

# Teaching Quality & Student Achievement

**F**EA believes teacher compensation should be based on things that make a real difference to our children's learning. Evidence shows that fair pay, high quality professional development and rigorous evaluation encourage teachers and help to ensure better results for students.

**No one wants ineffective teachers in classrooms, especially not fellow educators.** But, we need teacher assessment and evaluation systems that are rigorous and fair and designed to strengthen teacher practice and improve student learning. Measures of teacher performance should be based on multiple ratings and clear teaching standards. Those who are consistently unable to meet the standard of practice should receive targeted support, and if they do not improve, they should be removed from the classroom.

**Florida has a long history of doing performance based pay the wrong way.** Since the late 1990s, we've squandered precious time, money, effort and political capital on schemes that have failed to produce any meaningful results. Millions of dollars have been wasted on developing and implementing Florida Statute 1012.22, BEST, E-Comp, STAR, MAP, and Race To The Top 1. More will be wasted on the newest performance based pay plan, SB 736, unless we are willing to acknowledge why all the others have failed.

Unfortunately, Florida has again put the proverbial cart before the horse. The incentives and sanctions required by SB 736 are far ahead of the infrastructure and technology necessary to align student learning growth with effective teaching practice.

A successful performance based pay plan is contingent on several critical elements:

- 1.) Teachers must be correctly linked to the students they teach.** There is currently no system in place that accurately links teachers with their students.
- 2.) There must be sufficient verifiable data to make career-supporting or ending decisions.** Value-Added Model [VAM] experts recommend at least three years of data. Florida has only one year of verifiable data available and DOE has no plans to verify historical data. Consequently, some districts are treating 2011-12 as year 1 of the evaluation process and others are treating it as year 3.
- 3.) The data must be appropriate to the subject(s) taught by the teacher.** There is minimal or NO subject area data available for approximately 60% of Florida's teachers because they do not teach FCAT subjects in grades 4 thru 10.

New teachers, even those who teach FCAT subjects, have no existing data associated with them.

PreK-2 teachers, 11-12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, PE, music, art, technology teachers have no FCAT scores associated with their teaching position. Tests and data are not yet available to follow student learning growth in any of these courses.

For these teachers, school districts must either:

- Develop data streams for each teacher using student learning growth or performance data on their own district developed tests;
- OR, (if these district level tests do not exist or there is insufficient student data) create data streams from existing FCAT data tangentially related to a teacher's position by:
  - Determining a comparison pool of similar teachers;
  - Developing their own VAM formula or apply the DOE-developed VAM formula;
  - Arriving at a VAM score for each teacher by comparing them to other teachers in the pool;
  - Correlating these VAM scores with the VAM scores for FCAT teachers;
  - All, while ensuring the accuracy of the data and processes used to construct VAM scores for each teacher.

#### **4.) The VAM formula must address and adjust for factors that are out of a teacher's control so that teachers are not rewarded or punished unfairly.**

This is the first year of a complex system, and we do not know all of the factors that should or should not be included in order to fairly ascertain a teacher's effectiveness.

The Student Growth Implementation Committee (SGIC) worked diligently to include a number of factors in the VAM calculation; however, there was deep concern about other factors outside a teacher's control that may need to be included, such as student discipline, available technology, student homelessness and course complexity. Committee members were assured that many of these variables would be studied over time as the VAM model is implemented.

#### **5.) The VAM process must provide understandable, unconditional, conclusive information on teacher effectiveness as it relates to student learning.**

Even for FCAT teachers, the method by which the value added data is calculated creates an "uneven playing field" and risks damaging vital collaboration within the school and within the school district.

# Teaching Quality continued

For the 40% of teachers who have FCAT data associated with their teaching position, the DOE VAM formula uses teachers within schools as the comparison pool.

VAM scores for teachers in high performing schools are likely to regress to the mean; it will be very difficult to identify high performing and/or low performing teachers at high performing schools. Teachers in low performing schools are more likely to demonstrate the extremes in the VAM range. Highly effective and unsatisfactory teachers will be more prevalent in low performing schools, **even if their actual teaching performance is equal to that of a mean-score teacher at a high performing school.**

Districts are required to set ranges across the district even though the calculation is computed within the school, forcing an apples-to-oranges comparison.

## Other issues:

- The viability and usefulness of a complex VAM formula is only as good as the data used in the calculations:
  - Much of the data being used for the VAM model is data that was gathered for different accountability purposes; e.g. daily attendance for FEFP funding. Currently attendance data is gathered as daily attendance, not by course attendance; even though the teacher's value added score should reflect actual student attendance data for each course, it does not. The DOE is beginning this process now, but the data is not available for 2011-12 teacher evaluation computations.
- There is no model available to guide districts as they:
  - Correlate VAM score for FCAT and non-FCAT teachers with statistical fairness;
  - Correlate both elements of the new evaluation system (Instructional Practices and the VAM scores) on differing scales with statistical fairness.
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Students need effective teachers in order to learn and grow into responsible, creative, persistent, productive citizens. Teachers need collaborative, supportive administrators and colleagues to maximize their knowledge, skill and perception so their teaching practice truly inspires and affects students.

## The "Student Success Act", aka SB 736, forces radical changes on our schools based on limited data and unworkable timelines...and with no funding.

Proponents of SB 736 have consistently argued that the more students learn, the more teachers will earn. Sadly, not one dollar was allocated in SB 736 to raise teachers' salaries or sustain the student gains we have made.

Florida's newest performance based pay plan:

- Will dramatically increase student testing. More tests mean more days of testing and test preparation and fewer days of teaching and learning;
- Will cost local school districts millions to develop and implement these new tests. While districts are not required to fund performance pay until 2014, this legislation forces them to immediately begin developing and implementing hundreds of additional FCAT-style tests along with a new evaluation system. Some estimates say the total cost of new tests, technology and software could be over \$2 billion, yet the legislature provided no new funding;
- Reduces a school district's flexibility and authority over teacher evaluations, pay schedules and working conditions, despite all the talk about local control and less government;
- Requires more of teachers and gives them less. This bill places all responsibility for improving student achievement on the shoulders of teachers but does not reward them unless they give up their continuing or professional services contract and due process rights;
- Fails to ensure that highly effective and effective teachers will not be dismissed for issues unrelated to student performance. Under this new system, a teacher can be non-renewed even if their student achievement is high and their teacher appraisal system rating is highly effective or effective;
- Penalizes those who strive to improve their teaching skill through further education by eliminating salary supplements for some advanced degrees.

