

Myth: There is some sort of report out there ranking every teacher (with test scores) on effectiveness. These secret score reports have no name and principals have been told by the superintendent not to give them to teachers but they will be the basis of pay decisions for teachers. There's a shroud of secrecy around pay for performance.

Fact: Andy Baxter and the team assigned to pay for performance have developed a preliminary measure of value-added – what teachers bring to the classroom that helps students learn. Principals have received reports that rank teachers in their schools, and have been encouraged to share these reports with teachers, while also emphasizing that this is not the final standard because it is based on only one measure. As we develop multiple measures of teacher performance, we are going to test them with teachers long before high stakes are attached.

Myth: Pay for performance has been tried in other places and has failed, so it can't work here.

Fact: Pay for performance has a limited history in American public education. It has been successfully employed in Denver and Houston and less successfully in other places, such as Nashville. Our research shows that there are three elements in a pay-for-performance plan that are critical to success: A way to measure effectiveness that relies on multiple measures and is fair; teacher input into the design of effectiveness measures, and a reliable revenue stream to support the compensation changes so that teachers feel comfortable with the compensation promises in pay-for-performance. We are working to design a pay-for-performance model that includes all three elements.

Myth: CMS already has these ratings but won't share them with parents.

Fact: As noted above, we have done some preliminary assessment of the added value that teachers bring to their classrooms – but we have not developed the measure that we will use. We don't think it's fair to teachers to share these preliminary ratings with parents, because they are preliminary and they may not accurately assess each teacher's work. Instead, we want to assess teaching effectiveness using multiple measures, because we know that good teaching has many elements. The results in some form will be shared with parents and the community; how much, and in what form has not been determined. How and how much is shared will depend on how the measures are eventually used in teacher evaluations. Some information about personnel performance may remain private to protect employee privacy but we will balance these concerns against the need for parents to be involved in children's work at school.

Myth: A culture of testing is depriving poor children of the joy of learning. CMS measures children's progress too often and it does not help students learn.

Fact: Testing is necessary in schools to determine if children are learning. There are different kinds of tests, however, and they are used in different ways. CMS uses formative assessments, which provide teachers with snapshots of student learning, to help direct instruction – this means we monitor student learning with little tests regularly so that if a student is missing something, or not understanding something, we can identify the extra instruction that is needed and deliver it. Other kinds of tests given at the end of the semester or the school year – called End-of-Course and End-of-Grade tests – are administered by and required by the state.

Testing has been a part of learning as long as there have been schools. There is no evidence to support an assertion that measuring what students learn is harmful to the learning process.

Myth: The CMS agenda seems to be about everything but achievement. Why are teachers being singled out and punished?

Fact: Pay for performance does not single out teachers. Every employee in the district will ultimately have compensation linked to performance. Dr. Gorman will lead the way, followed by the institution of pay-for-performance for executive staff next year. Teachers will follow in the 2013-2014 school year, after a year of working with the new standard but not having it affect their compensation.

The pay-for-performance plan is not punishment. Instead, it rewards top performers and uses professional development to help weak teachers improve. The ultimate goal is to improve academic performance at CMS – and that can't happen unless we have great teaching. But we will apply similar standards of performance to those who work in education outside the classroom as well.

Myth: Pay for performance doesn't value continuing education for teachers, such as National Board certification and advanced degrees.

Fact: Pay for performance values strong teaching. In some cases, teachers can improve their performance in the classroom by earning a master's degree or National Board certification – and in those cases, their improved performance will be recognized with increased compensation. For other teachers, no degree is needed for great teaching – and the performance of these teachers will also be recognized with compensation. Under the current pay structure, North Carolina uses degrees and certification and longevity in the profession as proxies for excellence. We have found that excellence in the classroom is not linked to these things – they help some teachers and not others. So we are building a pay

structure that will be based on results – on actual performance – instead of things that may or may not be associated with great teaching. If a teacher’s classroom effectiveness increases after he earns a master’s degree, he’ll earn more. If a teacher’s classroom effectiveness increases after she receives National Board certification, she’ll earn more. But a teacher who gets an advanced degree or certification, but does not become more effective in the classroom will not be rewarded merely for the degree or certification.