



NEWSBREAK

Volume 3, Number 7

July 2009

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What's New?

CECR Updates the Implementation Checklist

CECR has updated the Implementation Checklist, a tool that is part of *A Guide to Implementation: Resources for Applied Practice*. The checklist identifies the major components and planning, design, and implementation steps of an alternative compensation program. The different components of the checklist are as follows:

- Overall plan components
- Stakeholder approvals and engagement
- Communication plan
- Award structure
- Financial consequences
- Performance measures
- Information technology considerations

School systems can use this checklist to address the following questions:

- Which stakeholders should be involved in the planning and design process?
- How does the school system plan to make decisions about incentives?
- What resources are necessary for successful implementation of the program (including financial resources)? How will the school system obtain these resources?
- What are the major project milestones, and when will they be completed?

The updates to the checklist provide some additional questions for states and districts to consider during the development of an alternative compensation program. In addition, the updates offer examples of plan components, based on current compensation reform efforts.

View the updated checklist at <http://cecr.ed.gov/guides/CECRchecklist.pdf>.

Hot Off the Press

Studies Probe “Value-Added” Measures—*EdWeek*. July 1, 2009.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/07/01/36valueadd.h28.html?tkn=PPTFA13oqhJx8H1YioKLXgw3d42RP1LY9QW5>

Princeton University released a study on value-added measures that claims that school and teacher value-added scores might not indicate teacher effectiveness as accurately as previously thought. In particular, the researcher suggests that nonrandom student assignment can influence a teacher’s value-added score. The report is available online at http://www.princeton.edu/~jrothst/published/rothstein_vam_may152009.pdf.

Secretary Duncan Challenges National Education Association to Accelerate School Reforms—U.S. Department of Education. July 2, 2009.

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/07/07022009.html>

Secretary Arne Duncan spoke to the National Education Association (NEA) at its annual convention and challenged the NEA to review its recruitment, retention, and reward policies as well as collective bargaining processes to better ensure that all teachers have a positive impact on their students. In addition, Duncan asked the NEA to include student achievement results as one of many measures to evaluate teachers and determine appropriate compensation for them.

Teacher Incentive Fund Addresses Three Key Issues—Center for American Progress. June 22, 2009. http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/06/teacher_incentive_fund.html

The Center for American Progress issued a press release stating that TIF addresses three important issues in education: that the current teacher pay structure does not serve to recruit and retain great talent, that monetary support from the federal government is needed to induce change, and that evidence suggests that pay-for-performance programs work to increase retention and improve student achievement.

Phila. Union President Says Teacher Morale “Very Low”—*The Philadelphia Inquirer*. July 2, 2009.

http://www.philly.com/inquirer/local/20090702_Phila_union_president_says_teacher_morale_very_low_.html

In the midst of contract negotiations, Philadelphia Superintendent Arlene Ackerman called for a longer school day, a process to remove ineffective teachers, and the use of merit pay. The union requested that the time and money spent on teacher training and evaluations be focused on increasing teacher skills rather than discipline. In addition, the union suggested that although schoolwide bonuses garner more support from teachers than individual teacher bonuses, the funds spent on bonuses would be better spent on improving working conditions and obtaining school supplies.

Grantee Spotlight: Memphis City Schools Effective Practice Incentive Community

New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) developed the Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC), an alternative compensation program that has been implemented in five school districts, including the Memphis City Schools (MCS). EPIC is designed to link principal and teacher incentive pay to the wide-scale sharing of effective educational practices. To be eligible for an EPIC award, MCS schools must have 50 percent or more of the student population eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and cannot be eligible for another schoolwide MCS incentive program. The primary components of EPIC include the following:

- **Developing value-added models for analyzing student achievement data to identify schools making the greatest gains.** NLNS works with Mathematica Policy Research (MPR) to determine the highest achieving MCS schools.
- **Identifying and rewarding school leaders and instructional staff in high-gain schools for their effective practices and strategies.** Effective Practice Teams, led by SchoolWorks, visit award-winning schools to identify effective school leadership, management, and instructional practices, based on protocols developed in collaboration with MCS.
- **Creating comprehensive case studies that are shared with a broad network of schools through an innovative online platform called the EPIC Knowledge System.** Educators identified as effective are eligible to document and share their strategies (e.g., curricular and instructional strategies, allocation of school resources, and professional development approaches) with other teachers in their school, district, and nationwide through an online community.
- **Embedding EPIC effective practices into MCS professional development and leadership training efforts.** The EPIC Knowledge System includes professional development modules, created based on the MCS practices identified as effective.

What need is the program trying to address?

MCS is considered a high-poverty district; 71 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Furthermore, the city faces other challenges such as a high student mobility rate (27 percent) and a growing population of English language learners. MCS has had high principal turnover during the past three years, replacing more than 50 percent of its principals.

What are the goals of the program?

Through its practice-sharing focus, EPIC aspires to improve student achievement in its partner districts and charter schools and in other districts and charter schools throughout the country.

The goals of the program include the following:

- Improve student achievement through increased teacher and principal effectiveness.
- Reform MCS teacher and principal compensation systems so educators are rewarded for increases in student achievement and the sharing of effective practices.
- Increase the number of effective teachers and principals serving low-income, minority, and disadvantaged students in MCS.

How much are the incentives?

Through the value-added model, MCS recognizes “Gold-Gain” schools (the highest gain scores) and “Silver-Gain” schools (the second highest gain scores). The following table illustrates the incentive structure:

Staff	Gold-Gain Schools	Silver-Gain Schools
Educational Assistants	\$1,000	\$1,000
Teachers	\$2,500	\$2,500
Principals	\$10,000	\$7,500
Assistant Principals	\$6,750	\$5,000
Spotlight Practitioners (teachers identified as effective, award begins in 2009–10 school year)	\$5,000–\$7,500	N/A

What are the recent highlights of the program?

In the first year of EPIC, NLNS and MCS accomplished the following:

- Engaged stakeholders throughout the district and the Memphis community.
- Hired staff and planned for EPIC implementation in the 2007–08 school year.
- Collaborated to create a statistical model to identify schools with the highest one-year academic gains.
- Developed (with SchoolWorks) a protocol for the Effective Practice Team visits.
- Contracted with Lipman Hearne to assist in the development of communications to school staff, parents, the media, and the general public.

During the second year of EPIC, NLNS and MCS accomplished the following:

- Announced 12 MCS schools with the highest gains (award winners).
- Disbursed awards to 547 instructional staff in February 2009, totaling \$1,087,263.
- Announced three MCS schools as repeat EPIC award winners.

For more information, access the following resources:

- Memphis City Schools Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) CECR TIF Profile (<http://cecr.ed.gov/initiatives/profiles/pdfs/Memphis.pdf>)
- Memphis City Schools Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) CECR National Map Profile (http://cecr.ed.gov/initiatives/maps/pdfs/CECR_TN_Memphis.pdf)
- EPIC webpage on the NLNS website (<http://www.nlms.org/epic.jsp>)
- *Measuring School Effectiveness in Memphis* (Mathematic Policy Research study) (<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/schooleffectmemphis.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.

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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