

Principal and Teacher Incentive Fund

Pay for Performance Program: 2007-08

At-a-Glance

The mission of the Dallas ISD is to graduate its students college and workforce ready. In this quest, the district has embarked upon an innovative program to recruit, retain, and reward effective teachers and principals for measured, quantifiable academic improvement of its students. Based upon the idea of merit pay, the Dallas ISD Pay for Performance program awards monetary incentives to its most effective achievers, so that pay becomes more in line with performance than it has previously. Although single salary schedules are maintained, teachers, principals, and support staff now can earn additional student achievement related bonuses.

Grants

Funded by state and federal grants, several programs within the district exist – TIF (Principal and Teacher Incentive Fund), TEEG (Texas Educator Excellence Grant), and DATE (District Awards for Teacher Excellence), TIF currently being the highest funded and promising the greatest potential. For that reason, the majority of the evaluation reports upon TIF, a \$22 million five-year grant.

Principal Incentive

Using Title I funds, 59 principals earned awards totaling \$500,000 for school year 2006-07, paid in December 2007. Principals in traditional and magnet schools with an overall rating of 5 received \$10,000 and continued to receive Board approved raises. Principals in traditional schools with an overall rating of 4 received \$7,500 and continued to receive Board approved raises.

Hard to Staff (Targeted Impact) Schools

Using TIF funds, 16 principals and 619 teachers (635 total) earned almost \$3.9 million in bonuses for school year 2007-08 to go to and remain at targeted impact schools within the district – high needs schools, based upon overall accountability ratings, social and neighborhood demographics, teacher turnover, percentage of high risk students, and low SES (socio-economic status).

TIF Pilot and Participant Survey

Fifty-nine schools were selected to participate in a 2007-08 pilot program, designed to reward school and teacher achievement based upon SEI and CEI scores for the academic year, payable in December 2008.

Eligibility was limited to teachers whose students had achievement measures in the state accountability system, achievement measures on a major nationally standardized test, or on a reliable and valid subject matter test. Teachers were rewarded based upon student achievement on these measures. According to a survey of participating teachers, money is a motivator. Of course, so is a desire to help students improve academically. So it would seem that money and desire to improve student achievement are complimentary. See Figure 1. Until the district's data on teacher, and to a somewhat lesser degree, school campus, performance become available in late 2008, quantifiable results are difficult to report. A supplement to this evaluation will be published when the data become available.

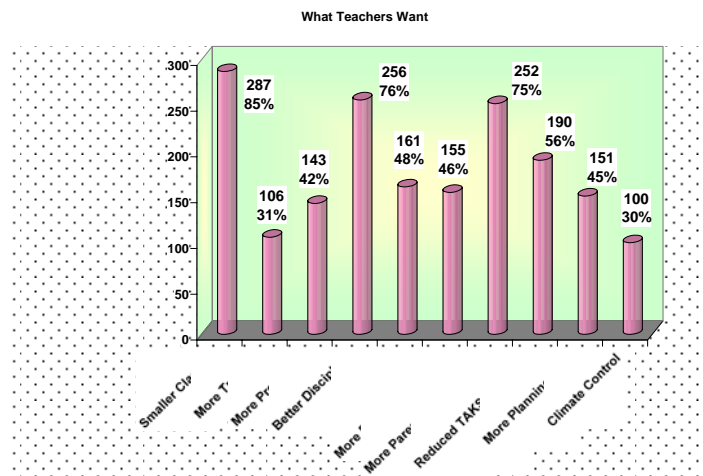


Figure 1 - Besides money bonuses, which do you think would make more effective teachers (may choose more than one)?

Recommendations for the Future

Integrate all Dallas ISD pay for performance plans with the two innermost rings of Dallas Achieves target – effective teachers and high achieving, engaged students.

Expand pay for performance districtwide to include a base salary, plus performance bonuses based upon student achievement.

For academic year 2008-09, develop a plan to include pay for performance for all non-core teachers as well as staff who provide services directly to students, such

as special education, fine arts, physical education, health services, etc.

As soon as possible, form a TIF Council subcommittee to explore ways and means for raising district mandated contribution funds – 30% in 2009-10, 75% in 2010-11, and 100% thereafter – to sustain the incentive program.

Drawing upon lessons learnt from the pilot project, expedite pay for performance feedback, so bonuses can be awarded, and deficiencies corrected, more quickly.

Mitigate confusion among sundry pay for performance calculations, so that each merit pay program should adopt its own unitary, standardized formula for data analysis.

Assuage participant anxiety by improving and opening more thoroughly channels of communication for pay for performance programs.

Preliminary Results

From initial responses to the program, results appear positive. Pay for performance appears to be on the future horizon for the Dallas ISD in furtherance of its mission to graduate students college and workforce ready.

For more information, see EA08-201-2, available at www.dallasisd.org/eval or contact Steven R. Wolfson at 972-925-6427.