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Pilot program for AISD teachers pays off

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Nearly \$1 million in bonuses are being awarded to teachers this month.

Austin Independent School District announced that teachers in the district's pilot pay performance program will receive bonuses awarded to schools that reached significant levels of improvement on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test taken last year. The bonuses this month almost total \$1 million.

Under the program, schools are considered to have made significant improvement if their TAKS scores in reading and math spiked more than those of most other schools across the state with similar demographics. The range of bonuses are anywhere from \$2,000 – \$4,000.

Want to know more about the pilot pay performance program?

What is AISD Reach?

Click to view a program overview and a payout schedule.

"It is kind of different because we're use to teaching, because we like to teach because we want our kids to be successful. Throwing in money is something that's new," interim principal at Lanier High School, Katherine Ryan, said.

Offering incentives is something new that's getting teachers excited, even the ones that don't teach the core math and reading classes. One component of the incentive program is based on overall school improvement. That's comparing AISD schools with schools across Texas. If the school makes the cut, the instructors who teach other classes still get a cut of the check.

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"The beauty in it is that it helps bring the campus together as a team to know that we all work together to make sure these kids get what they need to get in order to graduate," Ryan said.

During the year there are other opportunities for bonuses based on other factors, such as teacher retention, mentoring, as well as achieving personal goals.

"In any other business we give them a bonus," Ryan said. "We raise their salary, so this is just a way to bring that part of the world into education."

Ryan said while her teachers are glad to be doing their part to help their students be successful, more than 300 of them are especially happy to see an extra holiday check that they ordinarily wouldn't have received.

Last year, the performance pay program included nine schools and this year they've expanded to 11 schools. Next year, AISD plans to expand the pilot to 18 schools and by 2011 they hope to implement the program district wide.

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