

Appendix F: Achievement Challenge Project-Teacher Interview Questions

Attitudes about Merit Pay

- 1) Do you support the merit pay plan? And if so, would you like to see it continue?
- 2) Why did you vote in support of this program?
- 3) Are the goals of the merit pay program fair and attainable?
- 4) Do you feel that using test scores is a valid and appropriate way of measuring student achievement? ...and is it better to measure student gains from Spring to Spring, or from Fall to Spring?

Effective Teacher

- 5) How much do you feel you contribute to a student's performance?
- 6) Do you believe that your ability to raise student performance has changed since the inception of merit pay?
- 7) Does receiving a merit pay bonus reinforce how effective you are at teaching?
- 8) Do you think that student improvement is reflected in their test scores?

Innovation – *Prior merit pay literature states that the implementation of this type of program leads to teachers becoming more innovative in their approach to teaching.*

- 9) What effect, if any, has merit pay had on your teaching?
- 10) Have you tried out any new teaching styles or techniques since the inception of merit pay? If so, what?
- 11) Do you believe that merit pay is an incentive for teachers to change or improve the way they teach?

Work Harder – *The same literature also states that merit pay may encourage teachers to work harder.*

- 12) Has merit pay had an effect on your workload? And if so, how has it changed?
- 13) Do you believe the merit pay program is worth the extra effort and stress?
- 14) Is there more pressure on you because of the merit pay program?

Collaboration – *Opponents of merit pay say that merit pay will lead to a decrease in collaboration amongst teachers.*

- 15) What effect has merit pay had on your interactions with other teachers and professionals in the school?
- 16) Do you feel like collaboration has increased or decreased as a result of merit pay?
- 17) Are teachers more competitive in your school since the inception of merit pay?

Satisfaction with Compensation

- 18) Do you feel adequately rewarded for raising student performance?
- 19) For the increase in student achievement, is the amount of merit bonuses fair, not enough, or too much?
- 20) Do you feel that teachers who are more effective should receive larger salaries than less effective teachers?
- 21) Which would you prefer: A fixed increase in base salary, or a greater dollar amount in merit pay? And why?

School Climate – *Proponents of merit pay say that rewarding teachers with bonuses will improve the climate of the school.*

- 22) What is the climate of your school like since the implementation of merit pay? Has it changed, and if so, how?
- 23) Has work become more pleasurable/enjoyable since the inception of merit pay?
- 24) Were there any unintended consequences from the merit pay program?

Teacher Attitudes/Collegiality

- 25) Has merit pay had an effect on your attitude as a teacher or on the attitude of others with whom you work?
- 26) Do you feel that merit pay has led to jealousy amongst teachers?
- 27) Has there been a change in your working relationship with other teachers since the implementation of merit pay?

Teacher Retention – *One of the main reasons for implementing a merit pay program is to retain highly effective teachers. However, a number of teachers who received substantial bonuses (over \$5000) this past year have left the teaching profession.*

- 28) Why do you think that is?
- 29) Do you believe merit pay plans encourage teachers to stay in the classroom?
- 30) If you were making a decision about whether or not to stay in teaching, would merit pay have an impact on that decision?
- 31) Has there been a change in the teacher turnover rate because of merit pay?

Low Performing Students – *One of the criticisms of merit pay programs is that they encourage teachers to work with the higher-performing students, as they are more likely to improve their test scores.*

- 32) Has the merit pay program influenced the kinds of students that you would choose to work with?
- 33) Do you feel that you would be more inclined to work with low-performing students if you were receiving merit pay?
- 34) Does the current reward structure favor working with certain types of students more than others?