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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ARIZONA CAREER LADDER PROGRAM

(Student Success Through Teacher Accountability)

PROGRAM COMPONENTS:

As defined by Arizona Revised Statute §15-918, district Career Ladder Programs must provide for:

- *Increasingly higher levels of pupil academic progress as measured by objective criteria:*
 - specific criteria and requirements for the demonstration of academic progress
 - the use of various methods of assessment
 - specific guidelines for the review and refinement of pupil academic progress criteria, assessments and procedures

- *Increasingly higher levels of teaching skills:*

Placement on the Career Ladder is to be based on more than one measure of teacher performance. The areas of instructional performance, pupil academic progress, and instructional responsibilities must be included. Advancement to higher levels on the Career Ladder is gained by demonstrating increasingly higher levels of performance. Evaluation procedures and instruments must be fair and objective, and must be in compliance with state statutes.

- *Increasingly higher levels of teacher responsibility:*

Responsibilities could include team teaching, committee work, curriculum development, or special in-service projects that directly effect the level of classroom performance. Teachers at higher Career Ladder levels provide leadership in their districts by mentoring, coaching, and as professional development trainers.

- *Professional growth:*

Each district's Career Ladder Program must include adequate and appropriate staff development activities for teachers. Staff development activities assist teachers in meeting

program requirements and improving performance.

- *Equal teacher pay for equal teacher performance:*

The Career Ladder Program is a performance based compensation plan with a separate-but-parallel pay structure. It adheres to the concept of equal pay for equal performance. Education and/or longevity are not the basis for payment. The plan provides for growth and incentives for teachers and offers a support system for the implementation of district programs and projects.

PROVISIONS FOR PLACEMENT:

Specific criteria for placement at each level and step must be included. More than one person must be involved in placement decisions, and an appeal procedure must be developed. The law specifically addresses the importance of establishing inter-rater reliability among evaluators and those involved in making placement decisions. A district may include non-instructional classroom personnel if the position requires a teaching credential and the person is responsible for student achievement.

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COMPENSATION STRUCTURE:

The Career Ladder Program consists of levels, each having its own salary range. Teachers qualify through evaluation or classroom performance, student progress, and additional responsibility for a particular place within each level. Each district constructs its own “ladder” and places teachers according to their performance.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION:

Districts must provide appropriate administration of the program. A steering committee composed of teachers, administrators, board members, and parents must be designated to over see all program activities. Effective communications systems must be developed. The impact of the program responsibilities on building level administrators must be considered and support provided for them.

PROGRAM REVIEW AND EVALUATION:

The Career Ladder districts must provide information regarding procedures to review and evaluate the program on an on-going basis. This evaluation is typically accomplished through teacher and parent surveys, interviews, open forums, and data analysis.

SUPPORT OF DISTRICT PROGRAMS:

A key quality and characteristic of the Career Ladder Program is the integration of the elements of the

Career Ladder with all district programs. This requires alignment with district and state curriculum goals and focuses on improving instructional skills through staff development. This alignment and integration includes participation in higher levels of instructional responsibilities that also support student achievement through district programs.

FUNDING:

State appropriated funding is derived by a formula based primarily on student count. At full implementation, districts may increase their base funding level by 5.5%. Based on compliance with requirements, funding levels have progressed from 1.0%, to 5.5% above the base support level. All district programs are currently budgeted at the 5.5% level. **A portion of this funding is derived from a local tax. High school or common school district tax rate is based on two cents for each percentage increase. The unified district tax rate is based on four cents for each percentage increase.**

ADDITIONAL INCENTIVE COMPONENT:

In 1994-1995, a statute revision was enacted that allowed all districts to participate in an additional incentive component. All employees are eligible to participate in this program at the school site level. Specific provisions for implementation can be found in ARS §15:918. This provision allows each district to determine who is eligible to receive the incentive.