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You Get What You Give

It goes without saying that a child's success directly correlates to his or her education. In addition, numerous studies have shown that the most important factor in a child's educational achievement is having an effective teacher in the classroom. However, survey the work that these educators put into their jobs. Some go to the extreme to participate in specialized workshops and earn elite certifications. They pour their heart and soul into providing their students with the educational foundation needed to thrive. Others, conversely, merely do a desultory job simply to receive an easy paycheck. I ask you, what is just about paying these two very different types of teachers the same salary? I am a firm believer that you get what you give, which is why I wholeheartedly support merit based pay for high performing public school teachers in the state of Louisiana.

As the only student in the state of Louisiana to sit on the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, or BESE, I have been able to observe, first hand, all aspects of the education system here in Louisiana. From this experience, it is easy to see that this system in our state unquestionably needs improvement. This should begin with the teachers. In my opinion, if we want superior teachers, the finest and most intelligent available, than we must provide them with an incentive to strive for that greatness. A merit based pay system, which can be enforced by BESE, will ensure that their efforts go rewarded.

If enacted, this rule will not only benefit those teachers who are taking an extra step in their own profession, but will also impact the students they teach. I have already stated that there is a direct correlation between teacher performance and student's academic successes; therefore, it is logical to say that if a teacher performs in a higher capacity, the students, too, will benefit and be better equipped to realize their own potential.

However, as with all things, this rule may have consequences. A possible argument could be made about the definition of success. What exactly is it that would separate a high performing teacher from a lower performing teacher? I believe that this problem can easily be avoided by clearly defining expectations. Performance would not only be based on years of experience and level of education, but more importantly on the improvement in their students' academic performances, peer evaluations and the academic performance of the school as a whole.

The future of this state is in the hands of our children as they are now at the point of being molded into the adults that they will become. A large possessor of that malleable clay is the Louisiana education system. By bettering our teaching institutions through the enactment of such a rule, enforced by the board of education, for merit

incentives for educators, we are indirectly bettering the future of our own state. The ability for this change is in our hands, so let us not hinder the progress of the future, but enhance it through education. because, after all, knowledge is power.