A black and white photograph showing a group of approximately ten teachers of various ethnicities and ages. They are seated in rows, facing forward as if attending a training session or meeting. Some are looking directly at the camera, while others have their heads down or are looking slightly to the side.

Communicating with Teachers about Compensation in Local Districts

Act 1 of 2012: Compensation Training

December 2012

What will we do today?

- **Anticipate** likely areas of concern about compensation reform and prepare responses to proactively address those concerns.
- **Develop** messages and tools you will use to communicate the benefits of your compensation plan to teachers in your local context.
- **Plan** next steps to help you implement your communications strategy as quickly and as effectively as possible.

TOPIC	TIME
Planning a Strategy	20 minutes
Creating Core Messages	60 minutes
Questions and Concerns	10 minutes

Agenda

- **What teachers need to know**
- Planning a Strategy
- Creating Core Messages
- Questions, Concerns and Next Steps

Districts have the opportunity to move from a rigid system to a customized system that meets their needs.

Until now, districts have been bound to rigid, outdated salary rules. It's been impossible to offer higher salaries to teachers who get strong results or choose to work in high-need areas. It's been impossible to give teachers a raise when they do great work—something people can expect in almost any other profession.

With Act 1 of 2012 in place, districts have the flexibility to design compensation systems that respond to local school needs, allowing them to recruit, reward and retain more effective teachers, and providing a link between rigorous standards, accountability for student achievement, and professional growth.

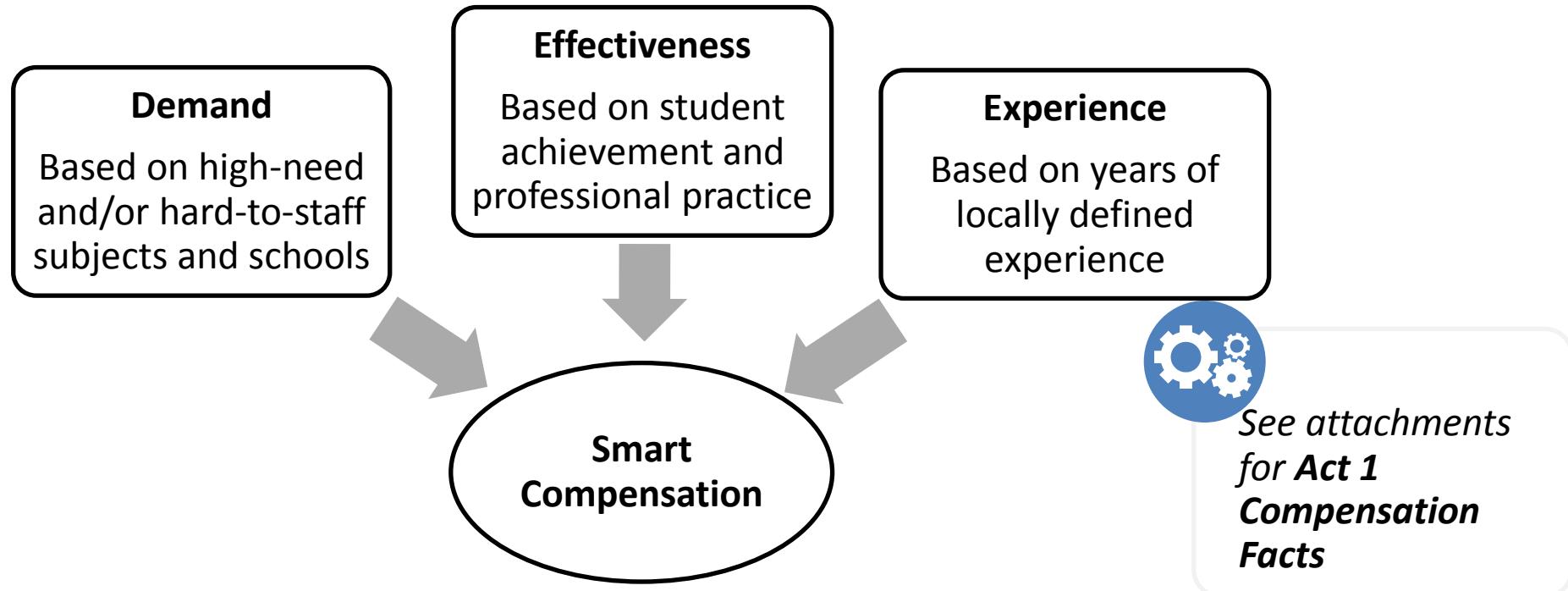
The Old Approach to Compensation

- Rigid, quality-blind salary schedules dictated by statewide mandates.

Act 1 Compensation

- Districts set their own targets for increasing achievement and reward teachers who make the biggest difference in classrooms.

Act 1 allows districts to design compensation systems that recruit, recognize, and retain effective teachers.



MINIMAL ACT 1 REQUIREMENTS:

- None of the three criteria above can account for more than 50% of the salary formula.
- Teachers or administrators who receive an “Ineffective” Compass rating do not receive a higher salary in the year following the evaluation.
- Any current teacher’s or certified school employee’s salary can not be reduced below the salary amount for the previous school year or at any time during a school year.

What is challenging in communicating about your new compensation plan compared to your current plan?



What is challenging in communicating about your new compensation plan?

How are those challenges making it difficult for your district to achieve its compensation system design goals?

Communicating with teachers about these changes can be difficult – but clear, consistent messaging is key.

Teachers need to know:

- 1 *What will change, and won't change, in determining compensation under Act 1*
- 2 *Why those changes are taking place*
- 3 *How it will affect them and their pay in your local context*



What are the most important messages that your teachers need to hear and understand about the new compensation plan? What tools will you need to communicate these messages?

Agenda

- What teachers need to hear know
- **Planning a Strategy**
- Creating Core Messages
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There are various channels to communicate messages about your new compensation system.

Channel	Strengths	Weaknesses
Mass Communications (e.g., newsletters, website)	Consistency, frequency, allows for details	Lack of personal touch
Staff Meetings	Slightly more personal touch, best used for conveying basic information, creates opportunity discussion and feedback.	Lack of frequency, not everyone attends, not effective for sharing details
Professional Development Sessions	Consistency, opportunities for feedback, best to focus attention on 1 or 2 topics	Lack of frequency, not everyone attends, not effective for covering lots of topics at once.
One-to-One Meetings with Teachers	Personal touch, chance to link teaching practice to compensation, provide school leaders insight into teachers concerns.	Lack of frequency, inconsistency
Teacher-led Communications (e.g., department meetings)	Organic opportunities for discussion, fellow teachers can offer their insight or support, a chance to gather feedback from the teacher's point of view.	Lack of consistency, potential for disagreement, likely that misinformation will be spread

Three tools can serve as the foundation of your communications strategy.

Introductory PowerPoint

- This sample PowerPoint contains a level of detail that would be appropriate as an introduction for teachers or community members.



See attachments for:

- *Sample Briefing Deck,*
- *Sample 1-Page Summary*
- *Sample Offer Letter*

One-Page Summary

- This sample one-pager clearly explains a new compensation system and could be distributed directly to teachers – or adapted for the district website.

Offer Letter

- This sample offer letter clearly explains a teacher's new salary – and the reasoning behind the new pay system.

Success will require making communications a priority at the district and building level.

Who will own these important communications responsibilities?

District Level

- Who will be responsible for distributing clear, accurate information to people at the building level?
- When and how will you check-in?
- How will building leaders be able to productively communicate their concerns?

Building Level

- Who will be responsible for distributing clear, accurate information to teachers?
- Who will this person contact with questions or concerns?
- How will teachers be able to productively communicate their concerns?

Pair and Share: A successful communications strategy uses the right channels at the right time.



What existing channels will you use to communicate with your teachers about the new compensation system?

When will you communicate with teachers?

It is important to utilize the tools and channels available to communicate frequently and early.

Date	Activity	Vehicle	Owner
12/10	Provide teachers with an overview of Act 1	Act 1 PowerPoint presentation	District: Superintendent
12/17	Teacher meeting to answer early questions	Drafted high-level district messages	District: Superintendent School: Principals
12/31	Update district on progress of new compensation plan	Monthly newsletter	District: Superintendent
1/14	Early rollout of new compensation plan to teachers	One-pager on new compensation plan	District: Superintendent School: Principals
1/28	Teacher meeting to answer questions on new model	New district compensation plan	District: Superintendent School: Principals
7/1	Distribute teacher offer letters to returning teachers	Offer letter template	School: Principals

Agenda

- What teachers need to know
- Planning a Strategy
- **Creating Core Messages**
- Questions, Concerns and Next Steps

Anticipating challenges: How would you respond to the following scenarios?



A teacher responds that she is dissatisfied that her master's degree will no longer be rewarded.

- A teacher is concerned that he no longer knows what he's going to make and that it is too hard to understand.
- A teacher is concerned that pay increases will depend on the evaluator teachers are assigned or on student test scores.
- An unidentified teacher distributes flyers in his colleague's mailboxes saying that all veteran teachers will be replaced with young new teachers.
- A teacher is concerned her pay will decrease under the district's new compensation system.

Leaders in other school districts have developed their messages for talking about compensation reform.

Which messages in these statements would resonate with your teachers? Why?

"To get enough of the teachers we need, teaching has to be a great job where talented people are supported and rewarded...That won't happen without reforming a compensation system that was designed deep in the last century for a labor market that no longer exists."

*Michael Bennett
Former Denver superintendent*

"Teachers pour their hearts, souls and even their personal resources into their demanding jobs...And in low-income areas, teachers are called upon even more frequently to provide extra support, financial and nonfinancial, for the children they teach...While almost everyone in politics, from presidential candidates to local elected leaders, takes the opportunity to praise teachers, it's obvious they are rich on words but stop short when it comes to providing fair compensation."

*Cory Booker
Mayor, Newark, New Jersey*

"Engineering, law, accounting and computer firms pay good salaries to attract the best and brightest. It shouldn't be any different when it comes to educating our children."

*Sandra Feldman
President, American Federation of Teachers*

"DCPS and the WTU agreed in the most recent teachers' contract to develop and implement a performance-based pay system because we felt it was essential to demonstrate — in the boldest way possible — how much we value the work you do...We recognize that you did not choose to enter the field of education for monetary reasons. But we also recognize that you deserve to be compensated as true professionals."

*DC Public Schools
IMPACT Plus Guidebook*

Tip #1: Make sure to focus on the big picture of what these reforms mean for teachers and students.

Often Heard	Better
I've scheduled several meetings with the budget office to see what we're going to do about this new legislation and how we are going to calculate pay raises from now on.	Our goal is to fix the current system to recognize and reward our teachers who get great results, no matter where they are in their careers. That way we can attract the teachers our schools need and make sure they stay in the classroom longer with the students who need them most, all while honoring all our teachers for their hard work.



How will you share “the big picture” with teachers and members of your community?

Tip #2: Look for opportunities to emphasize the positive benefits for teachers.

Often Heard	Better
Things are going to be changing. Our old system is going away, but depending on your Compass rating, you could still get an annual raise.	We want our pay system to reward people for their hard work. Promising new teachers will be able to earn more money faster. Consistently effective teachers will earn raises over time. But we value experience, too, so years of service will also factor into our system.



How will you communicate the benefits of your compensation system to teachers?

Tip #3: Don't get bogged down by details or distracted by speculation.

Often Heard	Better
We're going to be making a proposal next month, and as of right now, highly effective teachers will earn a 10% raise each year and effective teachers will earn 6%. Experience will account for somewhere between 20% and 40%. Here is the list of campuses and subject areas where teachers might earn extra pay under our new system....	We're working on the specifics, but ultimately our system is going to recognize performance as well as experience. We added pay up to \$1000 a year for our best people. Once we have everything finalized, you can expect a personalized packet that explains what this all means for your paycheck.



What level of detail do you think all teachers must know? What details should be communicated on an individual basis? What other mechanisms of the system do you want to communicate?

Pair and Share: With these three tips in mind, discuss the essential ideas you want to share with teachers.



Stay focused on the big picture: Why are we changing the way we pay teachers?



Emphasize the positive: How is this an improvement over the current system for your best teachers?

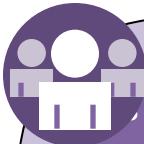


Don't get bogged down in the details: How will the system work? How will teachers be paid?

Final thoughts: As a district leader, you are a key messenger for this important work.

- **Be proactive.** During times of change, people tend to speculate if they don't have answers. Look for opportunities to provide clarity, guidance, and support, repeating core messages often using many forms and means of communication.
- **Be honest and confident.** These reforms are new for everyone. Don't skirt around the issues. Successful implementation is going to require commitment from all staff. At the same time, project confidence that the system will be implemented well and benefit teachers and students.
- **Stick to the facts.** Expect questions. If you don't know the answer, don't make one up. Get clarification and follow-up with your staff as soon as possible.
- **Encourage feedback.** If you want investment in the new system, look for opportunities to have two-way communication. Show people that you are listening to their concerns.

Revisiting challenges: After today's discussion, how would you respond to the following scenarios?



A teacher responds that she is dissatisfied that her master's degree will no longer be rewarded.

- A teacher is concerned that he no longer knows what he's going to make and that it is too hard to understand.
- A teacher is concerned that pay increases will depend on the evaluator teachers are assigned.
- An unidentified teacher distributes flyers in his colleague's mailboxes saying that all veteran teachers will be replaced with young new teachers.
- A teacher is concerned her pay will decrease under the district's new compensation system.

Questions?

- Please continue to utilize compensation materials and resources, including one-on-one support.
- Reach out for feedback during the design process.
- Complete a satisfaction survey that you'll receive via email.

The Department will support your work to design and adopt compensation plans that meet local priorities and satisfy the requirements of Act 1.

The LDOE will continue to provide:

- Ongoing support, individual consultation, and feedback in order to ensure that all decisions support the State's efforts to increase rigor and improve educational outcomes for every student in Louisiana.
- Future support sessions if desired
- Please contact Gary Jones (gary.jones@la.gov) for general support.
- If you have questions about the compensation models, please email act1@la.gov. We will connect you with TNP for one-on-one support.

Appendix 1: Sample messages from around the country.

- “Newark Can Lead in Fair Compensation” by Cory Booker, [The New Jersey Star-Ledger](#)
- “Bring Teachers’ Pay Into This Century” by Michael Bennett, [The Boston Globe](#)
- “Long-stagnant Teacher Compensation Needs to Be Upgraded”, [The Los Angeles Times](#)
- IMPACTplus for Teacher Guidebook, [DC Public Schools](#)