

Beggs Independent School District System to Motivate and Reward Teachers

The Beggs Independent School District in partnership with eight high-need LEAs has formed the REACH Coalition (Rural Educational Achievement Can be Higher) to implement a student-achievement-based differentiated compensation program. This program is being built upon existing and newly implemented incentive compensation programs in Oklahoma; SMART (System to Motivate and Reward Teachers) is the first to link incentives to student achievement. The program is being implemented in a three-group quasi-experimental design, where full-treatment and low-dosage areas will be compared with a no-dosage control group. Assignment of Beggs as the full-treatment group is based on the pragmatic conclusion that the district is the only one with an existing data system that can efficiently implement the program in year 1. Random assignment will be used to create the low-dosage and control groups, and the evaluation will, among other things, focus on the marginal effects of dosage level. The program design reflects input from key interest groups.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

The REACH coalition represents 22 rural elementary, middle, and high school campuses that enroll 7,130 students. Sixty-seven percent of these students are enrolled in the free or reduced-price lunch program. A total of 90 percent of the elementary campuses are school-wide Title I, and the remainder are targeted assistance. Three of the coalition schools are in some form of “NCLB school improvement or restructuring” due to poor performance. All campuses meet the definition of high-need schools.

Average per capita income in the region is \$12,000 (half the state level). Forty-two percent of the student population is white, 33 percent is Native American, 23 percent is black, 1 percent is Asian, and 1 percent is Hispanic.

These demographics vary between Beggs (largest district) and the other eight LEAs. For example, Beggs’ student population is 50 percent white, 25 percent

black, and 21 percent Native American, while the other LEAs average 65 percent white, 15 percent black, and 14 percent Native American.

Thirty-six percent of students in the Beggs district were below proficient in math, and only 20 percent of students in Beggs High School passed the state high school exit exam. Significant portions of the area faculty are considered “under-qualified” in terms of credentialing under NCLB standards; most have limited field experience in education.

Background

The new program will be implemented in an environment of high educator turnover (both principals and teachers) and low levels of student achievement. It will build on an existing non-achievement-based incentive system that has recently been augmented to provide a \$3,000 raise to state teachers (largest raise in 7 years). The new program operates on the assumption that educator effectiveness affects student achievement and provides

LOCATION(S)	Beggs, Oklahoma
GRANT AMOUNT	Year 1: \$ 507,514 5-year total: \$ 2,068,353
DURATION	5 years
PARTNERS	Beggs Independent School District, 8 Rural LEAs

large incentives for professional development that shows demonstrable links to student achievement. Potential divisiveness will be thwarted by offering both school- and course-based incentives to educators.

Incentives

Educators will receive incentives on two levels nestled within three general areas. The first level of incentives will be based on achieving set student achievement and school performance goals on state tests and interim norm-referenced assessments. The second level incentives are for taking on leadership roles and/or active participation in professional development.

The basic level I incentive structure rewards \$1,000 per multiple goal. Incentives for the level II goals can be as high as \$5,000 annually. Maximum possible, or expected, payouts are not discussed. Additional retention and recruitment incentives will be available.

Evaluation

Evaluation of educators will be outcomes-based with retention bonuses being tied to sustained effectiveness of 3 years or more. The evaluation rests on three types of measurable objectives: (1) process objectives, (2) outcome objectives, and (3) GPRA objectives. Overall project evaluation will be enhanced by the aforementioned quasi-experimental design which allows measures of program effectiveness to include dosage levels. A robust evaluation plan has been developed with four distinct areas of focus: (1) descriptive—documentation of participation will be kept in a longitudinal database that includes demographics and background information and data related to incentives; (2) formative—interviews, observations, and surveys will be conducted with service delivery to determine quality and usefulness; (3) implementation—program fidelity will be monitored and its effectiveness assessed; and (4) effects, impact, and sustainability—progress toward goals and objectives will be reviewed.

Resources

Grant and district matching funds will be used to provide incentives based on student achievement, to encourage educators to step into leadership roles and to participate in training, to expand professional development, and to retain teachers with proven effectiveness. Additional funds will be used to improve the existing data system and to evaluate the program. Support for the program is currently very high; proven success will sustain the program as costs become integrated into local budgets. Local and state resources will also be secured for future sustainability.

Data Systems

Existing databases will be improved to serve as a means for subsequent assessments of teacher and principal incentives eligibility.

Year 1 Activities

During the past year, Beggs ISD observed some exciting developments with the Beggs SMART (System to Motivate and Reward Teachers) grant. The district already sees signs of teamwork and collaboration among all staff members. Teachers and administrators are working diligently to solve the many challenges of our high-needs schools. All employees are working toward the same goal of increased academic achievement for students. Teachers are accomplishing the goal of increased student learning by attending more professional development, becoming more experienced and knowledgeable in their fields through National Board Certification, as well as obtaining degrees in advanced graduate-level classes. Prior to the inception of the grant, Beggs had two National Board Certified Teachers. To date, the district has eight teachers who have been through the process of National Board Certification and are awaiting their certification results. Beggs also has an additional six teachers throughout the district pursuing advanced graduate degrees.

