



The Design of Schools' Performance Incentive Programs in Texas: Findings from Year One of GEEG

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A recent report published by the National Center on Performance Incentives (NCPI) presents findings from the first-year evaluation of the Governor's Educator Excellence Grant (GEEG) program, one of several statewide educator incentive programs in Texas. In this report, the authors provide an overview of 99 schools' locally designed educator incentive programs and the strategies used to identify highly effective teachers and other school personnel.

Findings are based on systemic review of each school's state-approved application for the three-year GEEG program. Evaluators coded key features of program applications, including the performance measures used to evaluate teachers and the strategies schools used to identify highly effective teachers and school personnel. Considerable attention was given to how schools used (1) the required 75 percent of their grant to reward teachers, and (2) the remaining 25 percent for rewarding other personnel or for the implementation of professional growth activities.

Designing Performance Awards for Teachers

According to GEEG program guidelines, 75 percent of a school's grant had to be earmarked for performance awards to classroom teachers. Awards could be determined by teacher performance along four broad criteria. The first two criteria were required, and focused on measures of student

performance and teacher collaboration. Schools could also determine teacher award eligibility using optional measures of teacher initiative and commitment, and placement in hard-to-staff areas. Almost half of all schools (45.5%) used only the two required criteria for determining teachers' performance awards.

Measures of Teacher Performance

Most GEEG schools (80.8%) used student academic assessments for determining teachers' influence on student performance, most commonly the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), the State-Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA), and locally designed formative and end-of-year assessments. Slightly more than half (52.5%) used broader indicators of campus performance to measure performance, such as a school's rating on the state accountability system. Whether using student academic assessments or broader campus performance ratings, schools more frequently established achievement levels rather than achievement gains as the criteria for performance awards.

Schools used a variety of indicators to measure teacher collaboration. More than half (56.6%) used attendance at staff meetings, while slightly less than half (41.4%) considered teachers' involvement in collaborative lesson plan development. Other campuses evaluated teacher collaboration according

to their involvement in professional development (31.3%) and instructional/curricular leadership activities (25.2%).

Many GEEG schools did not use measures of teacher initiative and commitment or placement in hard-to-staff areas for determining teacher performance awards. Nearly half of schools (46.5%) did not use the former, while a majority (84.8%) did not use the latter. Of those considering teacher initiative and commitment, common indicators included tutoring students and teacher involvement in after-school programs, as well as teacher attendance during the school year. Hard-to-staff areas most often included locally determined placements (e.g., assignment to a TAKS subject and grade) or state-determined shortage areas such as special education, math, and bilingual education.

Award Amounts for Teachers

Proposed award amounts for teachers varied considerably between schools. State-issued guidelines for GEEG recommended awards ranging from a minimum of \$3,000 to a maximum of \$10,000 per teacher. According to program applications, schools anticipated paying teachers anywhere from \$100 to \$10,937 each school year. The average minimum award was \$2,897, while the average maximum was \$3,726. Seventy-six percent of schools proposed minimum awards of less than \$3,000, and 44 percent proposed maximum awards below that amount.

Unit of Accountability

Evaluators also coded whether the school considered the performance results of an individual teacher, a team of teachers (i.e., grade level or subject area), or an entire campus for determining award eligibility. GEEG schools almost exclusively used individual teachers as the unit of accountability except when measuring student performance. While 64 percent considered the impact of individual teachers on student performance, nearly half (48.5%) also considered student performance for the entire campus when determining performance awards.

Rewarding Other School Personnel

Up to 25 percent of a school's GEEG grant could be used to provide additional performance awards to non-teaching personnel (e.g., administrators, campus support staff) or to implement professional growth activities (e.g., professional development, teacher induction programs). To supplement the information available in official GEEG applications, evaluators administered a survey to GEEG schools during the 2006-07 school year to learn about the use of Part 2 funds (i.e., 25 percent of grant). The survey yielded responses from 95 of 99 GEEG schools (96.0%). Overall, 84 GEEG schools indicated funds were used to allocate additional personnel incentives. Principals and instructional support staff were the most common award recipients (receiving awards at 59 GEEG schools). Other common recipients included health and campus support staff (at 56 GEEG schools) and librarians (at 54 GEEG schools).

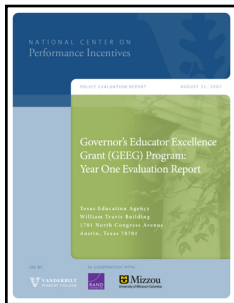
A small number of GEEG schools used the remaining 25 percent of grant monies to implement professional growth activities for staff and faculty. Only 16 percent of schools used these funds for professional development; five percent used them for teacher mentoring activities; and one school used the remaining funds for teacher induction programs.

Conclusion

Evaluators' review of GEEG applications during the first year of implementation indicated that schools used a wide array of performance indicators for measuring teacher performance. However, the majority of schools held several GEEG design features in common: (1) they used only the required program criteria to measure teacher performance (i.e., measures of student performance and teacher collaboration); (2) they held individual teachers accountable for performance; (3) they proposed award amounts below the recommended minimum of \$3,000; and (4) they used the additional 25 percent of grant funds to reward non-teaching personnel.

The authors of the report caution that implementation of GEEG programs at schools may vary from the plans as described in the program applications. Future evaluations will include a monitoring of how GEEG plans might adapt over time as schools adjust to the process of program implementation. They will also include outcome

analyses of GEEG's impact on teacher workforce trends and student achievement. Evaluators will further identify school system preferences for various GEEG program characteristics, and determine any influence of GEEG program characteristics on outcomes for teacher quality and student achievement.



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