No

14) As far as I know, my state does or does not provide for standardized testing as a part of my evaluation.

- a. Yes
- b. No

15) I believe that student growth can be adequately measured by state level standardized tests.

- a. Yes to a large degree
- b. Yes to a minor degree
- c. No

16) I believe there is a direct relationship between the effectiveness of a teacher and their students' results on standardized tests.

- a. Yes to a large degree

- b. Yes to a minor degree
- c. No

17) I believe that there are very few student-centered variables that interfere with my ability to educate my students.

- a. Yes to a large degree
- b. Yes to a minor degree
- c. No

18) I believe that standardized tests should be a part of my annual evaluation.

- a. I agree
- b. Neutral
- c. I disagree

19) I believe that I should be compensated based on my student's performance on standardized tests.

- a. I agree
- b. Neutral
- c. I disagree

20) I believe that performance based pay systems would allow districts to award teachers for their efforts better than the current system.

- a. Yes to a large degree
- b. Yes to a minor degree
- c. No

21) I would participate in a performance based pay system if provided the opportunity.

- a. I would participate
- b. I might participate
- c. I would not participate

22) I believe that competition, the driving force in a capitalistic society, should play a role in the evaluation systems of educators.

- a. Yes to a large degree
- b. Yes to a minor degree
- c. No

23) If I were going to be compensated based on the outcome of my students state standardized test scores, I would be hesitant to work with students from sub groups such as special education, free and reduced lunch, or children of color.

- a. I would be confident in teaching all students
- b. I would be hesitant to have members of these sub-groups in my classroom.
- c. I would not want students in my classroom that could negatively impact my evaluation or compensation.

24) I believe that performance based pay systems that compare you with other teachers would negatively impact collegiality between myself and the other teachers in which I would be in competition with.

- a. Yes to a large degree
- b. Yes to a minor degree
- c. No

25) I believe that performance based pay systems would help remedy our nations lagging international test comparisons.

- a. Yes to a large degree
- b. Yes to a minor degree
- c. No

26) I believe that performance base pay systems would attract teachers to the teaching profession.

- a. Yes, I believe that competition would attract more people to teaching
- b. No. Teaching is a “calling” and pay has little impact on being a teacher.

27) I believe that I would work harder if my compensation were directly tied to the outcome of my students on a performance based pay system.

- a. Yes to a large degree
- b. Yes to a minor degree
- c. No

28) I believe that the other teachers around me would work harder if they knew their compensation was directly tied to performance based pay systems.

- a. Yes to a large degree
- b. Yes to a minor degree
- c. No

29) I would be hesitant to participate in a performance based pay system unless all teachers were equally evaluated for their students’ performance.

- a. Yes
- b. Neutral
- c. No

30) I believe that some teachers should be compensated more or less based on the subjects that they teach.

- a. Yes
- b. Neutral
- c. No

31) I believe that there are teaching positions that are inherently easier or harder to teach based on whether or not the teacher's students participate in state standardized testing.

- a. Yes to a large degree
- b. Yes to a minor degree
- c. No

32) I would remain in my current position if I were forced to participate in a performance based pay system.

- a. Yes
- b. Maybe
- c. No

Part 3

33) Describe in detail your experiences of feeling concerning performance based pay systems.

34) Describe in detail your feelings concerning about being evaluated based on the performance of your students on state level standardized testing.

35) Where would you say you get most of your information concerning state and federal educational policies?

- 36) How would describe the state's current policy to evaluate teachers based on standardized test scores?
- 37) In what ways would students benefit from the use of a performance based pay system?
- 38) What are your perceptions about competition between teachers?

Appendix B:

In-depth Interview

- 1) Describe in detail your experiences of feeling concerning performance based pay systems.
 - a. Elaborate on these experiences and feelings.
- 2) Describe in detail your feelings concerning about being evaluated based on the performance of your students on state level standardized testing.
 - a. How are these evaluations fair
 - b. Or How are these evaluations unfair
- 3) Where would you say you get most of your information concerning state and federal educational policies?
 - a. How often do you engage in news articles concerning education?
 - b. How often do you engage in professional journals?
- 4) Do you believe that the state's current policy to evaluate teachers based on standardized test scores is fair?
 - a. Describe in detail your understandings of current state policy.
 - b. How will these policies effect your job as a teacher?
- 5) Do you believe that performance based pay systems would improve your districts educational outcomes?
 - a. Are your students tested using standardized state testing?
 - b. How do you use those scores to improve or make changes to your teaching?

- 6) Do you believe that competition between teachers plays a positive role in your building?
- a. Describe how you and your colleagues work together.
 - b. Do you see comparisons between yourselves as a negative thing?

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Vita

Jonathan *Scott* Marsh was born in Smithville, Missouri in 1972. He grew up on the family farm that was obtained from the United States Government under land grant provisions in 1836, and had been passed down in the family ever since. Mr. Marsh attended public school at Clinton County R-III in Plattsburg Missouri, where his mother taught for 30 years. During that time he was active in the Future Farmers of America, 4-H, Science Club, the football team, and National Honor Society. Mr. Marsh also spent his springs, summers, and falls, racing sailboats with his father, competing at the local, state, regional, and national levels.

Scott graduated high school in 1991 and attended Maple Woods Community College for one year under a superintendent's scholarship he won as senior in high school. He then transferred to the University of Central Missouri (UCM) where he pursued a Bachelor's of Science degree, double majoring in Elementary and Middle School Education, minoring in Mathematics. Mr. Marsh also spent time pursuing his now wife of twenty years, Diane. He also joined the Sigma Pi fraternity where he held various offices including treasurer and pledge educator.

Scott Graduated from UCM in 1996 and began his education career in the Park Hill School District teaching 8th grade math, reading, and social studies. During his time at Park Hill, he earned a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from University of Missouri Kansas City (UMKC) in 1999, and a Specialist's degree in Urban Leadership at UMKC in 2009. During that time Mr. Marsh has also served as a summer school administrator for two summers, and has been active in the district serving on many committees.

Scott continues to pursue his passion for teaching at Park Hill School District while serving as an adjunct professor for Park University where he teaches education courses in the evenings. He is also very active in the Boys Scouts of America where he serves dual leadership roles as the Cub Master of the pack and an adult leader for the troop attended by his four boys. Scott is also currently serving the Heart of America Council as a Program Director for the 2015 North Star District Day Camp.