



# Teacher Attitudes about Performance Incentives in Texas: Early Reactions to the GEEG Program

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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. Findings are based on surveys administered to GEEG teachers during the 2006-07 school year, the first year of program implementation. Surveys addressed the implementation process of schools' GEEG programs, teachers' attitudes toward performance incentives in general and GEEG specifically, and teachers' attitudes toward one another and their students since the inception of their schools' GEEG programs.

This policy brief focuses specifically on teachers' attitudes toward performance incentives in general and the GEEG program.

## Teachers' Preferences for Performance Measures

Teachers were asked to assign a level of importance to 17 different measures of performance in designing a performance incentive program. Respondents rated these measures on a four-point scale, where "1" equaled "no importance" and "4" equaled "high importance."

Teachers identified improvements in students' test scores (mean=3.5) and collaboration with faculty and staff (mean=3.3) as the most important measures of

performance. Interestingly, state guidelines required schools to incorporate these two performance measures when determining teachers' eligibility for GEEG awards.

Teachers also identified teaching in hard-to-staff fields and time spent on professional development as high-importance performance measures. The former, while allowed by GEEG state guidelines, was rarely used by schools (only 15 of the 99 schools used this measure). Professional development, however, was commonly used by schools as an indicator of teacher collaboration.

Teachers believed that student evaluation of teaching performance (mean=2.6) and independent evaluations of teacher portfolios (mean=2.6) were the least important measures to include in a performance incentive program. This implies that teachers may be less inclined to view subjective measures as important for the design of a performance incentive program. However, it is worth noting that over half of respondents indicated that all 17 indicators would be of moderate or high importance, revealing a preference for using a multitude of performance measures in the design of a performance incentive program.

### Early Perceptions about GEEG and Impact on School Environment

Surveys also gauged teachers' perceptions about the level of school staff involvement in the development of GEEG plans, as well as the fairness and impact of GEEG at their school. Teachers consistently reported that school staff participated in the development of GEEG plans. Administrators, teachers, and non-teaching staff — in that order — took part in development processes. This is noteworthy, as state guidelines for GEEG call for schoolwide involvement in the development of schools' performance incentive programs.

Results from a second survey indicate that GEEG teachers—both those who received an incentive award and those who did not—viewed their GEEG programs favorably. This may stem from the fact that teachers were frequently involved with the design of schools' GEEG programs. That is, within each school, teachers likely had more input into the plan design, which may have had an independent effect on their attitudes toward the program.

On average, teachers agreed that GEEG plans were fair and had beneficial effects at their schools.

- 61 percent of teachers agreed that the GEEG program accurately identified effective teachers as award recipients.
- 77 percent rejected the proposition that GEEG discouraged staff collaboration.
- 70 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that resentment increased due to the program.
- 56 percent thought the size of the bonus was adequate to motivate change.
- 75 percent reported a strong desire to earn the bonus.
- 79 percent indicated that they understood what they needed to do to earn a bonus.

Results suggest that teachers not earning a GEEG bonus award were at least as supportive of the GEEG program as bonus recipients. In fact, slightly more bonus non-recipients than recipients agreed that their

school's program did a good job of distinguishing between effective and ineffective teachers (68.7% versus 57.9%).

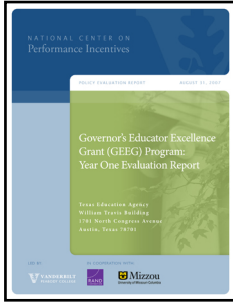
Teachers were also asked about changes in their colleagues' attitudes toward one another and their students. Responses indicate that GEEG has not negatively impacted teacher collegiality. More than two-thirds of teachers rejected the idea that their colleagues were becoming more competitive since the introduction of GEEG. There was also no indication teachers viewed their colleagues as being increasingly inattentive to their responsibilities toward their students.

### Early Results are Promising

Overall findings suggest that teachers at GEEG schools had favorable attitudes towards performance incentives during the first year of program implementation. This finding holds true for both bonus recipients and non-recipients, with non-recipients being slightly more supportive of GEEG. Roughly three-quarters of all teachers indicated a strong desire to earn a bonus.

While the authors caution that it is too soon to draw conclusions about teacher attitudes toward performance incentive programs and GEEG specifically, early results indicate no discernable impact on working conditions, morale, or teamwork at GEEG school sites.

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This research brief describes work performed by the National Center on Performance Incentives and documented in *Governor's Educator Excellence Grant (GEEG) Program: Year One Evaluation Report*, by Matthew G. Springer, Michael J. Podgursky, Jessica L. Lewis, Mark W. Ehlert, Catherine Gardner, Bonnie Ghosh-Dastidar, Omar S. Lopez, Christine H. Patterson, and Lori L. Taylor. The National Center on Performance Incentives is a research and development center funded in part by the United States Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (R305A06034). The views expressed in this research brief do not necessarily reflect those of the sponsoring agencies.

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