

2014

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#### Recommended Citation

Baker, Jr., Wilbur R. (2014) "Perceptions of New Jersey Music Teachers Regarding Merit Pay and Other Forms of Compensation," *Visions of Research in Music Education*: Vol. 25 , Article 8.  
Available at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme/vol25/iss1/8>

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## Perceptions of New Jersey Music Teachers Regarding Merit Pay and Other Forms of Compensation

By

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### Abstract

*This study is an examination of teachers' perceptions of monetary incentives including supplementary stipends and merit pay within the state of New Jersey. Participants (N = 619) completed an online questionnaire to indicate their opinions of remuneration for mentoring, teaching in subject shortage areas or high priority locations, sponsorship of co-curricular activities, increases for exceptional performance within a given year, school wide bonuses for all faculty based upon school performance, "sign on" bonuses for the initial year of employment, and performance-related promotion based upon career ladder steps. Participants indicated no opposition to stipends for extra duties and strong opposition to merit pay incentives based upon performance. There were no significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) for various forms of merit pay by assignment, location, and years of teaching experience except between early (38%) and middle (63%)/late (70%) career teacher experience level groupings in their opposition to "sign on" bonuses ( $\chi^2 = 10.04, p < .05$ ). Analyses of qualitative data regarding opposition to merit pay identified the following themes: (a) competition, (b) subjectivity, (c) ethics, and (d) inequity. A need for continued study is discussed and suggestions for future investigations are proposed.*

**Keywords:** merit pay, music education, accountability, teacher evaluation, student performance, sign on bonus

## Introduction

Objective factors including years of experience and professional growth such as workshop credits, graduate degrees, or other forms of professional development, form the basis of the traditional method of remuneration, which results in a single salary schedule. This model establishes a base salary for each teacher regardless of grade level or subject taught. While most teacher salary schedules cap off at certain pay levels based upon a predetermined number of years of experience or education, some districts occasionally grant supplementary stipends to teachers who coach extracurricular sports, sponsor after school clubs, or direct co-curricular music ensembles. To date, this salary table remains the most commonly used approach for compensating teachers throughout the United States (Elpus, 2011).

While the fixed salary schedule is predictable, noncompetitive, and objective, several researchers, politicians, and educators scrutinize its effectiveness in retaining excellent teachers and rewarding achievement (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2004). Critics of the fixed salary schedule assert that it is designed to reward time and service instead of performance quality (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2007). Others contend the lack of monetary incentives in such a salary schedule “pushes high performers out of the profession” (Greene & Forster, 2008, p.2). Some identify the inherent lack of flexibility in differentiating pay across subjects or assignments as a disadvantage of the single salary schedule. Moreover, additional pay for working in undesirable conditions is not an option under this type of contractual agreement (Heneman & Kimball, 2008).

Federal and state lawmakers recently passed legislation to include K-12 administration and teacher merit pay programs to improve student achievement and retain excellent teachers (Podgursky & Springer, 2007). For example, legislation encouraged local administrators to

“shine a spotlight on and reward excellence in teaching through compensation and promotion” as outlined in the Federal Race to the Top competitive grant program (United States Department of Education, 2009, pg. 69). Several individual district officials have adopted merit pay plans to attract and retain excellent teachers, to incentivize them to do superior work, and to discourage weak ones from remaining in the field (Inman, 1984; Fulbeck, 2014). Although Liu, Johnson, and Peske (2004) found that signing bonuses and other financial incentives had a limited effect on recruiting new teachers, Richardson (1999) stated, “It is probably starting salaries that have a disproportionate influence on young teachers’ career choices” (pg. 28). Similarly, in a study of music teachers at risk for attrition and migration, Hancock (2008) noted that “a \$10,000 increase in base salary reduced the odds of being a high attrition/migration risk by almost 40%” (p. 139). Despite these efforts, a recent survey of 10,000 teachers sponsored by *Scholastic* and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2012) revealed that only 16% of the teachers felt that performance pay helped to retain good colleagues while 26% of the respondents felt that performance pay would have a strong or very strong impact on student achievement.

“Buy-in” is the acceptance of proposed reform policies prior to the enactment or implementation of such initiatives. Business leaders from The New American Schools (1998), a nonprofit organization interested in funding and improving the quality of public education, stressed that new school designs must include “teachers’ input and commitment, and offer structures to involve them in planning and managing the education of their students” (New American Schools, 1998, p. 6). Previous investigators of school reform implementation concluded that teacher commitment and support were integral and necessary aspects of successful policy change or new policy adoption (Fuhman, 1991; Slavin & Fashola, 1998; McGowan, 1988). Turnbull (2002) identified several predictors of teacher acceptance of school

reform programs: support from staff members, administrator buy-in, and control over classroom implementations. Leigh (2013) revealed mixed results in the complexities of designing and implementing effective incentive programs. Vagi (2014) suggested the possibility of music being overlooked in compensation reform as it is often considered to be outside of the “core” curriculum. Consequently, “if music teachers feel that the financial awards associated with their work are limited by virtue of their position, it is likely that many music teachers may consider leaving the profession” (Vagi, 2014, p. 102). According to Elpus (2011), “music education scholarship has unfortunately been silent on the issue of teacher compensation—reformed or otherwise” (p. 181). If the successful implementation of new educational reform policies relies in part on teacher buy-in, it would deem beneficial to determine if teachers are supportive of merit pay prior to the implementation and administration of such a program.

Although there is a considerable body of research on the remuneration for teachers at large, there is a paucity of research literature specifically related to extra duty compensation and merit pay for arts educators. Several scholars have suggested a variety of performance-based proposals for compensating music teachers (Cowden, 1988; Elpus, 2011). However, there are few empirical studies related to the benefits of merit pay or the acceptance of such compensation programs by music educators. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of music teachers regarding professional supplementary remuneration and merit pay programs. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. Do a majority of public school music teachers support and receive extra duty stipends and/or merit pay?
2. Are there differences of opinion regarding extra duty stipends and merit pay between early, middle, and late career music teachers?
3. Are there differences of opinion regarding extra duty stipends and merit pay between elementary, middle, and high school music teachers?

4. Are there differences of opinion regarding extra duty stipends and merit pay between rural, suburban, and urban music teachers?
5. What are the individual concerns of music teachers regarding extra duty stipends and merit pay?

## **Method**

### **Procedures**

In the present study, I used an online questionnaire to collect descriptive data (see Appendix for Merit Pay Study Questionnaire). A thorough review of the research literature preceded questionnaire design and questions from the National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey (2011-2012) formed the basis of the survey. I requested demographic information on teaching assignment (elementary, middle, high), years of teaching experience, and school setting (rural, suburban, urban). Further, I asked participants to share their opinions of supplementary compensation and merit pay as they related to the following: (a) mentoring, (b) teaching in shortage areas (e.g. math or science) or high priority locations (e.g. inner city), (c) sponsorship of co-curricular activities, (d) individual increases for exceptional performance within a given year, (e) school wide bonuses for all faculty based upon school performance, (f) “sign on” bonuses for the initial year of employment, and (g) performance-related promotion based upon career ladder steps. Likert-scale gradations of teacher opinions ranged from “strongly favor” to “strongly oppose” for each of the aforementioned incentives. At the end of the survey, I included an optional comment section to elicit qualitative data regarding individual concerns and thoughts about merit pay.

### **Sample**

Participants ( $N = 619$ ) in this study consisted of music teachers currently employed by public school districts within the state of New Jersey. I accessed a list of public school district

websites ( $n = 693$ ) from the State of New Jersey Department of Education directory of public schools (<http://education.state.nj.us/directory/>) and subsequently reviewed all public school website faculty listings to determine if each school employed music teachers. On a spreadsheet, I then recorded individual music teacher email addresses ( $n = 3,003$ ), sorted them by county, and made two email attempts to obtain responses from the participants. Each email contained an opening letter of consent with a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) link that allowed them to enter a secured website hosted by an internet-based survey company:

<http://www.questionpro.com/>. Several email requests ( $n = 68$ ) were undeliverable or bounced back, resulting in a total of 2,935 active email addresses.

## Results

### Participant Demographics

A final return rate of 21% ( $N = 619$ ) resulted from the primary source participant pool. In light of the modest response rate, I conducted further examination of the returned data and revealed that response rates regarding teaching assignment types generally mirrored figures published by The New Jersey Arts Education Partnership (2012). Additionally, I found a correlation between self reported school location assignment percentages of the target population and state data from the United States Census Bureau (2010). While the response rate was less than desired, the actual number of respondents was relatively high and relevant according to large-sample survey criteria outlined by Babbie (1990) and Creswell (2002).

Respondents reported a majority of their teaching assignments as follows: (a) elementary/K-5, (44.87%;  $n = 280$ ), (b) middle/6-8, (28.69%;  $n = 179$ ), and (c) high school/9-12, (26.44%;  $n = 165$ ). Most teachers indicated suburban (71.63%;  $n = 447$ ) locations for their current teaching assignments followed by urban (19.71%;  $n = 123$ ) and rural (8.65%;  $n = 54$ )

geographic settings respectively. An open-ended question regarding the number of years taught inclusive of the current year yielded responses ranging from one to forty-four years ( $M = 16.29$ ) of teaching experience for the total population. The following categories denote years of teaching experience: early career (1-4), middle career (5-19), and late career (20 or more). Results included slightly more middle career respondents (52.18%;  $n = 323$ ) than early career (10.66%;  $n = 66$ ) and late career teachers (37.16%;  $n = 230$ ) combined as presented in Figure 1.

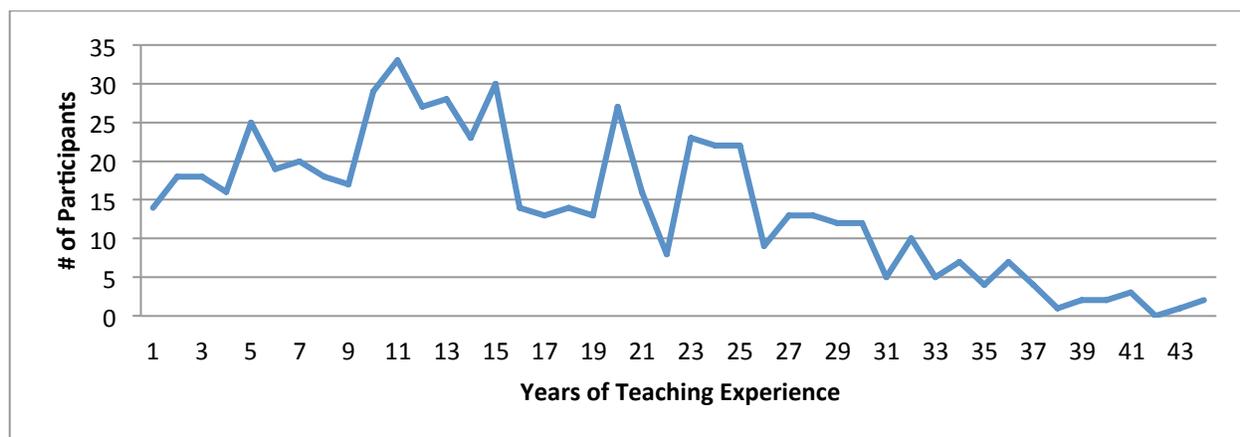


Figure 1. Participant years of teaching experience.

### Quantitative Data Responses

Using Chi-square analyses, I tested for differences in opinions regarding various stipends and forms of merit pay (i.e. mentoring, teaching in subject shortage area or high priority locations, sponsorship of co-curricular activities, individual increases for exceptional performance within a given year, school wide bonuses for all faculty based upon school performance, “sign on” bonuses for the initial year of employment, and performance-related promotion based upon career ladder steps). Participants selected Likert scale rankings from strongly favor to strongly oppose for each of the aforementioned stipends and sources of merit pay. I found significant differences for each of the 8 variables ( $p < .01$ ). Descriptive data on participants’ earnings and opinions of various pay incentives and supplements are in Table 1.

Table 1

*Participants' Earnings and Opinions of Pay Incentives and Supplements*

Incentive/Supplement	R	NR	Strongly Favor	Mildly Favor	Mildly Oppose	Strongly Oppose
1. Mentor responsibilities for new colleagues or student teachers	33.6 %	66.4 %	67.69%	26.33%	3.72%	2.26%
2. Teaching in a shortage area such as math or science	.48	99.52	11.47	27.30	29.08	32.15
3. Teaching in a high priority location (i.e. inner city school)	3.07	96.93	27.95	47.01	15.02	10.02
4. Sponsoring Co-curricular activities (marching band or musicals)	78.51	21.49	89.98	6.95	.97	2.10
5. Individual increase for exceptional performance in a given year	1.13	98.87	24.72	30.21	17.61	27.46
6. School wide bonus for all faculty based upon school performance	.97	99.03	17.77	30.37	23.42	28.43
7. Performance related promotion based upon career ladder steps	23.10	76.90	26.66	37.48	15.83	20.03
8. "Sign On" bonus for initial year of employment within district	.65	99.35	14.05	22.94	27.46	35.54

*Note.* R = Received by participant, NR = Not Received by participant

More than 50% of survey respondents mildly to strongly opposed three of the variables: (a) teaching in a subject shortage area, (b) schoolwide bonuses for all faculty based upon school performance, and (c) "sign on" bonuses for the initial year of employment. I further analyzed these variables to test for differences in responses by teaching assignment, school location, and years of teaching experience. No significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) for teaching in a subject shortage area and schoolwide bonuses by assignment, location, and years of teaching experience were discovered. However, I found significant differences between various music teacher experience level groupings' opposition to "sign on" bonuses [ $\chi^2(2, N = 619) = 10.04, p < .05$ ]

with a majority of middle (63%) and late (70%) career teachers and less than half of all early (38%) career participants mildly or strongly opposed to such monetary supplements.

### **Qualitative Data Responses**

I elicited qualitative data from participants by having them complete open ended comments. Participants ( $n = 271$ ) provided detailed commentary. I subsequently coded free-response data utilizing HyperRESEARCH software to identify emerging themes. While a majority ( $n = 202$ ) of the respondents expressed negative opinions of merit pay, none of them objected to stipends for extra duties or commitments of time (e.g. sponsorship of co-curricular activities, after school rehearsals, field trips, etc.). Coding of the comments occurred across the following emergent themes: (a) competition, (b) subjectivity, (c) ethics, and (d) inequity. Most respondents in favor of merit pay ( $n = 34$ ) indicated the need for clearly defined “criteria” that is “fair and objective” and questioned the appropriate implementation of such a program. Remaining comments ( $n = 35$ ) included neutral statements about merit pay or unrelated matters (e.g. parents, working conditions, and assessment) and were coded “other.”

### **Competition**

Several comments regarded the negative effects of competition as a result of merit pay initiatives and how such programs may undermine collegiality:

*Participant 98:* Hour-to-hour pay parity is most effective in keeping a collaborative spirit among educators. Competing for money based on incentives fosters animosity and a lack of team work. Students need a team of educators, not educators who operate as every man for himself. It takes a faculty working together to educate a community.

*Participant 116:* Our music department, though diverse in age, is a very close knit family that supports each other on many levels, both professional and personal. Ours is a collegial, not competitive environment. Enter merit pay and end caring about each other.

Other respondents also expressed concern regarding the division of the faculty and its effects on students. One respondent typed that merit pay will “pit teacher against teacher and undermine the

basic teaching principles of educating students” (*Participant 170*) while another noted that teachers will “compete for money rather than working together for the common good of students” (*Participant 13*). “Competition” and “jealousy” were frequently used terms in the discussion of merit pay as it related to the “erosion of comraderie among music faculties” (*Participant 209*).

### **Subjectivity**

Several respondents expressed opposition to merit pay based upon the perceived subjective nature of music evaluation:

*Participant 158*: How do you measure talent or artistic ability? A large program (numbers) does not a quality program make or vice versa. You have no control over scheduling or facilities which greatly influence a program’s success. If you are an instrumental teacher at a higher level, you have no control of what was handed to you and how far can you really grow an instrumental program if students have missed three or four base years of instruction?

*Participant 38*: Merit pay on any level is hard to determine because of the various factors and levels of achievement and success. In music, success can mean very different things to many different people. A performance very often cannot be simply right or wrong, good or bad, as is the case with some subjects that can be assessed using concrete means.

*Participant 128* expressed the opinion that “music is such a field that is both subjective in its nature as well as difficult to measure objectively, merit pay would not always be a great incentive for performance.” On the other hand, those in favor of merit pay suggested “measurable assessments of student growth in music” by conducting “student-driven proficiency tests” and evaluating “how students perform in concerts, festivals, All-State (and all subdivisions thereof), etc.” (*Participants 83 & 126*).

While a few respondents supported the performance-based aspects of music as a means of assessing and rewarding teacher effectiveness, a majority of teachers had reservations about compensating teachers for successful student performance:

*Participant 181*: While I believe well-trained musicians can and should give evaluative feedback about ensemble performances, the notion of giving a band director whose group

earns a “Superior” a merit pay bonus seems absurd. Sometimes the best educational interests of a music program don’t result in the best performances. For example, students who have trouble matching pitch shouldn’t be immediately excluded from singing in a choir. But merit pay would pressure directors to make decisions like that regularly.

The process versus product issue for measuring student success surfaced in several responses as *Participant 97* commented, “so much of what we do is in the process, not the product, yet everyone wants to make a judgment based on the product. . . how far have the students come since rehearsals began?” Another music educator noted the possible teaching pedagogical flaws in producing a polished performance by stating “performing groups can sound good when using such methods as teaching by rote therefore actually rewarding bad teaching” (*Participant 184*).

Many teachers questioned the level of expertise among administrators and their ability to assess subject specific criteria. Rhetorical questions varied from “How are we judged? Are there qualified people making the decisions?” to “Do they know how challenging certain instruments or certain skills are to teach at that particular grade level?” and “Will suggestions come from a board member, who doesn’t think the marching band plays enough pep tunes at a football game or from a qualified expert in music education?” (*Participants 108 & 210*). Comments often criticized non-music administrators and supervisors for lacking the appropriate knowledge to evaluate the quality of a music program:

*Participant 35*: Considering the fact that tests do not truly display learning, and that “educators” and politicians at the highest levels cannot figure out what makes a good teacher, I wonder how they can figure out something as abstract as music or any of the other arts.

*Participant 231*: If it isn’t flashy and doesn’t feature costumes and choreography, then administrators, and most parents I might add, do not realize its value. My goal is to give students skills that last for a lifetime, not just to spend all my time generating performances to please administrators. Who is going to decide what is quality and what has value? If you have non-music people making those decisions, even though I work very hard at what I believe in, I’ll never be one of those teachers that get merit pay.

Negative comments regarding supervisors outside of the field evaluating and rewarding teacher performance reflected a continuous thread in the discussion and resisting of merit pay.

## Ethics

Ethical concerns among respondents regarding merit pay included nepotism, political self-interests, and gaming the system. Several participants evidenced an unwillingness to accept monetary compensation beyond traditional stipends. *Participant 114* explained, “I do not believe in ‘charging’ the taxpayers more than a traditional stipend for exceptional work, we should provide exceptional work regardless of pay because it is the right thing to do. It’s the reason we entered the profession.” Yet another respondent wrote, “Those who love to teach, love their students and make a difference in the lives of the students deserve merit pay” (*Participant 251*).

A lack of trust in those in power who make decisions seemed to surface in many comments related to the ethics of merit pay. For example, several teachers mentioned the potential for “abuse” and “corruption” among local educational leaders:

*Participant 45*: I think merit pay would work in a utopian perfect world, but in our district, with the nepotism and corruption, I fear merit pay would be used to promote friends and family members of the administration. I do not trust nor do I have any confidence in public school administrators.

*Participant 112*: The main purpose of merit pay proposals is to destroy salary guides and further weaken unions. If all raises were based on “merit pay” as opposed to longevity and contract steps, many administrators would simply freeze pay for a majority of teachers, and raise just a few based on so-called “merit” in order to cover things.

Another teacher observed, “Merit pay erodes salary raises and step increases. Guaranteed the budget for merit pay would disappear and faculties would be left with no pay increases forever” (*Participant 209*). Several respondents perceived threats to existing teachers’ unions as the overall purpose for collective bargaining and worried that merit pay would compromise voice of solidarity among colleagues. *Participant 130* perceived the exchange of favors for favors as well as the existence of a “good ol’ boys club” in which those who belong to the inner circle of the administration receive merit pay as opportunities for abuse in an already corrupt system.

While a few respondents considered merit pay to be a validation of good work and indicated they would not teach better or differently, others indicated that monetary incentives might foster a teaching to the test philosophy or cheating the system strategy. One teacher stated, “If teachers were motivated by money to win competitions, they might aim for the easiest competitions or be extrinsically motivated to a point of disregarding ‘art’ in favor of monetary gain” (*Participant 246*). Another participant noted the opportunity to skew results in order to receive merit pay:

*Participant 110*: Individual teachers would have an incentive to work with the numbers and assessments to give the appearance of student growth. As a piano lab teacher, I can create a pretest that I know students will perform poorly on so that my benchmark and final assessments will show how much they improved!

Others summarized compromised integrity as “those who are tempted will falsify results to appear better than they are.”

### **Inequities**

There were several comments written about potential inequities related to merit pay, most of which focused on external variables such as scheduling, resources, and socioeconomic factors. The theme of fairness appeared several times as respondents indicated concern about the inconsistencies in funding as well as administrative and community support among public school music programs:

*Participant 49*: I know of other teachers that are equally as good as I am, but are not supported by their administrators and their programs do not shine as mine does. They are forced to have after school band practice with no late buses and no penalty for missing rehearsals. They are not given a suitable classroom or supplies. Therefore, merit pay would be great for me, but unfair as far as a lot of other teachers who have the misfortune of having bad administrators.

*Participant 97*: How does one create a fair rubric for success in a performance without having an understanding of the make-up of the group, the experience of the musicians, or how far the students have come since rehearsals began? This is unfair and a disservice to the teacher and students.

Many elementary music educators expressed concern about the limited amount of instructional time compared to their non-music teacher counterparts and indicated they only met with their students once a week for 30-40 minutes. *Participant 8* perceived such time constraints as limitations for “students to learn the fundamentals of music unless they are gifted and/or taking private lessons on their own.” Other elementary music teachers speculated about the misappropriation of funds specifically for performance-based programs at the upper level instead of rewarding experiential learning opportunities in the elementary setting.

Some identified demographics related to socioeconomic status, location, and household characteristics as student variables beyond the teacher’s control. Questions ranged from “How can you award merit pay for student progress if there are major differences between populations from town to town?” to “I work in a one square mile town that has a school with 386 students. Will I be judged against schools with 2,500+ to see if I deserve merit pay?” Another respondent further questioned the socioeconomic disparity between two districts and how the high visibility and reputation of one district may undermine the accomplishments of another:

*Participant 192:* Who does the better job? The person in a high end district who has an award winning music program or the person in a lower performing district who keeps kids involved in a wonderful activity. Both are very valuable, but in some places the first person would receive a bonus and the other not. That is the danger of merit pay.

Inner city music educators expressed additional concerns regarding the transient nature of their student populations and the lack of consistency from one year to another:

*Participant 244:* In my urban school district there is too much inconsistency with students. Each year it is almost a completely different set of students. Therefore it is hard to assess real improvement. Even throughout the school year there is too much turnover of students. The students and their families frequently move around the city or even to other states and countries. Also, many students are just trying to make it through the day due to violence, violent death in families, abuse, drug and substance abuse, etc. It is hard for students to achieve when their basic needs are not being met. These are things outside of the teacher’s control.

Such factors may contribute to a challenging teaching environment and place urban music teachers at an unfair disadvantage in receiving merit pay based upon student progress.

### **Discussion**

Merit pay is a common form of compensation in a variety of professions and market-based environments. The assumption is that more money will motivate and inspire workers to grow and develop into more productive or effective employees. Several politicians, educators, and business leaders continue to advocate for merit pay programs in education as an effort to improve student achievement. Legislators in the State of Florida Senate and House recently attempted to pass a bill to impose an increased property tax levy on school districts in violation of the law for “failing to adopt a salary schedule that compensates classroom teachers or school-based administrators on the basis of student performance rather than years worked” (S.B. 6, 2010, p. 8). Despite these efforts, educational union and professional organization members continue to oppose such programs and question their effectiveness (Martin, 2010). The findings from this investigation, with a focus on music educators, substantiate previous research involving the controversial aspects of merit pay for teachers including costs (Protsik, 1996), administrator and teacher attitudes (Hartshorn, Prather, & Chance, 2001), teaching to the test (Kelley, 1998; Noddings, 2007), and the demise of collegiality with increased competition (Chamberlin, Wragg, Haynes, & Wragg, 2002).

While most music educators accepted stipends for extra time commitments, they rejected merit pay based upon individual or group performance. Since a majority of respondents (78.51%) received supplementary pay for extra duties, it is no surprise that receiving such an incentive would predispose them to be in favor of the said benefit. Approximately one third (35.54%) of survey respondents evidenced the strongest opposition to supplementary pay in the

form of a sign on bonus during the initial year of employment. Such one time bonuses ranging from \$2,000.00 to \$20,000.00 served as attempts to attract new recruits to the field of education in the states of Massachusetts, Nevada, Tennessee, and Texas (Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004). It is understandable that most early career music teachers (62%) would favor such pay incentives while less than half of their middle (37%) and late (30%) career counterparts would support first year sign on bonuses. This finding also seems to indicate the adoption of sign on bonuses may lead to resentment among experienced teachers towards their early career colleagues. Furthermore, Chapman and Hutcheson (1982) and Goodlad (1983) determined that although beginning teachers may not expect high salaries upon employment, dissatisfied mid-career teachers often leave the profession because of low remuneration.

Co-curricular activity sponsorship was the only pay incentive or supplement received by a majority of the respondents (78.51%) while only three participants (.48%) reported earning merit pay for teaching in a shortage field such as math or science. Merit pay for teaching specific subjects or rewarding all faculty for student improvement in a target area such as math or writing may result in a narrow curriculum or less instructional time in other areas such as music or physical education (Chamberlin, et al., 2002). An interesting finding was that participants indicated stronger opposition to additional pay in the form of a sign on bonus during the initial year of employment than supplementary pay for teaching in a shortage field, given the survey identified math and science, not music, as such fields. While these findings were not statistically significant, future investigators may reveal why music teachers are more opposed to location/recruitment incentives than monetary rewards for teaching in a shortage field.

The demographic data from this study related to public school music teachers within the state of New Jersey. According to the United States Census Bureau (2010), New Jersey is second

to Washington D.C. as the most densely populated state with 1,195.5 people per square mile, hence the higher percentages of urban and suburban locations within this study. Although teachers from all 21 counties within the state responded to the survey, a possible limitation of this investigation may be an underrepresentation of rural music educators' opinions of merit pay. Public school districts within the state of New Jersey are also highly unionized. Despite the most recent implementation of a merit pay plan in Newark, the state's largest city, and the current governor's staunch support of monetary incentives for New Jersey's best teachers, members of the state's largest teacher's union are strongly opposed to performance pay for educators (New Jersey Education Association, 2011; Giroux, 2012). Future researchers might consider teacher perceptions of merit pay in states with less union presence and collective bargaining power as previous researchers found "a strong, inverse relationship between the use of merit pay and the degree of union influence" (Ballou, 2001, p. 59). A final limitation of the current study was that I excluded private school music teachers. Given the acceptance and prevalence of merit pay programs in non-religious private and charter schools (Ballou & Podgursky, 1993; Shuls & Muranto, 2014), further investigators might compare public music teacher attitudes and opinions of merit pay to those of private and non-traditional public schools.

In summary, this study supported several generalizations for music educators within the state of New Jersey based upon the data received: (a) Most districts compensate music teachers for fulfilling for additional responsibilities outside of the standard teaching contractual agreement, (b) There is widespread skepticism of the fairness and appropriate implementation of a performance-based pay system for music educators, and (c) The demographic characteristics of location and grade level among music teachers do not account for any significant differences of opinion regarding various forms of merit pay. Future researchers might wish to investigate other

states than the one used in this study to contribute to the literature. There is also a lack of studies regarding the need to develop effective means of identifying merit among music teachers in districts and states that mandate performance-based programs. Additionally, qualitative case study investigations of administrator and music teacher concerns regarding merit pay programs may provide more empirical data regarding the acceptance, effectiveness, and validity of such controversial policies.

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## Appendix

### Merit Pay Study Questionnaire

#### *Demographics*

1. Please indicate primary area of employment:

Elementary (K-5)       Middle (6-8)       Secondary (9-12)

2. Please indicate the total number of years you have been teaching: \_\_\_\_\_

#### *Incentives and Compensation*

For the following pay incentives, please indicate whether you favor or oppose each incentive and whether you now receive the incentive by marking *X* in each box.

Additional pay for assuming additional responsibilities as master or mentor teacher (e.g. supervising new teachers)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly oppose	<input type="checkbox"/> I receive this incentive. <input type="checkbox"/> I do not receive this incentive
Additional pay for teaching in a shortage field (e.g. math, science)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly oppose	<input type="checkbox"/> I receive this incentive. <input type="checkbox"/> I do not receive this incentive
Additional pay for teaching in a high priority location (e.g. inner city school)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly oppose	<input type="checkbox"/> I receive this incentive. <input type="checkbox"/> I do not receive this incentive
Additional pay for sponsoring co-curricular activities (e.g. marching band, musicals, clubs) and/or coaching sports	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly oppose	<input type="checkbox"/> I receive this incentive. <input type="checkbox"/> I do not receive this incentive
Salary increases as a part of a career ladder in which teachers progress through several promotional levels based on their performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly oppose	<input type="checkbox"/> I receive this incentive. <input type="checkbox"/> I do not receive this incentive
An individualized merit pay bonus for exceptional performance within a given year	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly oppose	<input type="checkbox"/> I receive this incentive. <input type="checkbox"/> I do not receive this incentive
A school wide bonus for all teachers in a school that shows exceptional performance or improvement within a given year	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly favor <input type="checkbox"/> Mildly oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly oppose	<input type="checkbox"/> I receive this incentive. <input type="checkbox"/> I do not receive this incentive

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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