

TASB HR Exchange June 2009 Edition

Austin ISD evaluates first phase of its strategic compensation initiative

In April, Austin ISD (AISD) published its evaluation of the first year of its strategic compensation pilot program, AISD REACH [This link opens in a new window.](#) The program's goals are student growth, professional growth for educators, and recruitment and retention of educators at high-needs schools. The district characterizes the program's early outcomes as "neutral or positive."

Participants at nine pilot schools (467 teachers and nine principals) earned \$2.2 million for successfully completing programs focused on student growth and professional growth. Educators at high-needs schools (based on the percentage of economically disadvantaged students and students with limited English proficiency) received extra support and incentives.

Stipends of up to \$8,700 were awarded to teachers at high-needs schools, with teachers earning awards of \$5,420 on average. Teachers at the remaining pilot schools earned stipends of up to \$6,400 (\$3,089 on average). Principals earned stipends of \$8,244, on average.

AISD asked its teachers to develop their own goals for student learning called student learning objectives (SLOs). Teachers at all pilot schools were asked to develop two SLOs and determine what to do to help students meet them. Teachers did well in terms of achieving the SLOs they developed, with 83 percent meeting one goal and 64 percent meeting both goals.

More important for the district, the evaluation supported the validity of SLOs as an instructional tool. Students of teachers who established and met one math SLO did significantly better on the math portion of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Similar results were found for reading.

Teachers and principals at six of the district's pilot schools also earned bonuses for their campus being in the top quartile of the Texas Education Agency's Comparable Improvement measure on TAKS in math and reading.

Novice teachers at pilot schools also appear to have benefitted from the intensive mentoring and training the program offers. Teachers in the first three years of their career were just as likely to meet their SLOs as veteran teachers were.