



NEWSBREAK

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What's New?

The Center for Educator Compensation Reform (CECR) Introduces TIF TIPS

CECR has developed TIF Informational Podcasts and Seminars, or TIF TIPS, in which CECR experts share key insights about different components of educator compensation reform. Transcripts also are available online for each podcast. The following TIF TIPS podcasts are now available:

- *Introduction to the Center for Educator Compensation Reform and the Teacher Incentive Fund* provides an overview of what CECR does and why it is important.

- *New Communications Challenges for TIF Grantees* provides lessons learned from early communications plans and insights into successful implementation of a communication plan for alternative compensation programs.
- *Formative Evaluation: Using Educator Reactions* explains why it is important for alternative compensation program staff to be concerned with educator reactions to program implementation and offers action steps to improve the chances of continued educator support.
- *Evaluations of Performance Incentive Programs: TIF Local Evaluations* discusses the purpose and function of local evaluations and highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to evaluation.
- *Principal Evaluation* details the challenges of evaluating principals in alternative compensation systems and provides examples of how TIF grantees are implementing principal evaluations.
- *TIF Challenges in Education Information Systems and Knowledge Management* focuses on the data-quality essentials that are necessary for implementing alternative compensation programs.
- *Communication Plans Revisited* provides further insight into components of a successful communication plan and discusses examples of successful district-level communications strategies.
- *Sustainability* highlights the importance of financial sustainability for alternative compensation programs, discusses potential challenges to sustainability, and introduces the idea of sustainability through district alignment.

Each podcast lasts approximately five minutes and provides a brief overview of the topic area, responding to key questions. The podcasts also include links to other CECR online resources that provide more detail about each topic. The podcasts and transcripts are available online at <http://cecr.ed.gov/initiatives/grantees/tifTips.cfm>.

Hot Off the Press

Administration Takes Aim at State Laws on Teachers—*The New York Times*. July 24, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/24/education/24educ.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=%22administrati on%20takes%20aim%20at%20state%20laws%20on%20teachers%22&st=cse

The federal Department of Education proposed preventing states with laws that bar the use of student achievement data to evaluate teacher performance from getting Race to the Top Fund dollars.

Con: Miniscule Bonuses Won't Enhance Teaching—*Bradenton (FL) Herald*. July 22, 2009. <http://www.bradenton.com/442/story/1589126.html>

Paul Houston, a former superintendent of schools and executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, suggests that the theories undergirding the federal push for teacher merit pay are flawed.

With Layoffs, Teacher Seniority Reconsidered—KPLU/National Public Radio. July 21, 2009. <http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/kplu/news.newsmain/article/1/0/1532269/KPLU.Local.News/With.Layoffs..Teacher.Seniority.Reconsidered>

Recent teacher layoffs in Seattle have some educators and community members questioning seniority rules. Some are pushing for teacher effectiveness to replace seniority as the criterion for determining which teachers are dismissed.

Halt Urged to Paying Teachers for Earning Master's Degrees—*EdWeek*. July 21, 2009. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/07/21/37masters.h28.html?tkn=YLRfTv4pBc5JbiojjdnBLZ25CtO1XemgrGpT>

In a new policy brief, Marguerite Roza and Raegen T. Miller argue that the practice of rewarding teachers for earning advanced degrees that show little correlation with improved student achievement costs states billions in education dollars each year.

Grantee Spotlight: Miami-Dade County Public Schools Project RISE

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is implementing Project RISE, which stands for Rewards and Incentives for School Educators. During the first year of the program (2007–08), 12 M-DCPS schools participated, with additional schools added during the second and third years for a total of 37 schools. Teachers in Project RISE schools earn incentives for pursuing and achieving National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification, working collaboratively to improve instruction, and participating in professional development activities tailored to the school’s needs. Administrators at the selected high-needs schools also receive incentives based on schoolwide student achievement scores. Further, there are school-level funds available for Project RISE schools that can be used for participation in action research, sharing of instructional best practices, and conference attendance.

Project RISE provides incentives for teachers within the selected schools with the long-term goal of raising student achievement so that the teachers in the schools qualify for the current statewide performance-based compensation systems. One state-level program based increased compensation for teachers primarily on increases in student achievement. A second state-level program rewards teachers for attaining National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification. Project RISE provides teachers in participating high-needs schools with additional incentives, resources, and tools to help the schools reach the performance benchmarks necessary to obtain these district and state incentives. These include expanded professional development opportunities, support for teachers seeking NBPTS certification through the “Take One” program, and mini-grants of up to \$500 for teachers to explore and share promising practices with their peers as previously described.

Project RISE also provides funds for the district to recruit and hire National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) in each participating school. The NBCTs serve as teacher leaders, modeling best practices in their classrooms, leading professional development activities at the school site, and serving as mentors for other teachers. Each NBCT is required to facilitate a minimum of four research-based professional development activities such as workshops, book studies, and/or learning communities each year that address school improvement needs. They also are charged with promoting NBPTS certification to teachers at the school and with supporting NBCT candidates during their pursuit of certification. The NBCTs are provided with release time during the school day to provide follow-up support to the teachers related to professional development activities, coach, and model best practices in classrooms. Principals and assistant principals in Project RISE schools do receive a bonus if their school demonstrates growth, measured by the M-DCPS Scorecard program. In addition, principals receive mentoring from high-quality, retired school leaders. Further, each Project RISE school appoints a leadership team to attend a one-week leadership development program during the summer following the school’s first year of implementation.

What need is the project trying to address?

M-DCPS is the fourth largest school district in the nation; it serves approximately 350,000 students in a geographic region that encompasses 2,000 square miles. Minority students make up 90 percent of the student body (62 percent Hispanic, 26 percent African American, 9 percent white, and 3 percent other). Approximately 21 percent of M-DCPS students are foreign-born, and 62 percent speak a language other than English at home. Further, 10 percent of M-DCPS students are classified as limited English proficient. Currently, 74 percent of district schools meet the federal definition of high needs. Furthermore, schools selected for participation in Project RISE are high-needs schools that were ineligible for incentive funds through the Florida School Recognition Program during the previous school year.

What are the goals of the program?

The goal of Project RISE is to increase student achievement by implementing a program that supports the development of highly effective teachers and administrators in high-needs schools and increases students' access to rigorous coursework. By promoting and supporting teachers' participation in the NBPTS certification process, Project RISE seeks to increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement, thereby enabling teachers and administrators to qualify for existing performance-based compensation systems for which they would otherwise be ineligible.

How much are the incentives?

NBPTS certified teachers receive a \$3,000 per year stipend for teaching and serving as a teacher leader at a high-needs school and \$2,500 per year for delivering staff professional development, coaching, and modeling.

Principals receive \$1,000 for a 10 percent increase in schoolwide student achievement.

Assistant principals receive \$800 for a 10 percent increase in schoolwide student achievement.

What are the recent highlights of the program?

During the first year of the program (2007–08), the recruitment and placement of the NBPTS certified teachers occurred after the beginning of the school year. However, M-DCPS was still able to fill all positions for Cohort 1 Project RISE schools. During this year, the following were accomplished:

- Project RISE staff provided support and guidance to school administrators and NBCTs in implementation of project activities.
- Project RISE NBCTs provided school-specific professional development and support to colleagues.
- Seventy-five percent of Cohort 1 schools improved by at least one letter grade on the Florida A++ Education Plan grading scale.

During the second year (2008–09) of the program, the following were accomplished:

- Project RISE Cohort 2 added 13 additional schools and 21 NBCTs.
- Cohort 1 schools received support in the implementation of strategies developed as a result of participation in the summer executive leadership institutes.
- All Project RISE schools received support in the implementation of the Classroom Instruction That Works model and in the creation or expansion of professional learning communities.
- In November 2008, six principals and 17 assistant principals from Cohort 1 schools received the incentive payments based on their school's increases in student achievement during 2007–08.

For further information about Project RISE, please visit the following links:

- M-DCPS Project RISE website: http://opi.dadeschools.net/Project_Rise/
- CECR TIF Profile: http://cecr.ed.gov/initiatives/profiles/pdfs/Miami_Dade.pdf
- CECR National Map Profile: http://cecr.ed.gov/initiatives/maps/pdfs/CECR_FL_MiamiDade.pdf

Contact Us

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The Center for Educator Compensation Reform (CECR) was awarded to Westat—in partnership with Learning Point Associates, Synergy Enterprises Inc., Vanderbilt University, and the University of Wisconsin—by the U.S. Department of Education in October 2006.

The primary purpose of CECR is to support the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grantees with their implementation efforts through the provision of ongoing technical assistance and the development and dissemination of timely resources. CECR also is charged with raising national awareness of alternative and effective strategies for educator compensation through this newsletter, a Web-based clearinghouse, and other outreach activities. We look forward to an exciting partnership with the TIF grantees as we embark together on blazing a new path for education reform.

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