

**Teacher Equity: Effective Teachers for All Children**  
**House Education and Labor Committee**  
**September 30, 2009**  
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Thank you for inviting me to testify today concerning the importance of teacher effectiveness to student achievement growth.

My name is Latanya Daniels and I am the Assistant Principal at Thomas Edison High School in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Thomas Edison is a high needs school with approximately 88% of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch. I appreciate the opportunity to share with the Committee how we have used a comprehensive performance pay reform at Thomas Edison to increase student achievement and teacher effectiveness.

**My Career in Teaching**

This year begins the 9<sup>th</sup> year of my educational career. For the first four years of my career, I was a middle school math teacher and I served in many leadership capacities. My school began implementing the Teacher Advancement Program or “TAP” – a comprehensive school reform system that provides powerful opportunities for career advancement, professional growth, instructionally focused accountability and competitive compensation for educators. I served as a TAP coach (which is called mentor elsewhere) for one semester and a TAP mentor (which is called master elsewhere) for two years. In a TAP school, there is approximately one mentor for every 15 career teachers and one coach for every 8 teachers. These experiences were very empowering for me, the teachers, and the students I supported through mentoring, coaching, and providing professional development.

I chose to be an assistant principal in a TAP high school because I see myself as an instructional leader in this role. With the academic impediments our students face within Thomas Edison, it’s imperative that I know the best practices of instruction and the most current professional development research to accelerate student learning. TAP provides me this opportunity as well as the opportunity to develop and coach our TAP mentors and career teachers to greatness. Finally, TAP keeps the main thing - student achievement - the main thing, and that’s my mission.

**Implementing a Performance Pay Program in a High Needs High School**

Thomas Edison is an urban high school within an urban district. It is a highly diverse school made up of approximately 40% African American, 19% East African immigrants , 20% Hispanic, 11% White, 9% Asian and 2% Native American students. Thomas Edison was deemed a Fresh Start school, meaning it was in the bottom 25% of district high schools in terms of student performance.

In the past several years, Thomas Edison has received the lowest achieving 9<sup>th</sup> grade students entering all Minneapolis high schools. With the challenges of 9<sup>th</sup> graders not being at grade level, the demanding needs of our ESL population, students' lack of self-efficacy, and other challenges, our staff continues to choose the TAP program because of its comprehensive approach of improving teacher quality and student achievement. TAP also provides:

- A formidable professional development program that embeds professional development to move novice teachers to effective teachers and experienced teachers to exceptional teachers;
- A structure to analyze data to set measurable and attainable goals for the school and each individual student;
- A standards-based evaluation system that identifies areas of strength and development for all teachers;
- A career ladder that provides opportunity for advancement for teachers while concurrently supporting staff in school-wide professional development; and
- A performance pay bonus system to reward student, thus school success.

For a school with high needs such as Thomas Edison, TAP is what is needed to shift from low student achievement and expectations to a culture of academic excellence and high expectations amongst all students and staff.

### **Student Achievement Growth**

In Minnesota, 13 out of 15 or 87% of TAP schools met or exceeded their growth projections for the 07-08 school year. Our school had very positive results:

- From 2006 – 2007, the graduation rate at Thomas Edison improved from 61% to 77%.
- Thomas Edison was the only Minneapolis high school to give the MAP test in 2008 – 2009 school year to our 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. The MAP test is a leveled test that measures student growth.
- 80% of our 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students made one year's growth or more in math.
- Over 50% of our 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students made one year's growth or more in reading.

### **Increased Teacher Retention**

TAP the system for teacher and student advancement, with its strong support system of professional development led by master and mentor teachers in the school, has helped to reduce teacher turnover. Prior the Thomas Edison's fresh start, the school experienced a 70% teacher turnover over a two-year period. With the fresh start, we retained 60% of our staff and had 40% new hires. Last year, we only lost one teacher due to layoffs. We began the 2009 – 2010 year with all teachers in place for the school year, and it felt great to staff, students, parents, and the community. The support from the TAP program helped us retain the greatest talent we were able to recruit during the interview and select process.

### **Attracting Talented Teachers to High Poverty Schools**

TAP provides a strong recruitment incentive for encouraging outstanding educators to teach in high-need schools. In interviews, we always share with candidates that Thomas

Edison is a TAP high school and explain what that means. Overwhelmingly, teacher candidates choose Thomas Edison over other Minneapolis high schools and even suburban high schools because of the embedded support. Our ability to offer annual performance based stipends to coaches and mentors also provides a strong recruitment and retention tool for highly effective educators to take on leadership work at our school.

### **Building Collegiality**

In our annual survey of teacher attitudes, we found that over 81% of teachers in Thomas Edison TAP report high levels of collegiality and satisfaction. We believe these results are a natural outgrowth of TAP's ongoing applied professional growth. Whatever concerns teachers have over the shift in culture to performance based compensation and rigorous accountability is tempered by the weekly professional development "cluster groups" that naturally facilitate collegiality.

### **Challenges in Building and Retaining a Talented Staff in a High Needs High School**

Teachers have a greater impact on student learning than anything else in schools. Yet current policies offer few incentives for strong teachers to take on tougher assignments.

Thomas Edison is in its second year as a Fresh Start school. The Minneapolis school board and the Minneapolis teachers' union settled upon a Memorandum of Agreement that allowed Fresh Start Schools to move away from the seniority process for filling teacher vacancies to an "interview and select" process. This process allowed us to recruit some of the best teacher candidates to Thomas Edison.

Our most novice teachers accepted their teaching positions because of the layers of support they would receive in the classroom and professional development through TAP. Also, the new teachers shared our values and beliefs.

### **Summary**

Even though TAP is a national program, it is structured to allow each school and district to focus on their particular student needs. For example, teacher professional development provided weekly in group meetings, and individually in the classroom, is driven by the needs of Thomas Edison students that we see in the data. We also take into account the strengths and weaknesses of our teachers - as demonstrated through multiple classroom evaluations - in structuring our professional support. Teachers value this professional support because it is specifically structured to help them improve the performance of their students.

I encourage the members of the Committee to support strategies and policies that have proven effective in addressing the need for effective educators in high need schools and districts. **Performance pay programs** that include opportunities for **career advancement, standards based evaluation and professional support**, such as TAP, have demonstrated their effectiveness in increasing student achievement, as well as increasing recruitment and retention of effective educators in high need schools.

In a high need school, there is a tremendous need to create an ongoing support structure that enables teachers to continually improve the effectiveness of their instruction if students are going to continue improving academically. At Edison High School in Minneapolis, TAP has provided that structure for us to improve. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

## ATTACHMENT A

### **Description of TAP™**

TAP™: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement— is a performance pay and professional development system that is increasing student achievement, and improving teacher recruitment and retention in high need schools.

TAP is a comprehensive, research-based reform designed to attract, retain, support, and develop effective teachers and principals. It combines comprehensive teacher support with performance pay incentives to create an instructional environment that is continually focused on advancing student learning. Attracting, developing, and supporting excellent teachers is crucial to our mission because our student achievement goals are simply not attainable without a high quality faculty.

### **Unique Solutions Provided by the TAP**

TAP counters many of the traditional drawbacks that plague the teaching profession: ineffective professional development, lack of career advancement, lack of accuracy or differentiation in classroom evaluations, and low, undifferentiated compensation. TAP provides an integrated, comprehensive solution to these challenges—changing the structure of the teaching profession within schools while maintaining the essence of the profession. TAP is a whole school reform intended to recruit, motivate, develop and retain high quality teachers in order to increase student achievement.

- 1. Building the Capacity of Teachers and Principals through Professional Development** that is directly aligned to content standards and elements of effective instruction and takes place during the regular school day, so educators can constantly improve the quality of their instruction and increase their students' academic achievement. This allows teachers to learn new instructional strategies and have greater opportunity to collaborate, both of which will lead them to become more effective teachers. The TAP Leadership Team of master and mentor teachers, as well as school administrators guide the professional development which addresses the individual needs of teachers and their students.
- 2. Additional Roles and Responsibilities** allow teachers to progress from a Career, Mentor and Master teacher—depending upon their interests, abilities and accomplishments. This allows good teachers to advance without having to leave the classroom and provides the expert staff to deliver intensive, school-based professional development that supports more rigorous coursework and standards.
- 3. A Fair, Rigorous and Objective Evaluation Process** for evaluating teachers and principals. Teachers are held accountable for meeting standards that are based on effective instruction, as well as for the academic growth of their students, and principals are evaluated based on student achievement growth as well as other leadership factors. Classroom evaluations are conducted multiple times each year by trained and certified

evaluators (administrators, Master and Mentor teachers) using clearly defined rubrics which reduces the possibility of bias or favoritism.

**4. Performance-based Compensation Based on Student Achievement Gains and Classroom Evaluations of Teachers throughout the Year.** Student achievement is measured using “value-added” measures of student learning gains from year to year. These learning gains are determined using the same assessments that are used to calculate progress under NCLB. TAP changes the current system by compensating teachers according to their roles and responsibilities, their performance in the classroom, and the performance of their students. The new system also encourages districts to offer competitive salaries to those who teach in "hard-to-staff" subjects and schools.

By combining these elements in an effective strategy for reform, TAP is working to turn teaching, especially in high need schools, into a highly rewarding career choice.