

KLBJ 590
AISD pays nearly \$1M in teacher bonuses
Newsroom
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Flanked by the president of the local teacher's union, the district board president, teachers and other administrators, Austin ISD Superintendent Pat Forgione on Wednesday announced more than \$990,000 in stipends to be distributed to over 330 teachers and some principals at six schools, district-wide.

The announcement came as part of a pre-planned news conference at one of the schools where some of the bonus checks would be distributed, Sidney Lanier High School, on Payton Gin Road, just north of U.S. 183 in north Austin.

"This was a risk to take some taxpayer money and say we're going to put it in an incentive program, and to study it," Dr. Forgione said. "It's a work in progress."

Administrators call the program "AISD REACH", and Forgione says it is designed to reward teachers for doing far above average on state standardized tests and for keeping good teachers at troubled campuses.

"This is a complex initiative. Our business is not simple; it's complex. And so I hope you'll respect the risk that these schools took for innovation and to go for the gold," he said. "This is a pilot. You'll be seeing in the spring that we'll be coming out with a report to look at every component. We're going to be self-critical. If a component isn't working, we can replace it."

Among the people in line to speak, Education Austin President Louis Malfaro said some unions in Texas malign the thought of performance-based pay, but he welcomes it.

"You know, I hated opening the newspaper today and reading the headline that we're paying teachers for TAKS scores, because we're not. We're not looking at an absolute TAKS target," Malfaro said.

In a news release, Austin ISD says stipends of \$2,000 went for teachers who scored "Comparable Improvement ratings" in reading or math and teachers who achieved "required reading and math growth" could receive \$4,000. The district says "the payout amount for principals is \$4,000 for each subject or \$8,000 for achieving both reading and math growth".

The six districts involved in the project for the 2007-08 school year were Barton Hills Elementary, Dobie Middle, Hart Elementary, Menchaca Elementary, O. Henry Middle and Lanier High School.