



Educator Attitudes and Beliefs about Performance Pay in Schools: Findings from Year Two of the TEEG Program October 2009

A recent report published by the National Center on Performance Incentives (NCPI) presents findings from the second-year evaluation of the Texas Educator Excellence Grant (TEEG) program, a statewide educator incentive program that operated in Texas. As part of that larger study, evaluators examined educators' attitudes about performance pay. Findings are based on the survey responses of more than 35,000 full-time instructional personnel in schools participating in the first year of the TEEG program (2006–07 school year). This survey, administered during the fall 2007 semester, specifically addressed concepts such as educators' perceptions about a school's TEEG plan, performance pay generally, their school climate, principal leadership, and their own ability to impact student learning.

Attitudes about Performance Pay

Survey responses indicated broad support for the idea of performance pay in general, and the TEEG program specifically. Most respondents supported performance pay for group or individual performance (63.7 percent and 74.8 percent, respectively). Furthermore, 54 percent of respondents

indicated that they did not believe performance pay would adversely affect teacher collaboration, while 55 percent believed that incentives could encourage teachers to work more effectively. Finally, a smaller majority felt that performance pay would help recruit and retain more effective teachers.

Overall, school personnel also held positive attitudes about the design and impact of a school's TEEG performance pay plans. A large majority (73 percent) agreed that TEEG plans were fair to teachers, and only 29 percent said the plan had a negative effect at the school. Approximately 77 percent had a clear understanding of the performance criteria to earn a TEEG bonus award, and 79 percent believed that these eligibility criteria captured professional practice "worthy of extra pay".

Additionally, most respondents (72 percent) believed that the size of the highest potential TEEG bonus amount at their school was sufficiently large enough to motivate them to try to earn the award. However, some dissent was evident as only 40 percent believed that a school's TEEG

plan “does a good job of distinguishing effective from ineffective teachers.” Additionally, a full 77 percent agreed that their schools’ TEEG plans did not affect teaching practices or professional behaviors.

Finally, evaluators found that respondents who reported receipt of a TEEG bonus award also held more positive beliefs about performance pay generally and the impact of TEEG in schools. Inexperienced teachers were also more supportive of performance pay and TEEG plans than their more experienced counterparts, a common finding in the broader literature regarding teachers’ attitudes about performance pay.

Attitudes about Performance Measures

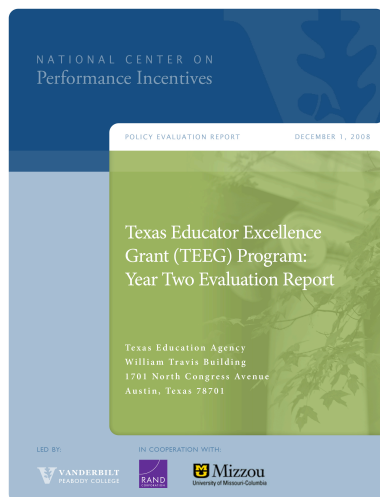
When asked which performance measures were most important in determining their eligibility for a TEEG bonus award, respondents identified results of standardized achievement tests as being the most prominent measure. They also indicated student achievement gains should be more important than student achievement levels for the determination of performance pay. In fact, a full 91 percent agreed that gains should be an important factor in determining performance pay. These attitudes are somewhat inconsistent with national findings and reports from other states which have generally indicated that teachers feel less favorably about using standardized test measures as performance pay criteria. Educators also rated collaboration with other faculty and staff as an important criterion for receiving a TEEG bonus award. Furthermore, roughly 80 percent of all respondents agreed with providing bonuses for teachers in hard-to-staff fields, to reward extra-classroom contributions like mentoring other teachers or working with parents, and also for teachers achieving National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification.

Conclusion

Survey findings indicate that – among schools that participated in the first year of TEEG – most educators supported the principle of performance pay and did not believe TEEG had a negative effect on school culture. Consistent with other research on performance pay, inexperienced personnel held more positive opinions about performance pay and the TEEG program, as did – not too surprisingly – those educators receiving bonus awards. Additionally, TEEG schools that designed more individualistic award distribution plans also held more positive beliefs about performance pay.

Future evaluation reports continued to examine these attitudes throughout the duration of the TEEG program, looking specifically at how a school’s participation pattern in TEEG influenced attitudes. Existing literature suggests that unstable opportunities to participate in a performance pay program can have a negative influence on educator attitudes. This is particularly relevant given the degree of participation volatility experienced by schools in the TEEG program.

To read more about NCPI’s year-two evaluation of the TEEG program, visit www.performanceincentives.org.



This research brief describes work performed by the National Center on Performance Incentives and documented in Texas Educator Excellence Grant (TEEG) Program: Year Two Evaluation Report, by Matthew G. Springer, Michael J. Podgursky, Jessica L. Lewis, Mark W. Ehlert, Bonnie Ghosh-Dastidar, Timothy J. Gronberg, Laura S. Hamilton, Dennis W. Jansen, Omar S. Lopez, Christine H. Patterson, Brian M. Stetcher, 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 Services (R305A06034). The views expressed in this research brief do not necessarily reflect those of the sponsoring agencies.

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