

Key Elements of an Effective Performance Award System

When constructing a performance award system, the following design principals should be considered. Is the system:

- **Transparent:** Do all key stakeholders understand how performance awards are determined and do all school personnel understand exactly how their performance is assessed and rewarded within the system?
- **Fair:** Do all key stakeholders believe that the system provides an opportunity for all instructional staff to be fairly assessed and awarded for their contribution to student growth and development?
- **Aligned:** Is the performance award system aligned to the current instructional goals of the district and does it work in partnership with the professional development system?
- **Meaningful:** Does the performance award system encourage and reward teacher behaviors that result in the attainment of district goals for student performance, and are the award amounts enough to motivate teacher behavior?
- **Justifiable:** Are the goals at the foundation of the plan worthy of the effort and financial resources necessary to implement the program?
- **Beneficial:** Is the performance award system designed to result in enhanced teacher quality and improved student performance?
- **Rigorous but attainable:** Does the performance award system provide challenging targets for teacher and student performance, yet ones that are feasible to attain with support such as professional development?

The following questions are illustrative of the decisions that district and campus-level leadership teams must make when designing a performance award system:

- How many educator positions will you include in your award program?
- Will you include all classroom teachers, only teachers of core academic subjects, paraprofessionals as well as teachers, assistant principals as well as principals?
- Will you award individuals, groups, or both?
- What must you consider when making this decision?
- Does this decision align to your district's instructional goals?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- If you intend to award either all teachers or groups of teachers, have you determined how you will evaluate the performance of those who teach non-tested subjects and grades?
- Have you identified the data sources (tests or other assessments) that you will use to measure student academic performance for each teacher category, grade-level, and subject area of teacher included in the plan?
- What is the importance of fair and credible measures?
- How do you ensure that awards are meaningful and differentiated (not everyone gets the same amount)?
- How can you ensure awards will drive teacher behavior?
- Will you incorporate recruitment and retention incentives, professional development, collaboration, leadership roles, and data systems in your plan?
- What is the value of these other components?