

# TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MERIT PAY

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to show the various perceptions teachers have on merit pay. This research was designed to examine the perceptions and attitudes of teachers towards the idea of performance based pay. This topic has been an ongoing battle within school systems since the 1800s. The participants in this study were teachers from the state of Indiana. An internet search was done to find similar public school corporations in Indiana that had already implemented merit pay systems or were planning on establishing a pay scale system based on performance. Approximately 250 teachers from four school corporations were invited to complete the survey. Out of those invited, 42 teachers completed the survey, producing a response rate of 16.8%. Of the 42 teachers who participated in the survey, 25 teachers (59.5%) were not in schools with merit pay, while 17 teachers (40.5%) were in a system that used merit pay. Results indicated that there are significant differences to the questions regarding higher pay for better performance. To all other questions there are no significant differences noted. An overwhelming number of participants strongly disagreed with the concept of merit pay, arguing that teachers work to the best of their ability while seeking to sharpen the craft of teaching and additional pay will do little to enhance student achievement.

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### Teachers' Perceptions of Merit Pay

In the majority of job fields, employees are rewarded with incentives such as pay increases, promotions, or other benefits. In the educational field, however, teachers are seldom rewarded with bonuses for their efforts. Instead, teachers' raises are given in allotted time increments deemed by their corporation's pay scale or upon earning a higher degree of professionalism in education, such as obtaining a master's degree. In the past, school corporations have been hesitant to differentiate between the highly effective instructor and the ineffective instructor.

Amid current waves of school reform, performance-based pay, also known as merit pay, is a topic that has been greatly debated as a way to reward highly effective teachers. Historically, merit pay has not been successful. The idea of merit pay has been previously looked at as being an implementation of an incentive program that has not been instituted properly. Research shows that performance-based pay is becoming more commonly used throughout school districts (Lewis and Podgursky, 2011).

The ultimate goal of schools that are adopting performance-based systems is to increase student achievement, while at the same time encouraging teachers to continually research, differentiate, and improve classroom instructional methods and procedures. By linking teachers' pay to student achievement and improvement, there is an intended motivation for teachers to continually improve their own instructional methods (Lewis and Podgursky, 2011). This research intends to show the various perceptions that teachers have of merit pay, whether currently in a merit pay system or not, and what those teachers believe to be both positive and negative aspects of merit pay.

### Research Questions

The following questions will guide this research: (1) What are teachers' perceptions of merit pay? (2) What specific aspects do teachers perceive as either good or bad about merit pay?

## Review of Literature

Merit pay is not a new idea. In fact, up until 1950, just like many workers in non-education workplaces, teachers would request an increase in salary, citing reasons why a raise was necessary. In 1950, the National Education Association (NEA) suggested that this was not a reliable system, and it came up with a single salary schedule for all teachers. Often only based on years' experience and additional education (continuing education courses), this teacher salary schedule has now become the predominant system for deciding teacher pay (Jones, 2011).

Performance-based pay has been a largely debated topic for several years (Solmon and Podgursky, 2000). It has become more widely researched in hopes of alleviating the decline in school performance (Solmon and Podgursky, 2000). Performance-based pay was first started in England in 1710. It took a negative toll on the teachers and the school system. Teachers became over anxious and competitive with the idea that extra money could be earned based on student achievement. Although performance-based pay caused an unhealthy relationship within the teacher population, students' scores and tests did improve (Solmon and Podgursky, 2000). In 1883 a stop was put to the idea of performance-based pay because a large percentage of the public refused to accept the idea of merit pay. In 1969, the idea re-emerged in the United States. Merit pay was said to be unorganized, resulting in teachers not being compensated appropriately (Solmon and Podgursky, 2000).

Carol Langdon notes that, "according to a 1998 Gallup poll, more teachers (40%) now favor performance-based compensation than in previous years-31% in 1989 and 32% in 1984" (as cited in Solmon and Podgursky, 2000, p.45). The public prefers merit pay over tenure, believing that tenure would allow teachers to become stale (Howell, Peterson, West, 2011). Teachers often oppose performance-based pay for the following reasons: it was difficult to fairly evaluate teacher performance;

teacher morale could decrease; and political problems could arise within the school (Solmon and Podgursky, 2000).

The manner in which teachers were compensated upon performance was an issue as well (Solmon and Podgursky, 2000). If the differentiation of pay is allowed, the question of how the pay will be allotted becomes a question to those who receive or do not receive the bonus. Understanding the evaluation tool and the components is extremely important in regard to merit pay. Individuals begin asking, "What is the evaluation tool and how is the tool being used?" There is a possibility that the evaluator is biased. Also, the question of individual versus group compensation comes in to play. Teachers believe that no single person makes a difference in a student's education. Therefore, the allotment should be a collective to the entire staff that has helped in educating the student (Solmon and Podgursky, 2000). This poses a problem to teachers who believe that some will then be compensated for not living up to their potential (Solmon and Podgursky, 2000). This could potentially lead to others being paid unfairly on the principle of "free rider." These different arguments are still debated and largely believed

One model for merit pay is the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP). Teachers are awarded bonuses based on classroom observation and evaluation, as well the teacher's impact on student performance. "Master Teachers" are also chosen as mentors to other teachers. These master teachers also earn bonuses. While TAP is continuing to gain popularity across the country, reports from some Chicago area schools show that TAP has had no effect on student achievement or teacher retention (Alderman, 2010). Historically, performance-based pay has been dismissed due to the inconsistencies of evaluation and allotment of the funds (Solmon and Podgursky, 2000). Several teachers that had won numerous awards and were considered well accredited were interviewed and had similar beliefs on merit pay.



As a nation, the United States has looked to other countries to see what has been successful in educational reform. After those reforms have been analyzed, American schools have attempted to utilize those methods as a basis for yet again reforming the American educational system. Students who attended school in the systems utilizing merit on average scored 15% higher in science, 25% higher in reading, and 25% higher in math (Woessman, 2011, p. 2).

Merit pay may elicit a change in the public's view point of education. There are many ideals behind merit pay that justify putting it into action, such as noticing and valuing hard work, recruiting a more diverse nation of educators, and overcoming the U.S.'s shortage of qualified teachers (Lewis, 2011). As a society, the work force has responded to receiving rewards for hard work. In most professions, if an employee performs well, a bonus, salary increase, promotion, and other numerous incentives are offered. Employees are not considered equal in craft to one another simply because they have been hired; this should be true of educators as well (Scherer, 2011). Tenure should not be deemed a "safe zone" of comfortably pulling out the same lesson plans year after year. As a whole, persons holding a bachelor's or master's degree in education are paid significantly less than most holding degrees in other areas and are out in the current work force (Scherer, 2001). Merit pay is thought to attract intelligent and effective teachers from different industries who will be motivated to enter the classroom for performance-based pay (Protheroe, 2011). In the United States there is a drastic shortage of certified teachers (Patrick, 2011). Many "hard to staff" schools have begun relying on substitutes or persons outside the teaching profession to teach instead of hiring full-time teachers when the position they are filling is a revolving door. In certain subject areas, school districts may have as high as 59% who are teaching in an area in which they are not licensed (Scherer, 2001). Merit pay will give potential educators the push to pursue teaching as a career choice (Patrick, 2011).

Many states have decided to implement merit pay with the hope of attracting high quality teachers. The manner in which teachers earn merit pay, however, depends on various evaluations adopted by the individual state (Patrick, 2011). In South Carolina many schools use a number of criteria equally. Teachers' bonuses are 30 percent school-wide achievement, 30 percent student growth and/or achievement, and 40 percent teacher evaluations (Chait & Miller, 2009). Teachers' views on which types of factors in the educational workplace should be considered in pay performance often remain unchanged. These factors include collaboration, ongoing professional development, and teachers' demonstration of knowledge and skills in content area. Teachers do not, however, support being paid extra for student performance (Wells, 2011).

While the purpose of merit pay is to provide extra incentive for the teacher, principals report that there is no real motivation to improve their own leadership skills, and they find it easier to increase teacher evaluation scores, thus allowing their teachers to advance in pay and keeping (perceived) morale up (Figlio & Kenny, 2007). In states such as Maryland, however, performance pay comes in the form of school-wide funding. Principals here indicate that leadership is even more necessary to provide teachers the framework to help students increase achievement (Kelly, Conley & Kimball, 2000).

Some teachers do not like the idea of merit pay; it would be more desirable to work in a more stable environment for moderate pay, rather than in very stressful situations for additional pay (Gersen, 2010). In general, however, teachers who are already in a system of performance pay approve of it, while those who are not in such a system do not like the idea (Cornett, 1995). Teachers often put in extraordinary effort to help their students achieve, regardless of merit pay. Those in the system realize monetary benefits for their work. Those who are not under such a system are often wary of the way they will be evaluated, and what will qualify them for additional pay. In some instances, cuts in school

funding have lessened the earned merit pay, causing some teachers to change their outlook on the performance pay system (Raham, 2000).

Once a school corporation has adopted a merit pay system, teachers seem more willing to attend professional development sessions and take advantage of other opportunities to improve in the profession (Jones, 2011). In hopes of raising student achievement, and ultimately their own salaries, teachers will also begin to collaborate more with other teachers (Kelly, Conley & Kimball, 2000), as long as each has the same opportunity to earn a salary bonus. In some school corporations, bonus pay comes out of a pool, where the more teachers that qualify, the less the bonuses will be. This system inevitably causes teachers to collaborate less, hoping other teachers don't qualify, and increasing their own bonus (Solmon & Podgursky, 2001). Fiscally, this system does make more sense. School corporations would set aside a finite amount of money reserved for those bonuses, because school funding is often based on enrollment rather than achievement (Gersen, 2010). Maryland, however, has implemented a system where it is not the teachers that receive higher pay, but the school itself receives more funding when the school improves achievement. While principal leadership is essential in these systems, many teachers actually report that they began collaborating more, not because they were going to get a bonus, but because the school-wide climate was more positive and everyone wanted to do his/her part to increase the school's overall achievement (Kelly, Conley & Kimball, 2000). While salary bonuses are nice to receive, the majority of teachers entered the profession because of a passion for teaching, and that passion ultimately drives the teacher to improve his craft.

Indiana is another state that has recently implemented merit pay. In April 2011, Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels signed Senate Enrolled Act 1. This legislation requires school corporations to pay teachers and evaluate their performance based on student performance on standardized tests (Carden, 2011), changing the way teachers are evaluated, and placing the emphasis on student

achievement. The four criteria that will make up the evaluation system are the incentive pay (which may not make up more than 33% of a teachers base pay), student achievement, teacher leadership or professional growth or mentoring, and attendance (Schneider, 2011). Merit pay will give younger teachers an opportunity to earn more money based on performance instead of experience as it has been in the past. Model rubrics rank teachers in four categories: highly effective, effective, improvement necessary, ineffective (Schneider, 2011). Teachers that are not as successful in student gains on standardized tests will be denied salary increases and/or scheduled pay increases. Statewide support will be provided through The New Teacher Project (TNTP), in which teachers will be tracked to ensure no student has an ineffective teacher two years in a row (Protheroe, 2011). New teacher evaluation standards will be statewide before the upcoming 2011-12 school year (Carden, 2011).

While schools continue to search for ways of improving student performance, many states are trying various forms of performance-based pay. Indiana joins other states, such as Kentucky and Maryland, by implementing performance-based pay systems. The reception of such implementations is often filled with mixed emotions, which is quite often due to an uncertainty of what is to come, and how individual teachers will be evaluated. While there are various evaluations and rubrics to base teacher performance on, the goal is still the same: to help the students. The purpose of this study is to find teachers' perceptions of performance-based pay, and how performance-based pay impacts the achievement of students.

## Methods

### *Participants*

This research was designed to examine the perceptions and attitudes of teachers concerning merit pay. The participants in this study were teachers in Indiana, including those on merit pay and those earning the schools' mandated annual salary. Invitations were sent out to ten school corporations

throughout Indiana, employing approximately 8,000 teachers. To select these schools, an internet search was done to find public school corporations in Indiana that had already implemented merit pay systems. These schools corporations included Greensburg, Bloomfield, Bremen, Plymouth, and Warren Township. Non-merit pay schools were selected based on similar demographics and general location. The school corporations not on merit pay that were invited to participate were South Bend, Elkhart, Goshen, and Metropolitan School District of Washington Township (MSDWT).

From Goshen Community Schools, principals from Goshen High School, Goshen Middle School and Chandler Elementary approved for the survey to be administered. Goshen Community Schools are 52% Caucasian, 37% Hispanic, 8% Multiracial, and 3% "Other," with 66% free or reduced lunch. The principal from Riverside Intermediate from Plymouth Community School Corporation also gave approval to administer the survey to the staff. Plymouth schools are 78% Caucasian, 16% Hispanic, 4% Multi-racial, 1% Black, and 1% "other," with 40% free or reduced lunch. Participants were from all levels of Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, with 19 teaching grades K-4, 14 teaching grades 5-8, and three teaching in grades 9-12. Four participants teach both 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The participants were sampled through stratified sampling. Inclusions of the sample were all teachers from the public schools being sampled. Exclusions were teachers in Indiana who are not employed by the school systems previously stated. Employees of the selected schools who are not teachers were also excluded.

Approximately 250 teachers from the four schools were invited to complete the survey. Out of those invited, 42 teachers completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 16.8%. Of the 42 teachers who participated in the survey, 25 (59.5%) were not in schools with merit pay, while 17 (40.5%) were in some system that uses merit pay. There were 30 (71.4%) females and 12 (28.6%) males that completed the survey. The ages of participants were as follows, with percent responding in parentheses: 22-25 (9.5), 26-30 (14.3), 31-40 (28.6), 41-50 (7.1), and 50+ (40.5). The years of experience for the

respondents followed a similar pattern, with the 42.9% of teachers having 16-20 years' experience, followed by 19% with 4-7 years' experience, 14.3% with 8-10 years' experience, and 11.9% for both 0-3 and 11-15 years' experience.

#### *Data collection*

The online survey (Appendix B) contained fifteen questions using the Likert-scale (rating scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree), Likert-like scale and open-ended questions about their perceptions and attitudes on merit pay. Questions could be answered or skipped at the discretion of the participant. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Questions were divided into three main categories. The first group included demographic information including gender, age, the number of years' taught, as presented under the participants section. The second group of questions covered frequencies of actions such as professional development, collaboration, and compensation. These questions consisted of Likert scale and Likert-like scale questions and were analyzed using ANOVA. The third group was open-ended questions that were qualitatively analyzed.

#### *Procedure*

The Indiana University South Bend (IUSB) Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought for conducting the research online through email that contained a link to the online surveys. The subject population was public school teachers in the state of Indiana in the selected school corporations. While waiting for IRB approval, internet searches were conducted to find e-mail addresses for the principals of all schools in the selected school corporations. Once approved by the IRB (Appendix F), principals at the selected schools were contacted by e-mail (Appendix C) for permission to disseminate surveys to the teachers. If principals did not respond within one week, the email was sent one additional time to ask for permission. Principals who approved were asked to respond to the researchers with

approval, as well as a carbon copy to the building secretary, who would then be forwarding the invitations to the staff. This was done so as not to appear coercive to staff, or as not to be seen as an endorsement by the principal. The invitation for teachers (Appendix D) to take the survey was then e-mailed to the designated secretary, and disseminated to the school faculty. The e-mail contained a short explanation of this study, the study information sheet (Appendix A), and a link to the survey (Appendix B). The first page of the survey included the consent form. Surveys were completed anywhere the teacher had access to the internet, and when it was convenient. A window of two weeks was allowed for participants to complete the survey. A follow-up email (Appendix E) was sent one week after the initial email as a reminder to those who had yet to complete the survey, as well as a thank you to those that had completed it. If subjects declined to participate, or did not take any action, by the end of the two weeks there was no further communication. Results from the survey were stored in a secured file that was password protected and accessible only to the primary researcher and shared with the other researchers. The data was analyzed after the survey period had ended.

There were no risks associated with this research, and, while there were no direct benefits to teachers for participating, the overall benefit was to determine how teachers perceived merit pay and the impact merit pay had on teaching, as well as to allow for vital information to school boards as local pay structures are constructed in the near future. No identifiable information was collected. Participants were made aware that it is possible through an internet communications, that someone other than the intended recipient may see the responses. While some demographic and open-ended questions were asked, every effort was made to ensure that no specific individual could be identified in the research. Within the final report, quotes were occasionally shared with the faculty sponsor at IU South Bend. Results were shared with the faculty sponsor at IU South Bend and were shared with various school districts. If a quote could directly identify an individual, that quote was not included in the results.

## Results and Discussion

Within the results and discussion section a description of demographic information is given in regard to the participants who were involved. This study examined and analyzed quantitative data and qualitative data collected from teachers from four different school corporations. The qualitative analysis was broken up into three main sections. These sections include personal improvement, teacher collaboration, and teacher performance. Data from the surveys were divided into three groups. The first group included demographic information including gender, age, and the number of years' taught, as presented under the demographics section.

### *Demographics*

Approximately 250 teachers from four school corporations were invited to complete the survey; out of the 250 teachers who were invited to complete the survey, 42 of the teachers participated, yielding a response rate of 16.8%. Of the 42 participants, 25 (59.5%) were not in schools with merit pay, while 17 (40.5%) were in some system that uses merit pay. Of those who participated in the survey, 28.9% of the participants were male and the remaining 71.1% were female.

In regard to the age of the participants, 0% of the participants were under the age of 21, 8.9% were between the ages of 22-25, 13.3% were between the ages of 26-30, 26.7% were between the ages of 31-40, 6.7% were between the ages of 41-50, and 44% of the participants were 51 and older. In this study the years of teaching experience was examined; 55.5% of the participants had over 16 years of teaching experience, 15.6% had 8-15 years of experience, and 28.9% had less than 7 years of experience.

### *Quantitative Analysis*

The Quantitative analysis will be broken down into three main sections. These three sections include personal improvement and professional development; teacher collaboration; and teacher



performance, evaluation, and compensation. These sections will include tables detailing data that was collected from the survey.

### *Personal Improvement and Professional Development*

Professional development is a critical component of an educator's job description, whether this is through conferences, teacher collaboration, research, or any other means. Differentiated instruction is now being recognized for helping to reach all students, in whatever type of instruction best connects with the student. Table 1 shows that 26.3% of respondents who are in merit pay schools seek to differentiate instruction, while 100% of those teachers who responded from non-merit pay schools attempt to differentiate instruction.

Table 1  
*I seek to differentiate my instructional methods.*

Responses	Merit Pay ( <i>n</i> = 19)		Non Merit Pay ( <i>n</i> = 30)		All ( <i>n</i> = 49)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Strongly agree	2	10.5	19	63.3	21	42.9
Agree	3	15.8	11	36.7	14	28.6
Disagree	10	52.6	0	0	10	20.4
Strongly disagree	4	21.1	0	0	4	0

This data seems counterintuitive and is contrary to Cornett (1995). It would seem as though teachers who would be paid more for impacting more students would look to differentiate their instruction as a means to improve overall student achievement. The data shows that even though teachers are not being given any extra incentive, they are still differentiating their instruction to fit the needs of the students who are in their classrooms.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of merit pay and non-merit pay of teacher beliefs regarding professional development. Most teachers regardless of merit pay want to seek to grow as an educator. The data reveals that on average teachers attend professional development workshops three to four times a year. There was no statistically significant effect of teacher perception of professional development at the  $p < 0.05$  level for the two conditions [ $F(1,35) = .063, p = 0.803$ ]. The results show that regardless of merit, teachers believe that professional growth is important. See Tables 2 and 3 for more details.

Table 2

*Scores for the Question about Professional Development*

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Merit Pay	14	3.93	1.64	2.98	4.88
Non Merit	22	3.86	1.58	3.16	4.57
Total	36	3.89	1.58	3.35	4.42

Table 3

*Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Professional Growth*

Source	<i>Sum or Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	.052	1	.052	.063	.803
Within Groups	27.948	34	.822		
Total	28.000	35			

Professional development has proven to be important to the growth of educators. Once a school corporation has adopted a merit pay system, teachers seem more willing to attend professional development sessions and take advantage of other opportunities to improve in the profession (Jones,

2011). This statement could hold validity but the data shows that regardless of performance-based pay, teachers are seeking professional development.

Professional development is a key component of growing as a teacher in order to ensure the success of students and colleagues. Professional development gives teachers the opportunity to collaborate and share ideas with one another. This creates a positive teacher and learning environment for students. The results validate that teachers are willing to receive professional development in order to become better educators in order to guide their students into a successful academic career.

Within the survey, a question of whether merit pay had increased student achievement was asked. Table 4 shows that only 2.4% of teachers who are on a merit pay system believe that merit pay increases student achievement, resulting in 35.7% teachers believing that merit pay does not increase student achievement. The other 61.9 % of the participants did not answer this question because they were either not on merit pay or skipped the question. Table 5 reveals similar results. This table shows that 33.3 % of teachers who are not on a merit pay system believe that student achievement does not increase merit pay, thus resulting in only 9.5% of the participants who answered this question believed that merit pay had increased student achievement.

Table 4

*Merit pay has increased student achievement in my school.*

Responses	<i>N</i>	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	0	0		
Agree	1	2.4	6.3	2.4
Disagree	8	19.0	50.0	21.4
Strongly disagree	7	16.7	43.8	38.1
Missing System	26	61.9	100	
Total	42	100.0		

Table 5

*Student Achievement has remained the same since merit pay was implemented.*

Responses	<i>N</i>	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	0	0	0	
Agree	4	4	22.2	100
Disagree	4	9.5	22.2	55.6
Strongly disagree	10	23.8	55.6	77.8
Missing System	24	57.9	100	
Total	42	100.0		

A majority of the participants disagreed that merit pay caused an increase in student achievement. This data showed that teachers believed that merit pay did not cause a growth in student achievement. The ultimate goal of schools adopting merit pay was to increase student achievement, while at the same time encouraging teachers to continually research, differentiate, and improve classroom instructional methods and procedures. By linking teachers' pay to student achievement and improvement, there is an intended motivation for teachers to continually improve their own instructional methods (Lewis and Podgursky, 2011). The data shows that regardless of merit pay, student achievement does not change.

In Table 6, the data revealed that 19 people responded to this question; 34.3% of the participants that receive merit pay disagree that because of merit pay they differentiate instructional methods. Only 11.9 % believe that merit pay caused them to differentiate instruction. There were 24 % of the teachers who did not answer this question. The data from table 7 revealed that even though they are not being paid by performance, that 100% consistently seek way to differentiate instruction. There were 28.6 % of teachers who did not answer this question.

Table 6

*Merit pay has caused me to differentiate instructional methods.*

Responses	<i>N</i>	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	2	4.8	10.5	
Agree	3	7.1	15.8	2.4
Disagree	10	23.8	52.6	21.4
Strongly disagree	4	9.5	21.1	38.1
Missing System	23	54.8		
Total	42	100.0		

Table 7

*I consistently seek ways to differentiate my instructional methods.*

Responses	<i>N</i>	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	19	45.2	63.3	
Agree	11	26.2	36.7	2.4
Disagree	0	0	0	21.4
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	38.1
Missing System	12	28.6	37	
Total	42	100.0		

It is imperative that instruction is differentiated and geared to each student's learning abilities. The data shows that with or without merit pay, teachers are going to differentiate instruction to the best of their ability. Teachers often put in extraordinary effort to help their students achieve, regardless of merit pay (Raham, 2000). Teachers who care about their students' learning and success will do all that they can to ensure the success of the students that are in their classrooms.

*Teacher Collaboration*

In table 8, according to the data that was collected from the survey, 100% of teachers that do not receive merit pay collaborate with other coworkers. Only 15% agree or strongly agree that they collaborate with teachers more because of merit pay.

Table 8

*I collaborate with other teachers.*

Responses	Merit Pay (n=19)		Non Merit Pay (n = 29)		All (n = 48)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly agree	1	5.3	19	65.5	20	41.7
Agree	2	10.5	10	34.5	12	25.0
Disagree	9	47.4	0	0	9	18.8
Strongly disagree	7	36.8	0	0	7	14.6

The data shows that 100% of non-merit pay teachers collaborate without the incentive of merit pay. Only 15% of those who are on merit pay respond to the question “I have collaborated more with other teachers due to merit pay” positively. Therefore, the implementation of merit pay could result in negative outcomes. Teachers might stop collaborating with one another, and competition may increase among teachers, in regard to who has the best scores and better techniques. Merit pay systems could cause teachers to collaborate less, hoping other teachers do not qualify for an incentive bonus in order to increase their own bonus (Solmon and Podgursky, 2001).

An ANOVA was run for the question of whether teachers collaborated with one another. The results showed that there was no statistical significance; however, there was a practical difference.

Table 9

*Scores for the Question about Teacher Collaboration*

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Yes	8	3.37	0.51	2.94	3.81
No	21	3.76	0.44	3.56	3.96
Total	29	3.65	0.48	3.47	3.84

Table 10

*Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Teacher Collaboration*

Source	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	.867	1	.867	4.119	.052
Within Groups	5.685	27	.211		
Total	6.552	28			

*Teacher Performance, Evaluation, and Compensation*

The following tables consider teachers' opinions if compensation for their efforts should differ according to their performance. Table 11 demonstrates those 14 out of 22 merit pay participants and 22 out of 29 of non-merit pay participants either agree or strongly agree that teachers who perform at higher levels should be rewarded in one way or another.

Table 11

*I believe that teachers performing at higher levels should be rewarded differently than teacher performing at lower levels*

Responses	Merit Pay (n=22)		Non Merit Pay (n = 29)		All (n = 51)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Strongly agree	2	9.1	8	27.6	10	19.6
Agree	12	54.5	14	48.3	26	50.1
Disagree	5	22.7	5	17.2	10	19.6
Strongly disagree	3	13.6	2	6.9	5	0.1

The results from Table 11 concur with the Gallup Poll in which “71 percent ... supported ... for paying teachers on the basis of their work ...., while 73 percent indicated that a teacher’s salary should be closely tied to students’ academic achievement (Protheroe, 2011, p. 28). The results show that a majority of participants that were surveyed responded that they agree or strongly agree that teachers performing at higher levels should be rewarded differently than teachers performing at lower levels.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run between what those teacher receiving merit pay and those teachers not receiving merit pay perceptions were. The results indicate that regardless if teachers are on a merit pay system or not, teachers believe that those performing at higher levels should be rewarded differently than teachers performing at lower levels. A statistically significant difference was found  $F(1,28) = 9.975, p < .05$  (see Table 13).



Table 12

*Scores for Teachers performing at Higher Levels should be rewarded differently than Teachers performing at Lower Levels*

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Merit Pay	21	3.24	.70	2.92	3.56
Not Merit Pay	8	2.25	.89	1.51	2.99
Total	29	2.97	.86	2.64	3.29

The p-value of .004 supports a statistical significance in the results. There is a significant difference in the perception of teachers about receiving a reward for their work.

Table 13

*Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Teachers performing at Higher Levels should be rewarded differently than Teachers performing at Lower Levels*

Source	<i>Sum or Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	5.656	1	5.656	9.975	.004
Within Groups	15.310	27	.567		
Total	20.966	28			

Interestingly, a large majority of respondents believe that they should be recompensed for their efforts, but they are not satisfied with the merit pay system. The standardized testing students are subjected to do not tell the entire story and it is difficult to find a reliable evaluation tool to distinguish effective from non-effective teachers. According to Solmon and Podgursky, "Teaching is not a science. A faster more talented teacher cannot always turn out students that achieve at increasingly higher levels"

(p. 10). It is also stated that excellent teachers often receive the “hardest students” and it is often impossible to show growth in these difficult classrooms (Solmon & Podgursky, 2000).

Most teachers, regardless of merit pay, do not believe that standardized testing is a result of how hard they work, meaning that standardized testing does not mirror how much effort and expertise a teacher brings to the classroom.

Table 14

*My students' achievement does NOT reflect how hard I work*

Responses	Merit Pay (n = 22)		Non Merit Pay (n = 30)		All (n = 52)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Strongly agree	7	4.5	10	33.3	17	33.0
Agree	9	40.9	13	43.3	22	42.3
Disagree	5	22.7	7	23.3	12	23.1
Strongly disagree	1	4.5	0	0	1	0.02

$F(1,27)=6.345$ ,  $p=.018$  showing significance.

Tables 15 and 16 reveal the same notion. Over twice as many teachers do not have confidence in standardized testing as a measurement of their own efforts. Only one-third believe that student testing indicates their own hard work. The  $p$  value of 0.018 reveals that there is a significant difference between the two factions.

Table 15

*Scores for Teacher Evaluations Accurately Reflecting their Performance*

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Yes	8	2.13	.83	1.43	2.82
No	21	3.00	.84	2.62	3.38
Total	29	2.76	.91	2.41	3.11

Table 16

*Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Teacher Evaluations Accurately Reflecting their Performance*

Source	<i>Sum or Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	4.435	1	4.435	6.345	0.018
Within Groups	18.875	27	0.699		
Total	23.310	28			

When teachers are judged on how well they are doing their job, such judgments are frequently viewed as being unfair, inaccurate or biased” (Solmon&Podgursky, 2000, p. 5). The data reveals that teachers are not confident with standardized testing as a measurement of their efforts. Several factors could influence testing for students on any given day.

In regard to the evaluation process, teachers were asked if they believe that the evaluation process was clear and objective. Table 17 shows that 26.2 % of those teachers on merit pay believe the process was clear and objective. Only 16.2 % of teachers disagree, stating that the evaluation process was unclear. The data reveals that 40.5 % of those teachers who are on a non-merit pay system state that the evaluation process is clear and objective while 30.9 % of the those participants believe that the system is unclear. There were 31% of the teachers that did not make a choice for this question.

Table 17

*I believe the evaluation process is clear and objective*

Responses	Merit Pay (n=22)		Non-Merit Pay (n = 30)		All (n = 52)	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Strongly agree	2	4.8	6	14.3	8	15.4
Agree	9	21.4	11	26.2	20	38.5
Disagree	7	16.7	10	23.8	17	32.7
Strongly disagree	4	9.5	3	7.1	7	13.5

Within a merit pay system there are various ways in which teachers can be evaluated. The data shows that teachers with or without merit pay doubt the evaluation tools and rubrics that are being used. The idea of evaluation is the same throughout, which is to help teachers to better service and help with increasing student achievement.

Table 18 shows statistical data in regard to how teachers feel about rewarding teachers who are at higher levels compared to those teachers who are performing at lower levels. This data revealed that 40.5% of teachers who are on merit pay disagree that teachers performing at higher levels should be rewarded differently than teachers performing at lower levels, leaving only 9.5% stating that teachers performing at higher levels should be rewarded. Fifty percent of teachers on merit pay did not respond to this question. Of the 29 non-merit pay participants that responded to this question, 52.3% of the teachers believe that teachers that are performing at higher levels should be rewarded differently than teachers performing at lower levels. Among those teachers who are on non-merit pay, 16.7% disagree that teachers performing at higher levels should be rewarded differently. There were 31% of teachers who did not answer this question.

Table 18

*I believe that teachers performing at higher levels should be rewarded differently than teachers performing at lower levels.*

Responses	Merit Pay (n=21)		Non Merit Pay (n = 29)		All (n = 50)	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
Strongly agree	0	0	8	19	8	16.0
Agree	4	9.5	14	33.3	18	36.0
Disagree	6	14.3	5	11.9	11	22.0
Strongly disagree	11	26.2	2	4.8	13	26.0

Table 19 shows that out of 22 teachers who are on merit pay, 33.3% agreed that the evaluation accurately reflected their performance. Only 19.0% disagree, stating that they believe the evaluation does not accurately reflect their performance. Table 19 shows that 45.3% of those teachers who are on non-merit pay agree that the evaluation accurately reflects their performance, thus resulting in 23.8 % of those teachers disagreeing stating that the evaluation process did not accurately reflect their performance. There were 31% of teachers who did not answer that question.

Table 19

*I believe my evaluation accurately reflects my performance.*

Responses	Merit Pay (n=22)		Non Merit Pay (n = 29)		All (n = 51)	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
Strongly agree	2	4.8	6	14.3	8	15.7
Agree	12	28.6	13	31	25	49.0
Disagree	5	11.9	7	16.7	12	23.5
Strongly Disagree	3	7.1	3	7.1	6	11.8

Evaluations can be a useful and enlightening way to help teachers become better teachers in order to help students achieve success. It is important that staff understand how they are being evaluated. Staff members need to know the evaluation tool is and its purpose. Historically performance-based pay

has been discontinued because of the inconsistencies and the way bonuses were allotted (Solmon and Podgursky, 2000). Therefore, it is important to give clear and concise guidelines in how and who will use the evaluation tool.

### *Qualitative Analysis*

There were seven major questions that characterized teachers' perceptions of merit pay described by the participants. Each of the seven major themes was labeled with a question. This was done to get a better understanding of how teachers feel about merit pay and the corresponding aspects in regards to teaching. The seven questions, as derived from the present set of transcripts, are as follows:

1. If your school has merit pay, what changes, if any, do you think should be made to the current evaluation tool used

for merit pay?

2. If your school has merit pay, have you seen a change in student achievement since merit pay was implemented?

3. In your opinion, what is/would be the best aspect of merit pay?

4. Should student achievement be included in the evaluation process? Please explain.

5. What is your overall opinion of merit pay?

6. In your opinion, what is/would be the worst aspect of merit pay?

7. What do you find most rewarding about teaching?

1. If your school has merit pay, what changes, if any, do you think should be made to the current evaluation tool used for merit pay?

Teachers who are currently in a school corporation who use merit pay have mixed feelings on the evaluation tool. Two teachers said that they are early in the implementation, and they have not yet had

time to evaluate whether the evaluations are accurate and effective. Four teachers believed that the evaluation tool their school used was either sufficient, or “very thorough,” with one teacher saying that “Indiana is giving the option of using the model my district uses as an evaluation tool.” Three other teachers reported that their school uses the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP). While one said that TAP is a “fair way to evaluate teachers based on a broad spectrum of variables,” the other two believe that TAP is “very time consuming and has taken effective teachers away from the classroom,” and that it “is supposed to be support (for the teacher) but is more like a gotcha program. The evaluations are subjective and biased.” TAP does have many opportunities for improvement built into the system, including “professional development, weekly 45-minute team meetings, and mentor and master teachers to provide support” (Aldeman, 2010). Other teachers added that they believe the evaluation tool is “too long and difficult to understand,” and that teacher evaluations should be based on individual achievement, rather than student/class achievement and Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) scores.

2. If your school has merit pay, have you seen a change in student achievement since merit pay was implemented?

Eight teachers replied that merit pay has only recently been implemented, and therefore is too early to tell if there is student improvement. Four other teachers reported that “student achievement (if you measure that by test scores) improve(d)”; however, three of those teachers add that the school, and classroom teacher, has set in place many other implementations to help increase student achievement. As one teacher wrote, “How can you pin point merit pay as a contributing factor in student achievement?” One teacher simply stated, “No, they still do not care.” The data would suggest that, while teachers may not like the idea, or won’t admit it, student achievement has increased since the

implementation of merit pay (Lewis & Podgursky, 2011). The consensus seems to be, though, that improvement was due to other initiatives and not merit pay.

3. In your opinion, what is/would be the best aspect of merit pay?

The idea behind merit pay is to reward teachers who go above and beyond to stimulate student production and achievement. Six teachers stated that there is not a "best" aspect of merit pay, with one implying that as much as teachers can work and improve, ultimately students' personal responsibility is the only thing that will cause that student to increase achievement. Most responses, however, were more optimistic. Ten teachers said that the additional pay would be the best aspect of merit pay, which could be to help supplement already low starting wages for teachers, or the high amounts of student loans that new teachers often accumulate from college. Nine teachers said that merit pay would reward those teachers who work hard, while 13 noted that merit pay rewards those teachers who are effective and doing an outstanding job. There is a distinction made between working hard and doing a great job. I think it rewards those people who have a passion for the job, who work long past the final bell, and continue to get better. I think it would push teachers to get better instead of settling for the status quo. One teacher replied that merit pay "would hold all teachers accountable to high standards for effective teaching, thus improving the school climate and school achievement." In this case, while teachers may benefit monetarily, the real advantage would be overall student and school achievement.

4. Should student achievement be included in the (teacher) evaluation process?

A majority (34/42) of teachers answered this question with different solutions; it all came down to responding with either a simple "No" or "Yes, but "I believe it should (only) be one part of the evaluation process." "There are many other components in the mix." Only one teacher answered with an "Absolutely." Most were not in favor of using the ISTEP as the only indicator of student achievement. Several quotes of teachers stood out that are repeated one way or another frequently. "NO!!! Children



come from many different backgrounds and bring in too much baggage. One year, I got a new student the day before (ISTEP) testing. This child was in [his] seventh foster home and [he] was only in third grade. The test does not take family issues, illnesses, thought processes, and the fear of failure into account. All of these issues can affect a child on a test.” Or “No, student achievement has too many variables such as home life, etc. I teach in a situation where students have much more on their mind than just the school work. Such as where they might be staying for the night, if their parent(s) will still be home when they (student) get home, if they have heat etc. Therefore, these students place less emphasis on the learning process than others. This is supported by Solmon and Podgursky (2000), in which one of the educators mentions that schools often have “revolving doors” and calls the “student turn-over astronomical” (p. 13). Additionally, when teachers are on merit pay, students and their families are aware of it. This could result in situations where students try to use the system to get rid of a teacher that students may not like. ”Student achievement and growth should be considered, but I do not believe that ISTEP is a good measure of student achievement. I have also heard students say: Let’s do badly on this test to get Mr./Mrs. X in trouble. The (ISTEP) test is not high stakes for them, so they don’t care about it. It is also not a growth test, and yet we use it as one. It is not designed to follow cohorts. This is bad science.”

##### 5. What is your overall opinion of merit pay?

The responses to this question were on a continuum. At one end was “I believe it has a place in our profession. I know I am a highly effective teacher and I feel that I should be compensated for my abilities. We are also professionals and just like other professions; we should be judged on our abilities and how effective our work is during the (school) year.” Another teacher breaks down the components of the benefits of merit pay. “I would rather take out the pay but continue to implement the process of collaboration/evaluation/learning because it has GREATLY improved my teaching.”

The majority of respondents lean to the more negative side of the continuum. Interestingly, it appears that the “newer” teachers tend to favor merit pay to the more “seasoned” teachers. “I am not much of a fan. I know this is the way of the future, but I’m not sure this could ever be done equitably. There are too many variables to consider. I think fewer and fewer young people will consider education as a career. The money just won’t be there to support a family. In the past, pension plans, calendar, and a climbing salary scale have made education attractive. Those are the days of the past.” Educators are also worried about the effects of merit pay on their team work. “It will lead to less collaboration and teamwork unless awards are team or grade level awards. Even then, I am concerned that it will lead to an unhealthy, unnatural focus on test scores ... I suspect cheating will increase. Now, when I see my students, I think of their name and interests. If merit pay takes hold, I fear I will just see them as a number, their recent test scores, and a dollar sign, my next salary increase.” “Many argue that individual merit...stifles reform pitting teachers against each other in search of a more lucrative paycheck” (p.7) and that “teachers will no longer be willing to share their hard work if they feel that someone else is going to take credit and get the extra pay” (Solmon&Podgursky, 2000, p. 8). Teamwork, which is a very important aspect of teaching effectively, will be in jeopardy and teachers may be driven to cheating (Berliner, 2001). Teachers believe it will be difficult to design a way of evaluating them that is fair and objective. “Teachers in our school work as hard as they can, including many hours of professional development. We won’t work any harder, longer, or in a more dedicated manner just because we might get merit pay. If that is why teachers are in their profession – that’s wrong! We have many poor and English as a Second Language students. Our scores are lower than many (other) schools (but we show good growth), yet we have some of the best teachers I know.” Merit pay may also imply that teachers are not already doing the best job possible, and they need an incentive to perform better (Protheroe, 2011). This seems to express what many teachers believe: “I think what once started out as a good idea is now unrealistic. There is no way to accurately

monitor teachers and decide who deserves what on a pay scale. I think the merit pay system will drive older teachers to retire and discourage new teachers from entering the teaching profession. I believe in a few short years we will have a shortage of teachers and be in an even bigger mess than we are already.”

6. In your opinion what is/would be the worst aspect of merit pay?

The idea behind merit pay is to reward those teachers who have gone above and beyond to help with the production and achievement of students. Seven teachers say that “school climate” would change in a negative way if merit pay was implemented. Teachers would become more competitive and it would lead to less collaboration among teachers. In order to create a school where everyone is on the same page, it is extremely important to have collaboration among one another. One participant says that the worst aspect of merit pay is “competition among peers, jealousy, jockeying for the ‘best’ students.” Other participants worried about the process of evaluation. One respondent says, “Linking it solely to standardized test scores. If not done fairly and objectively it has the potential to impact teacher morale (i.e., a belief that someone received a better evaluation and merit pay because the administrator likes him/her etc.).”

7. What do you find most rewarding about teaching?

For the majority of teachers, there is a common goal. That common goal is to help mold and shape students academically and socially into upstanding individuals. One teacher says the most rewarding thing about teaching is “just about everything! It is getting children excited about learning, giving them new approaches to learning, teaching them to problem solve, explore, and feel. There are so many creative ways in which a teacher can get their children to learn without pencil and paper, and rote book work. If you give them a reason to learn besides the state mandated tests they will learn, but they need to know why and what's in it for them. That is the hardest task for teachers due to the new state guidelines.” Many respondents seem to agree that teaching is about making a positive impact on these students' lives to help

them grow and flourish. Another teacher says that the most rewarding part about being a teacher is “seeing the GROWTH of the children and seeing their eyes light up when they ‘get it.’ The love and appreciation I get from students is amazing as well. One of my favorite parts of the day is greeting all the children in the morning. I love getting hugs and hello's from my students and many other students that I have taught before or never taught before even.” It is evident that teaching is not about the money, it is about the passion and love of teaching.”

Only four schools gave approval to disseminate the survey. The large majority of principals did not respond with an answer, and South Bend Community Schools and Elkhart Community Schools, as well as Westlane Elementary (MSDWT) replied that the research would not be allowed. In addition, once IRB approval was obtained, only three weeks remained in the semester. A longer period of time would have allowed, possibly, for more principals to reply, and therefore more participants to respond.

One limitation that seems to have a large impact on the responses was that the schools who had already implemented merit pay had done so only within the last year. This caused the responses to possibly show some mixed reactions, whereas more established merit pay schools might have teachers who better understood the system, and had a better idea of the impact merit pay has on student achievement. For public schools in Indiana, the timing may simply be too early to obtain an accurate depiction of merit pay's effects.

Future research on merit pay could extend to survey those teachers who are in private schools or charter schools, as well as a larger variety of public schools. While teachers in merit pay were surveyed, many who responded indicated that the system had been in place only for a year or two. Additional research could also focus on teachers who have been in a merit pay system for several years, compared to school corporations that have just recently implemented merit pay. The next step would then be to research the actual impact of merit pay on student achievement. The data shows that there is some

improvement on student performance; however, many teachers felt that those increases were due to other school initiatives, not merit pay.

### Conclusions

Merit pay is a topic that seems to be in the educational spotlight. As school corporations continually seek ways to improve school climate and student performance, the pendulum invariable swings back to paying teachers for performance, either teacher or student. While on the surface this may seem like a motivator for teachers to improve classroom instruction, many teachers believe they already work as hard as possible to teach their students.

While teachers in merit pay structures do report student achievement and scores improving, most don't believe that is a result of merit pay, but rather the culmination of a number of school initiatives that have been implemented over the past few years. Teachers do, however, admit that receiving extra pay for hard work and excellence in the classroom would be a welcome bonus, although not an incentive to work any harder.

Teachers are also quick to point out that one does not enter the educational field for the money; teachers teach to inspire and connect with the future of our country; teachers teach to see that "light bulb moment." This research has shown that with or without merit pay, the important factor is educating students. The idea of merit pay has its benefits and drawbacks. It can be a successful way of rewarding teachers but can also cause a negative impact on school climate and culture. Teachers are likely to collaborate and seek professional development opportunities with or without merit pay. Teachers are concerned that teaching will soon become more about making money, rather than inspiring children's futures. The majority of teachers surveyed want to positively impact students so that they can develop into hard-working model citizens.

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Appendix A

*Study Information Sheet*

Study #11071

INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTH BEND  
Teachers' Perceptions of Merit Pay

Dear Teachers/Colleagues,

We are completing our master's degree at IU South Bend and as part of our final requirements we are conducting a research study. The purpose of this study is to determine how teachers feel about merit pay, or pay for performance type pay structures, as well as how they believe such a pay system has/will effect classroom teaching.

We are extending this invitation to you as a teacher for one of the eight school districts throughout the state of Indiana. Schools surveyed will include both those that are currently using merit pay, as well as those that do not. You are one of about 5000 teachers being invited to participate in our research and your participation is completely voluntary. In order to participate, please click on the SurveyMonkey.com link below and complete survey. This survey contains ten questions using the Likert-scale (rating scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree), Likert-like scale and open-ended questions about your perceptions and attitudes on merit pay. The survey should not take more than 15 minutes to complete.

There are no risks associated with this research, and, while there are no direct benefits to you for participating, We hope to determine how teachers perceive merit pay, its impact on teaching, and allow for vital information to school boards as they begin constructing local pay structures in the near future.

No identifiable information about you will be collected. It is possible, however, with internet communications, that through intent or accident someone other than the intended recipient may see your responses. While we are asking some demographic and open-ended questions, we will make every effort to ensure that no individual can be identified in our reports. We will be sharing our final report, which may include quotes, with our faculty sponsor at IU South Bend. Results may also be shared with other students in our course, as well as various school districts. If we believe a quote could directly identify an individual, it will **not** be used, however we cannot know for sure what may identify a particular person. Keep in mind that you are always free to not answer any question that you wish.

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures you may contact us at [dloth@elkhart.k12.in.us](mailto:dloth@elkhart.k12.in.us). You may also contact our faculty sponsor, Michelle Bakerson, Ph.D., (574) 520-4391, [mbakerso@iusb.edu](mailto:mbakerso@iusb.edu).

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the Indiana University South Bend Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Research Subjects, 1700 Mishawaka Ave., A247, South Bend, IN 46634, (574) 520-4181, [sbirb@iusb.edu](mailto:sbirb@iusb.edu).

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate without penalty. Since the surveys do not ask for your name, once you submit the survey you will not be able to withdraw from the study. You may submit a partially completed or completely blank survey.



If you agree to participate and would like to take the survey please click on the link below.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/F9LQ35K>

Thank you for your consideration.

Dan Loth  
Science Teacher, Elkhart Central High School  
Indiana University Graduate Student

Vanessa Jackson  
Indiana University Graduate Student

Cornelia Langheinrich  
Indiana University Graduate Student

## Appendix B

*Teacher Survey Form*

## Teachers' Perceptions of Merit Pay

The purpose of this survey is to obtain information on your thoughts and learning experiences concerning merit pay or performance-pay in your school setting. The results of this survey will be used to identify the perceptions of teachers on merit pay, and the impact of merit pay on teacher practices. This survey will not collect any names, and any other directly identifying information will remain strictly confidential. General trends, numerical results, and quotes from open ended responses may be used for the completion of this research, and possibly shared with our faculty sponsor, members of our research class, and various school districts. The completion of the survey indicates your permission to use the results, with the understanding that none of the information will be attributed to any single identifiable individual. If you choose not to complete this survey at any time simply close the survey window on your internet browser.

Please check the applicable boxes for each question:

1. Please indicate the following categories in which you are in:

a. What is your gender?  Male  Female

b. What age range do you fall in?

21 and Under     22-25     26-30     31-40     41-50     50+

c. How many years of experience do you have teaching?

0-3                       4-7                       8-10                       11-15                       16-20                       21 or more

d. What is your annual teaching salary (in thousands)?

Less than \$35     \$35-39     \$40-45     \$45-49     \$50-59     \$60 or more

e. Does your school corporation have merit pay or performance-based pay?

- yes       no       don't know

f. What grade level do you teach?

- K-4       5-8       9-12       Other (explain)\_\_\_\_\_

Please click on the appropriate button to proceed

My school currently has merit pay

My school currently does not have merit pay

If your school has implemented merit pay, please indicate the following:

<b>2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
a. Merit pay has increased student achievement in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I understand how I am/will be evaluated for merit pay.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I have collaborated more with other teachers due to merit pay.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Merit pay has caused me to differentiate my instructional methods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I believe the evaluation process is clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I believe the evaluation process is objective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. The benefits of merit pay outweigh the challenges.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. I believe that teachers performing at higher levels should be rewarded differently than	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

teachers performing at lower levels.				
i. I believe my evaluation accurately reflects my performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. My students' achievement does <u>not</u> reflect how hard I work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Student achievement has remained the same since merit pay was implemented	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. My view on merit pay has had a positive change since merit pay was implemented	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If your school has not implemented merit pay, please indicate the following.

<b>2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
a. I collaborate with other teachers weekly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I believe that teachers performing at higher levels should be rewarded differently than teachers performing at lower levels.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I believe my evaluation accurately reflects my performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I believe the evaluation process is clear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I believe the evaluation process is objective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I consistently seek ways to differentiate my instructional methods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. My students' achievement does	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

notreflecthow hard I work				
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<b>3. Please indicate how many times in the last two years you...</b>	None	1 Time	2 Times	3 to 4 Times	More than 4
a. Attended a workshop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Mentored another teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Collaborated with other teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Completed professional growth classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Researched new teaching methods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Have been evaluated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please answer the following open ended questions:**

4. What do you find most rewarding about teaching?
5. Should Student achievement be included in the evaluation? Please explain.
6. What changes, if any, do you think should be made to the current evaluation tool used for merit pay?
7. Have you seen a change in student achievement since merit pay was implemented? Please explain.
8. What is your overall opinion of merit pay?
9. In your opinion, what is/would be the worst aspect of merit pay?
10. In your opinion, what is/would be the best aspect of merit pay?



Appendix C

*Principal E-mail*

E-mail Subject Line: Research Project, Seeking approval for Master's Project

Dear (Principal Name),

We are contacting you in regards to our research project that we are conducting as graduate students at Indiana University-South Bend. Our research is entitled "Teachers' Perceptions of Merit Pay," and we intend to find out what teachers believe about merit pay, and how it may impact their teaching. We would like your permission to allow your teachers to participate in our survey. If you would like to preview the survey beforehand, you can go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/F9LQ35K> to see the questions that we will be asking. We would like to email the invitation via your secretary, so as not to make it seem coercive to your staff. We would also email one reminder one week after the initial invitation that we would also ask your secretary to forward as well. If you will allow us to administer the survey to your staff, please respond with your approval, as well as send a Carbon Copy to the secretary who would be forwarding our emails. We look forward to your response.

Thank you for your time and cooperation,

*Vanessa Jackson*

Indiana University Graduate Student

*Cornelia Langheinrich*

Indiana University Graduate Student

*Dan Loth*

Science Teacher, Elkhart Central High School,

Indiana University Graduate Student

Appendix D

*Secretary E-mail (with Study Information Sheet)*

Subject Line: Research Project, Please forward to your teachers

Dear (Secretary Name),

We have received permission from (Principal Name) to conduct our Master's Degree Research Project on "Teachers' Perceptions on Merit Pay" at your school. Please forward to your staff per (principal name)'s approval. Also, please CC me on the email forward to your staff.

Thank you

Vanessa Jackson, Cornelia Langheinrich, and Dan Loth

TEACHERS: We are students from Indiana University-South Bend, and we are working on our Master's Degree Research Project. Please read the attached Study Information Sheet , also at the end of this email, and consider helping us by answering a few questions on your ideas and/or perceptions of merit pay. The survey should not take any longer than 15 minutes.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/F9LQ35K>

*Vanessa Jackson*

*Cornelia Langheinrich*

*Dan Loth*

-Indiana University Graduate Student

-Indiana University Graduate

Student-Science Teacher,

-Elkhart Central HS

-Indiana University

Graduate Student

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTH BEND

Teachers' Perceptions of Merit Pay

Dear Teachers/Colleagues,

We are completing our master's degree at IU South Bend and as part of our final requirements we are conducting a research study. The purpose of this study is to determine how teachers feel about merit pay, or pay for performance type pay structures, as well as how they believe such a pay system has/will effect classroom teaching.

We are extending this invitation to you as a teacher for one of the eight school districts throughout the state of Indiana. Schools surveyed will include both those that are currently using merit pay, as well as those that do not. You are one of about 5000 teachers being invited to participate in our research and your



participation is completely voluntary. In order to participate, please click on the SurveyMonkey.com link below and complete survey. This survey contains ten questions using the Likert-scale (rating scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree), Likert-like scale and open-ended questions about your perceptions and attitudes on merit pay. The survey should not take more than 15 minutes to complete.

There are no risks associated with this research, and, while there are no direct benefits to you for participating, We hope to determine how teachers perceive merit pay, its impact on teaching, and allow for vital information to school boards as they begin constructing local pay structures in the near future.

No identifiable information about you will be collected. It is possible, however, with internet communications, that through intent or accident someone other than the intended recipient may see your responses. While we are asking some demographic and open-ended questions, we will make every effort to ensure that no individual can be identified in our reports. We will be sharing our final report, which may include quotes, with our faculty sponsor at IU South Bend. Results may also be shared with other students in our course, as well as various school districts. If we believe a quote could directly identify an individual, it will **not** be used, however we cannot know for sure what may identify a particular person. Keep in mind that you are always free to not answer any question that you wish.

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures you may contact us at [dloth@elkhart.k12.in.us](mailto:dloth@elkhart.k12.in.us). You may also contact our faculty sponsor, Michelle Bakerson, Ph.D., (574) 520-4391, [mbakerso@iusb.edu](mailto:mbakerso@iusb.edu).

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the Indiana University South Bend Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Research Subjects, 1700 Mishawaka Ave., A247, South Bend, IN 46634, (574) 520-4181, [sbirb@iusb.edu](mailto:sbirb@iusb.edu).

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate without penalty. Since the surveys do not ask for your name, once you submit the survey you will not be able to withdraw from the study. You may submit a partially completed or completely blank survey.

If you agree to participate and would like to take the survey please click on the link below.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/F9LQ35K>

Thank you again for your time and cooperation

Vanessa Jackson

Cornelia Langheinrich

Dan Loth

Appendix E

*Follow Up E-mail*

(Secretary Name),

Please forward this to your teachers as a reminder about the survey on "Teacher Perceptions on Merit Pay."

Thank you

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Teachers,

Approximately one week ago we sent out a link for a survey entitled "Teachers' Perceptions of Merit Pay." That letter is attached for you to review. A number of you have completed this survey, and we greatly appreciate that. Thank you! If you have not yet taken the survey, please consider doing so. The results will help us to express many of the opinions and beliefs of teachers around the state of Indiana as new pay structures are being designed and implemented. Remember, participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and we will do everything we can to make sure responses remain anonymous. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/F9LQ35K>

Thank you again for your time and cooperation,

*Vanessa Jackson*

Indiana University Graduate Student

*Dan Loth*

Science Teacher, Elkhart Central High School

Indiana University Graduate Student

*Cornelia Langheinrich*

Indiana University Graduate Student

Appendix F

*IRB APPROVAL*



**INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
SOUTH BEND**

**NOTICE OF APPROVAL EXEMPT REVIEW**

**DATE:** November 10, 2011 **TO:** Dan Loth

**COPY:** Michelle Bakerson, Education

**FR From:** Erika Zynda, Contracts & Grants Coordinator

**Re:** Protocol Entitled: Teacher's Perceptions of Merit Pay  
Protocol # 11071

**Approval Date:** November 10, 2011

The IUSB Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved the research protocol referenced above as exempt; §46.101b, ¶2. This study is approved from November 10, 2011 to November 9, 2012. As the principal investigator of this study you assume the following reporting responsibilities:

**AMENDMENTS:** Investigators are required to report on these forms ANY changes to the research study (such as design, procedures, study information sheet/consent form, or subject population, including size). The new procedure may not be initiated until IRB approval has been given. An amendment form can be found at <http://www.iusb.edu/~sbirb/amendment.doc>.

**AUDITOR INSPECTION REPORTS:** Investigators are required to provide to the IRB a copy of any auditor inspection reports or findings issued to them by regulatory agencies, cooperative research groups, contract research organizations, the sponsor, or the funding agency.

**COMPLETION:** It is your responsibility to let the IRB know when this study is complete by sending an email to [sbirb@iusb.edu](mailto:sbirb@iusb.edu). Approximately one month before the expiration date we will send a notice to you at the address on your application requesting information on the current status of your study. If this is a student project and we don't hear from you, we will send a notice to your faculty sponsor. If we do not receive any response we will consider the study as ended and change our files to show that. It is your responsibility to let the IRB office know of address changes and project date changes.

**STUDY INFORMATION SHEET/INFORMED CONSENT:** All subjects should be given a copy of the stamped approved study information sheet or informed consent.

We suggest you keep this letter with your copy of the approved protocol. Please refer to the exact project title and protocol number in any future correspondence with our office. All correspondence must be typed.

Enclosures: Documentation of Review and Approval  
Approved Study Information Sheet/Informed Consent-stamped copy must be used

Federal Wide Assurance #FWA00003544-IRB00000222

For additional FWA information, see the Website at <http://www.iupui.edu/~resgrad/spon/fwa.htm>

[IRBAdministration](mailto:IRBAdministration@iusb.edu) | 574-520-4181 | [sbirb@iusb.edu](mailto:sbirb@iusb.edu) | [www.iusb.edu/~sbirb](http://www.iusb.edu/~sbirb)