



NEWSBREAK

Volume 3, Number 2

February 2009

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What's New?

Two New Case Summaries Available on the Center for Educator Compensation Reform Website

The Center for Educator Compensation Reform (CECR) has added two new case summaries to its website at <http://cecr.ed.gov/guides/summaries.cfm>. The case summaries tell the stories of alternative compensation programs from conception through implementation. They also provide valuable lessons learned for others who are designing or implementing such programs.

Performance Pay in Houston discusses the development of the Houston Independent School District's pay-for-performance program, the ASPIRE Award—including initial challenges and how Houston addressed them as well as lessons learned from the perspectives of both union and school district officials. The case summary is available at <http://cecr.ed.gov/guides/summaries/HoustonCaseSummary.pdf>.

Alaska School Performance Incentive Program provides insight into the development and implementation of Alaska's School-Based Performance Incentive Program (AKSPIP). The AKSPIP case summary also offers lessons learned from implementation. The case summary is available at <http://cecr.ed.gov/guides/summaries/AlaskaCaseSummary.pdf>.

Hot Off the Press

Audit: Teacher Pay Program Needs Better Oversight—*The Associated Press*, February 3, 2009. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28998908/>

Minnesota's Office of the Legislative Auditor reviewed the state's alternative compensation program, Q Comp, in February 2009. Findings suggest that the state Department of Education should be more consistent in its oversight of the program, particularly in the application process. In addition, the report suggests that there is no clear correlation between the program and increases in student achievement. The full report is available online at <http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/qcomp.pdf>.

Let's See Some Serious Talk on School Plans—*The News Tribune* (Tacoma, Washington), January 29, 2009. <http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/columnists/callaghan/story/609854.html>

The Basic Education Finance Task Force in Washington released a report suggesting a new compensation plan for teachers. In addition to suggesting that teachers' pay correspond with their performance, the report called for an increase in state school funding, accessibility to full-day kindergarten for all children, and funding for professional learning for teachers.

Obama Signs Economic-Stimulus Package—*Education Week*, February 17, 2009. http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/02/12/21stimdeal_web.html

Despite the controversy about the topic, President Barack Obama and legislators signed a bill, providing additional money to fund performance-based compensation programs under the economic recovery stimulus plan.

Grantee Spotlight: Prince George's County Public Schools Financial Incentive Rewards for Supervisors and Teachers

Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) developed the Financial Incentive Rewards for Supervisors and Teachers (FIRST) program, which bases additional teacher, principal, and assistant principal compensation on several variables, including student achievement, hard-to-staff subject areas, performance-based evaluations, and professional advancement and contribution. The FIRST program augments current school supports already in place, including enhanced staffing allocations for content area coaches, mentors for teachers with less than two years of experience, and certain targeted student intervention programs.

The district identified 42 schools for participation, selecting from a group of underperforming schools that are in some stage of corrective action or restructuring under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Program implementation began with 12 pilot schools during the 2008–09 school year, with the remaining 30 schools scheduled for implementation through a phased-in process for the remaining years of the grant.

What need is the project trying to address?

PGCPS is the second largest school system in Maryland and serves more than 128,000 students, who are primarily African American (76.3 percent) and Hispanic (14 percent). The county increased the percentage of highly qualified teachers teaching core academic classes in recent years. Between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of core academic classes taught by highly qualified teachers increased from 62.1 percent to 78 percent; however, the distribution of highly qualified teachers remains uneven. Fewer than one third of highly qualified teachers teach in schools with high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. At the high school level, fewer than 40 percent of highly qualified teachers teach in schools with high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. In addition, PGCPS struggles with maintaining a highly effective and experienced administrative staff. For example, more than 80 percent of principals have less than three years of experience in school administration.

In addition to the challenges of attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers, PGCPS students face academic challenges. In 2006, fewer than half of the students tested in PGCPS showed proficiency on the Maryland School Assessments, and fewer than half of the high school students passed the mandatory high school graduation exams in English, biology, algebra, and government. Although there has been an upward trend during the past two years, the PGCPS school system remains in corrective action due to its overall student achievement data.

What are the goals of the project?

PGCPS has developed a countywide business plan, *Children Come First*, which is designed to move schools out of corrective action and improve student achievement. The FIRST program works with the *Children Come First* initiative to accomplish the following objectives:

- Increase teacher and administrator effectiveness, leading to higher student achievement.
- Reform compensation systems to reward teachers and administrators for improvements in student achievement.
- Increase the number of effective teachers serving poor, minority, and disadvantaged students in hard-to-staff schools.
- Create a sustainable performance-based compensation system.

How much are the incentives?

Teachers. Under the FIRST program, teachers are eligible to receive a bonus of up to \$10,000, based on the following criteria:

- Meeting student achievement targets at the school and individual teacher levels.
- Teaching in hard-to-staff subjects.
- Meeting expectations on a standards-based evaluation system.
- Participating in professional growth and development activities and completing a leadership project designed to improve student achievement.

Administrators. Principals are eligible for a bonus of up to \$12,000, and assistant principals are eligible for a bonus of up to \$11,500 based on the following criteria:

- Meeting student achievement targets at the school level.
- Meeting expectations on a standards-based evaluation system.
- Participating in professional growth and development activities.
- Assuming leadership and additional responsibilities to promote student achievement.

Each component of the compensation system is weighted to emphasize the importance of growth in student achievement. Fifty percent of teacher bonuses and 60 percent of administrator bonuses depend on student achievement. Additional financial incentives are offered for participation in the Effective Practices Incentive Fund in later years: \$5,000 per teacher and \$12,000 per administrator.

What are the recent highlights of the project?

The initial year of the grant concentrated on the comprehensive planning of the program. PGCPS collaborated with education stakeholders across the county and created two advisory groups representing teachers and administrators. The union bargaining units and the superintendent selected the members of the advisory groups. The advisory groups reviewed all program components and helped develop the plan for implementation. The program received a commendation from the U.S. Department of Education during its site visit for the level of collaboration and support from the bargaining units represented on the advisory committees.

Currently, the program consists of 12 schools. Each succeeding year after the pilot year, additional schools will join the program. In addition, the program design offers multiple opportunities for teachers and administrators to earn incentives, often within the same categories. Participants earn scaled awards depending on their success in achieving the program goals.

The first goal for Year 2 implementation is to introduce a rigorous performance evaluation system based on Charlotte Danielson's (1996) *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. The second goal is to identify funding support for the long-term sustainability of the project. The final goal is to integrate PGCPS efforts with the systemwide performance management work under way. More information on the program is available online (<http://www1.pgcps.org/first/>), including the FIRST Calculator, which provides teachers and administrators with the tools to determine eligibility for awards, and the FIRST program weekly updates (<http://www1.pgcps.org/first/index.aspx?id=74270>), which keep program participants informed of program implementation.

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.

This work was originally produced in whole or in part by CECR with funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-06-CO-0110. The content does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of CECR or the Department of Education, nor does mention or visual representation of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by CECR or the federal government.

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