

New Millennium Schools: Delivering Six-Figure Teacher Salaries in Return for Outstanding Student Learning Gains

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New Millennium Schools: Delivering Six-Figure Teacher Salaries in Return for Outstanding Student Learning Gains Ph.D. Matthew Ladner, D.M.A. Mark S. Francis, Ph.D. Gregory E. Stone Despite the fact that American students enjoy higher average family incomes and per-pupil funding, they consistently rank near the bottom in international examinations of high school achievement. Many researchers point to the United States' poor practices of recruiting, training, compensating, and retaining teachers. The highest-achieving countries tend to recruit their teachers from the top 5 percent of university graduates; however, on average, American K-12 schools recruit from the bottom third.

A growing body of research in the United States demonstrates that teacher quality makes a profound difference in student learning. Judging schools on a value-added basis, by measuring academic growth over time, reveals a profound need to attract high-quality teachers into American classrooms in large numbers. Students learning from three highly effective instructors in three successive grades learn 50 percent more than students who have three consecutive ineffective instructors. These results are consistent across subjects and occur after controlling for student factors. Teacher quality is 10 to 20 times more important than variation in average class sizes, within the observable range. Unfortunately, though, poor human resource practices lead high-quality teachers to cluster in leafy suburbs, far from the children most in need.

In this paper, we propose a charter school model based on providing value-added merit pay, identifying "master teachers" through value-added assessment, and adding more students to classes taught by master teachers. By giving these high-performing teachers two-thirds of the revenue for additional students, we find that a six-figure salary may well be within reach for master teachers with average class sizes in the low 30s (based on the current and recent historical practice in the United States). With high salaries as incentive, administrators can access new pools of talent and recruit more high-ability graduates into the classroom.



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