

Fort Lupton Teacher Incentive Fund

The Fort Lupton Teacher Incentive Fund (FL-TIF) project will develop a performance-based compensation system that rewards effective teachers and principals who raise student achievement at the school and classroom level and who provide students with greater access to rigorous coursework.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

Weld County School District is made up of four schools (two elementary, one middle, one high) enrolling 2,443 students. All schools are high-need with more than 52 percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and all have a high percentage of English Language Learners (ELL), low-socioeconomic status, and minority students.

Three of the district's four schools have been identified for improvement because of failure to make adequate yearly progress. While student achievement levels are rising as measured by state assessments, all grade levels remain below the state average proficient/advanced. The district has, through strong recruiting and attention to class assignments, reduced the percentage of non-highly qualified teachers from over 50 percent in secondary schools to less than 10 percent. Teacher turnover has been cut in half, but still remains high at over 20 percent. Teachers tend to remain in the district for fewer than 2 years; average teacher experience is 8 years.

Background

Following the passage of a mill levy override in November 2006, the district moved from last in teacher compensation among neighboring school districts

in Weld County to a middle position for starting salaries. Salaries remain the reason teachers most often cited for leaving the district, especially since most teachers commute from surrounding communities.

Incentives

Currently, the local education authority has tentatively defined incentive compensation for teachers as a bonus, based on the attainment of defined, measurable goals, and the opportunity to earn an additional bonus by serving as a mentor teacher to others within their respective school. Those teachers not meeting individual goals but whose school meets institutional goals could earn a smaller bonus (partial incentive compensation). These teachers may also receive an additional amount for taking on additional responsibilities (i.e., mentor teacher, curriculum development team). Special education, art, music, physical education teachers and other instructional staff will receive compensatory amounts similar to content teachers based on similar criteria as it applies to their roles. Proposed principals' incentives include a bonus, based on the success of their teachers and staff in achieving bonus goals, and based on student achievement rates at the school. The incentive amounts will be determined during year one.

LOCATION(S)	Weld County School District, Fort Lupton, Colorado
GRANT AMOUNT	Year 1: \$937,040 5-year total: \$3,670,133
DURATION	5 years
PARTNERS	Dr. Susan Duron (META Associates, Evaluator)

Evaluation

An external evaluation is conducted annually and occurs through the collection of implementation and results/outcome data (i.e., focus groups, surveys).

The state standards-based assessment (CSAP), NWEA and other assessments provide the primary means to measure student achievement and determine, along with observation and evaluation, teacher and principal effectiveness. Principals will use data collected through a variety of measures, including classroom walk-throughs and RtI implementation plans, to ensure delivery of rigorous coursework to all students.

Resources

The use of funds is accounted for in five explicit budgetary categories over the course of the five-year grant: personnel, fringe, travel, supplies and contractual. The district's contribution is \$2,152,370. The program is developing a plan for securing federal, state, local, and private resources and working with the community to build support for compensation that is competitive with the surrounding communities.

Data Systems

Existing databases include Alpine Achievement Data System (CSAP and NWEA scores), Infinite Campus Education Process Management System and DIBELS database. Additional data factors associated with performance-based compensation system, will be added to Infinite Campus and Alpine Achievement as they are developed and implemented. AIMSweb is being phased in for the district's Response to Intervention (RtI) plan.

Year 2 Activities

During Year 2, the incentive plan was re-worked to align with the student growth percentiles developed by the Colorado Department of Education. The state's growth model compares each student's performance to students in the same grade throughout Colorado who had similar scores in the Colorado Student Achievement Program (CSAP) in past years. It then calculates a Growth Percentile, much like children's height and weight charts. Under the revised performance pay plan, teachers, principals, and content tutors received bonuses in October 2008 if their school's median growth percentile exceeded the state growth average on the spring 2008 CSAP (50th percentile) in each of three tested areas (reading, writing and mathematics).

All of the district's schools exceeded the state average growth percentile on at least one of the assessments, and teacher/principal bonuses ranged from \$560 to \$2,170. Instructional paraprofessionals earned from \$224 to \$868. The bonus payments totaled almost \$257,000 district-wide.

Outlook for Year 3

During Year 3, additional elements will be considered, including a Voluntary Incentive Plan (VIP) for action research projects designed to improve student achievement, individual or team student assessment targets, or other targets related to the School or District Improvement Plan.