



Volume 2, Number 1

December 2007/January 2008

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What's New?

Updates to the CECR Online Library

The Center for Educator Compensation Reform (CECR) website features information, resources, and tools exclusively dedicated to educator compensation reform policies and programs. One feature is the CECR Online Library. This library is a searchable database on the growing collection of research and literature related to educator compensation reform efforts. Located at <http://cecr.ed.gov/library/>, the database is updated monthly to include the most recent and relevant research and policy reports. CECR staff members review, categorize, and abstract selected articles.

The database is searchable by publication type, date, and specific issue area. Publication types include the following categories, which are defined in greater detail on the CECR Online Library homepage:

- Scientific research
- Rigorous research
- National, state, or regional reports
- Research reviews and books
- Policy analysis and reports
- Spotlight articles that warrant special recognition
- Issue papers that may be relevant but that are neither scientific nor rigorous

The CECR Online Library offers current research on a variety of relevant topics, including the use of pay-for-performance programs and financial incentives to fill hard-to-staff subject areas, the use of value-added models for assessing student growth, and building community support for alternative teacher compensation. This information can be especially helpful in writing and implementing new policy and programs.

Hot Off the Press

[Merit Element Suggested for School Principals' Pay Plan](#)—*Columbia Tribune*, November 6, 2007

Missouri School District considers tying principal raises to principal evaluations and student performance.

[Districts Turn to Pay Incentives to Keep Teachers at High-Needs Schools](#)—*Commercial Appeal*, November 19, 2007

Rural Tennessee school districts use pay incentive to attract and retain teachers.

[CISD Applies for Merit-Pay Funding](#)—*The Courier*, November 19, 2007

Texas school district applies for state grant that would bring at least \$2 million to the district to implement an incentive program.

[Value-Added Analysis and Education Policy](#)—*The Urban Institute*, November 2007

In the first policy brief released by the Urban Institute's National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER), issues surrounding the use of value-added analysis for estimations on student performance and teacher effectiveness and subsequent compensation decisions are discussed.

[Principal Compensation: More Research Needed on a Promising Reform](#)—*Center for American Progress*, December 4, 2007

The latest report published by the Center for American Progress examines data on principal salaries over a 10-year period and discusses the need for more research on compensation reform.

Grantee Spotlight: Eagle County School District

Eagle County Schools (ECS) received a TIF grant to expand their current performance-based compensation system for teachers; the program implements components of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), based on the national model developed by the Milken Family Foundation and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). ECS is seeking to improve student achievement by focusing on instructional quality by

offering teachers: (1) multiple career paths; (2) instructionally focused accountability through teacher evaluations; (3) ongoing, applied professional growth; and (4) performance-based compensation. Eagle County will use the TIF grant to:

- Increase teacher stipends for master and mentor teachers;
- Increase training for master/mentor teachers, principals, and career teachers;
- Improve compensation to teachers in high-poverty schools through student achievement and recruitment incentives;
- Develop "team" or building-level performance incentives to reward both quantitative and qualitative teacher efforts to improve student achievement;
- Differentiate teacher contracts to increase training in core content areas; and
- Improve data capabilities for measuring student learning.

What need is the project trying to address?

The program is targeting high-quality instruction to meet the diverse educational needs of the Eagle County student population. The school district serves a diverse population of students, with over 30 percent of students classified as English language learners (ELL). Each of the 13 schools supported under the grant is classified as 'high-poverty,' whereby at least 30 percent of the school's students are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch.

Eagle County's program also addresses teacher retention issues. Historically, the district experienced higher turnover rates than the state average. At the time of the proposal, the teacher turnover rate in Eagle County was 21.1 percent for the 2004-05 school year, higher than the state average of 16.1 percent. District staff is overall less experienced.

What are the goals of the project?

The objective of Eagle County's program is to support teachers in the overarching mission of increasing student achievement in high-need schools. To meet this goal, the work under the grant will strengthen the teacher pay structure. Under the proposed expansion, teachers will be given new opportunities for professional growth. The grant aims to expand the incentive and support structures of the current program by:

- Improving performance-based compensation for teachers;
- Improving evaluations for teachers;
- Offering new professional development opportunities for teachers and principals;
- Improving the district's data management; and

- Providing multiple career paths for teachers through master and mentor teaching positions.

How much are the incentives?

Eagle County uses TIF funds as follows:

- **Improve and expand teacher bonuses.** To increase buy-in from all stakeholder groups, ECS has formed a performance-based compensation committee charged with reforming the current payout system that has been in place for five years. The committee will develop a plan to implement team or building-level performance incentives based on a variety of measures (for example, at the high school level, drop-out rates may be added to performance criteria).
- **Recruitment bonus.** Teachers who teach in schools where at least 50 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch are eligible for a \$2,500 recruitment bonus and an additional \$2,500 bonus for meeting additional performance criteria.
- **Salary augmentation for Master and Mentor Teachers.** Teachers who take on additional roles and responsibilities as Master or Mentor Teachers receive a salary augmentation. The grant increases the bonus from \$7,000 to \$11,500 for Master Teachers and from \$3,000 to \$5,000 for Mentor Teachers.
- **Leadership training.** The TIF grant is being used to develop additional, intensive training for Instructional Leadership Team members (principals, masters, mentors).

Beyond monetary incentives, the TIF grant helps strengthen the ECS effort by:

- **Improving instructionally focused accountability for teachers.** The grant will fund additional training for teachers using the teacher evaluation rubric.
- **Improving ongoing, applied professional growth opportunities.** The grant also provides additional training on standards-based instruction and leadership training for principals.

What are the strengths of the project?

The TIF grant enhances the capabilities of TAP to build on the improvements already made. Teacher salaries increased in Eagle County as a result of TAP, which has replaced the traditional salary schedule and created a pathway to higher teacher salaries. Teachers who meet annual student growth goals earn more money as a result of the TIF grant than they would have earned on either the previous TAP scale or the traditional salary schedule. Teachers whose classrooms make the highest individual

student gains will also have higher earnings on the TIF incentive scale than they would on the previous compensation scales.

The TIF grant is being used for program expansion and enhancement, as the Eagle County School District has an established funding source through local taxes for the current performance-based compensation system

The original proposal indicated some positive progress since implementing TAP in 2002. The district has experienced a decrease in teacher turnover for teachers with four or more years of experience. ECS has also seen success with its teacher evaluation process in identifying low-performing teachers.

Challenges

To address one of the districts biggest challenges—multiple, unrelated databases—ECS is using a customized software program to associate students to teachers and another customized database for the evaluation portion of its program. Because these are non-standard uses for these software packages, the district still faces implementation and training obstacles.

To improve this and make classroom-level data more readily accessible to teachers, ECS is currently training teachers to use INFORM, a data management system for standards-based learning from EDmin. This new system will allow Eagle County to combine external assessment data with internal classroom assessment data to inform teachers on individual student learning.

ECS also struggles with validity and reliability questions for testing students in the early years and grades and in developing assessments in the content areas for the upper grades. ECS is also exploring assessment issues for traditionally non-tested subjects, such as drama.

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.