

Guiding Principles for Teacher Incentive Fund Grants

for State and Local Leaders of AASA, NEA, and NSBA

May 2010



Great Public Schools for Every Student



The principles outlined in this document have been developed jointly by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the National Education Association (NEA), and the National School Boards Association (NSBA). The principles are designed to offer guidance to our local leaders and members if they choose to participate in the U.S. Department of Education Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant program, which requires incentive compensation plans. Just as these principles have been developed jointly, we strongly believe that TIF incentive compensation plans—in order to be successful and sustainable as part of a school improvement system—must be developed collaboratively with the relevant stakeholders.

To improve schools, we need to build and sustain a comprehensive and continuous system of school improvement and organizational growth. Incentive compensation plans may be one component of the continuous improvement system, but it should not stand alone. In order to support the school improvement process, the compensation system must be aligned with the organizational mission and with other organizational operations, such as teacher evaluation, professional development and induction. Schools also must provide the conditions that support teaching and learning. Experience has shown that when developing incentive compensation plans it is best to start with school-wide plans as they foster collaboration among school staff and are easier to develop and implement.

Incentive compensation systems must have well-defined communication procedures, purposeful planning and implementation processes, and must be aligned with organizational goals. Careful communication starts with a broad base of support among teachers and school staff, administrators, school boards and community members. Successful planning and implementation require a detailed process for ongoing shared decision-making and ownership by the people affected by the pay system. Ownership is achieved with willing participants and a clear link between teaching practices, their impact on student learning and the reward system. Alignment with the district's organizational goals will provide a stable and purposeful footing that everyone can agree to build upon.

We recommend that you utilize the following guiding principles when developing and implementing an incentive compensation plan:

1. School boards, administrators, and unions/associations should review various models of incentive compensation plans including research about their effectiveness before developing a plan at the local level.

2. School boards, administrators, and unions/associations should work together to build ongoing community and stakeholder support for both the incentive compensation plan as well as the necessary funding.
3. School boards, administrators, and unions/associations should work together to develop and implement the plan utilizing collective bargaining where it exists.
4. In the implementation of the incentive compensation plan, teachers should be provided assistance including time, curriculum, and professional development to increase student achievement.
5. The foundation of incentive compensation plans shall be professional-level base salaries.
6. Funding for the plan must be adequate and sustainable.
7. The plan and its requirements should be transparent, easily understood, and uniformly implemented.
8. A detailed implementation plan, with agreed-upon benchmarks and timelines, should be developed.
9. The incentive compensation plan should be based on a multi-factor approach (teacher evaluations, student performance growth, specific goals set by the teacher and/or management, increased responsibilities, assessments of student learning, etc.) that is research-based and improves student achievement.
10. All employees who meet the criteria for the incentive compensation plan should be compensated accordingly, and incentive compensation plans should foster collaboration not competition.
11. Evaluations, if a factor in incentive compensation plans, should be fair, of high quality and rigorous and take into account multiple measures of student progress.

About AASA

The American Association of School Administrators, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders across the United States. AASA's mission is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children. For more information, visit www.aasa.org.

About NEA

The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators and students preparing to become teachers. For more information, please visit www.nea.org.

About NSBA

Founded in 1940, the National School Boards Association (www.nsba.org) is a not-for-profit organization representing state associations of school boards and their 95,000 local school board members throughout the United States. Its mission is to work with and through all its State Association members to foster excellence and equity in public education through school board leadership. NSBA achieves that mission by representing the school board perspective in working with federal government agencies and national organizations that impact education, and provides vital information and services to state associations of school boards throughout the nation.