

Title: Incentives for recruiting and retaining teachers and administrators serving English learner students

Date: August 2015

Question: >> Could you provide research on incentives for recruiting and retaining teachers and administrators who serve English learner students in pre-K and elementary school?

Response:

We have prepared the following memo with references on recruitment and retention incentives for teachers and administrators serving English learner students or other special populations. Citations include a link to a free online version, when available. All citations are accompanied by an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the author or publisher of the document. We have not done an evaluation of the methodological rigor of these resources, but provide them for your information only.

References

Alekseeva, A., Boyle, A., Carlson Le Floch, K., Golden, L., Harris, B., & Wissel, S. (2014). *Building teacher capacity to support English language learners in schools receiving School Improvement Grants*. Washington, DC: Mathematical Policy Research, Inc. Retrieved on May 22, 2015, from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20154004/pdf/20154004.pdf>

Abstract: The Study of School Turnaround examines the improvement process in a purposive sample of 35 case study schools receiving federal funds through the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program over a three-year period (2010/11 to 2012/13 school years). This brief focuses on 11 of these SIG schools with high proportions of English Language Learner (ELL) students (a median of 45 percent ELLs), describing their efforts to improve teachers' capacity for serving ELLs through staffing strategies and professional development (PD). Key findings that emerged from the ELL case study data collected during the 2011/12 and 2012/13 school years include:

- Few schools reported leveraging staffing strategies to improve teacher capacity for serving ELLs. Administrators in 3 of the 11 schools reported considering ELL expertise and experience when hiring classroom teachers, while respondents in 2 of the 11 schools reported that teachers' ELL expertise and experience purposefully factored into assignment of teachers to specific classrooms.
- Most teacher survey respondents (54 to 100 percent) in all 11 schools reported participating in ELL-related PD during the 2011/12 school year. On average, teachers reported that ELL-related PD accounted for less than 20 percent of their total PD hours.
- Teacher survey respondents in schools that reported a greater PD focus on ELL-related topics, such as instructional strategies for advancing English proficiency or instructional

strategies to use for ELLs within content classes, also generally appeared more likely to report that PD improved their effectiveness as teachers of ELLs.

Amrein-Beardsley, A. (2012). Recruiting expert teachers into high-needs schools: Leadership, money, and colleagues. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 20(27). Retrieved on May 26, 2015, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ982705.pdf>

Abstract: Teacher quality experts are urging policymakers to identify and target expert teachers and entice them to teach in high-needs schools. To understand what this might take, expert teachers in Arizona were surveyed to understand their job-related preferences to inform future recruitment policies. Findings should inform others about the important factors educational policymakers might consider when thinking about recruiting expert teachers into high-needs schools. These factors include the quality of the principal; salary, bonuses, and benefits; and the degree to which expert teachers can work in multiple roles to enhance student learning.

Berry, B., Rasberry, M., & Williams, A. (2005). *Recruiting and retaining quality teachers for high-needs schools: Insights from NBCT Summits and other policy initiatives*. Carborro, NC: Center for Teaching Quality. Retrieved on May 22, 2015, from http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf_nationalstrategyforumreport.pdf

Excerpt: In this paper we draw on the best available empirical evidence, key case studies, and the insights from some of the nation's most accomplished teachers to suggest how we may build on the foundation of existing programs.

Bridges, M., Fuller, B., Huang, D. S., & Hamre, B. K. (2011). Strengthening the early childhood workforce: How wage incentives may boost training and job stability. *Early Education and Development*, 22(6), 1009–1029.

Abstract: Aiming to raise the quality of early childhood teachers and caregivers and to reduce turnover, government and professional associations are pursuing 2 intervention strategies. The 1st mandates higher credential levels, as seen with Head Start and state preschool reforms. Here we examine the efficacy of the 2nd strategy: offering wage incentives to encourage in-service training and to reduce job turnover. We followed 2,783 preschool center directors, teachers, and classroom aides who participated in California's Child-care Retention Incentive (CRI) program during a 3-year period. County-designed programs offered differing combinations of wage supplements and professional development to participants who pursued college-level training. We found a priori low levels of staff turnover among those who selected into the CRI program. This conditioned the modest program effects that we observed and revealed the segmented character of the early childhood labor force, which appears to shape selection patterns. Demographic attributes of staff and the auspice in which staff worked were significantly related to the number of college units acquired and to job stability. Specific features of local CRI programs were less influential. Staff completed more college courses when participating in programs that provided stronger career advising and professional activities in addition to their college coursework. Practice or Policy: Implications for incentive programs nationwide are discussed.

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, University of California at Berkeley. (2009). *Compensation initiatives for the early care and education workforce: A chart of current activities at the national, state, and local levels*. Berkeley, CA: Author. Retrieved on May 26, 2015, from http://www.ccw.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=56

Excerpt: Wage Incentives, also referred to as Wage/Compensation Supplements or Retention Grants, are designed to reward early care and education teachers and providers based on their level of education and years of tenure. In addition to providing opportunities for early care and education teachers and providers to improve their education, these types of programs particularly

target salary increases to experienced, well-trained caregivers whose salaries do not reflect their level of educational attainment. The following states currently have such programs: Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Utah, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

Garcia, P., & Potemski, A. (2009). *Recruiting teachers for schools serving English language learners*. Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. Retrieved on May 22, 2015, from <http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/recruitingTeachersforSchoolsServingELs.pdf>

Excerpt: The resources and strategies in this document are intended to help districts choose recruitment strategies that best fit their needs, understand what the related research says about those strategies, and then use this information to design recruitment and preparation programs that will fill current and future district vacancies for teachers of ELLs...Strategies:

1. Recruit teachers who are familiar with the language and culture of ELLs.
2. Train general education teachers to work with ELLs.
3. Recruit paraeducators into training programs to become certified teachers of ELLs.
4. Develop alternative certification programs.
5. Recruit educators globally.
 - a. Participate in foreign teacher exchange programs.
 - b. Recruit foreign-born and culturally diverse candidates into teacher preparation programs.
6. Target financial incentives.

Greenlee, B., & Brown, J. J., Jr. (2009). Retaining teachers in challenging schools. *Education*, 130(1), 96–109.

Abstract: School leaders face the difficult challenge of finding teachers who are highly qualified, committed, and prepared to ensure that all students achieve at levels mandated by NCLB. The pervasive strategy attempted by school districts to recruit teachers to high need schools is incentive programs that include either salary enhancement or bonuses. Teachers (N = 97) were surveyed to identify principal leadership behaviors and incentives that are most effective to create a school environment where teachers will want to stay. The findings from this study show that financial incentives, working conditions, and principal behaviors all play an important role in recruiting and retaining teachers in challenging schools. Incentives identified by respondents differed widely whether among teacher certification routes and school context.

Heyburn, S., Lewis, J., & Ritter, G. (2010). *Compensation reform and design preferences of Teacher Incentive Fund grantees* (Policy Paper). Nashville, TN: National Center on Performance Incentives, Vanderbilt University. Retrieved on May 26, 2015, from <https://my.vanderbilt.edu/performanceincentives/ncpi-publications/design-and-implementation-of-incentive-pay-systems/compensation-reform-and-design-preferences-of-teacher-incentive-fund-grantees/>

Abstract: In U.S. K–12 public education, incentive pay for educators remains firmly fixed as a high-interest policy topic and has recently become a popular reform initiative in many school systems. The Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), created in 2006 by the U.S. Department of Education, is at the forefront of this policy movement and has provided hundreds of millions of federal dollars for the implementation of incentive pay systems for teachers and principals. This paper examines the incentive pay plans implemented under the TIF program as of the 2009–10 school year, a reasonable starting point to understanding how federal dollars are being used to modify systems for compensating educators. Primarily drawing upon survey findings, researchers address the following questions: (a) What are the overall objectives of TIF plans? (b) How do sites determine

bonus award eligibility? and (c) How are bonus awards distributed and to whom? Overall, TIF plans focus on rewarding educators' performance in addition to recruiting and retaining educators in hard-to-staff positions. Most plans are designed in ways that limit excessive competition between educators, but they differ considerably in the actual dollar amount of bonus awards offered to educators. As the TIF program is set to receive \$600 million dollars this year through federal appropriations and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the findings from this report are particularly relevant and will allow policymakers and practitioners alike to learn more about how school systems are modifying educator compensation and what those choices might ultimately mean for teaching and learning within the nation's public schools.

Jacob, B. A. (2007). The challenges of staffing urban schools with effective teachers. *Future of Children, 17*(1), 129–153. Retrieved on May 26, 2015, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ795883.pdf>

Abstract: Jacob examines challenges faced by urban districts in staffing their schools with effective teachers. He emphasizes that the problem is far from uniform. Teacher shortages are more severe in certain subjects and grades than others, and differ dramatically from one school to another. The Chicago public schools, for example, regularly receive roughly ten applicants for each teaching position. But many applicants are interested in specific schools, and district officials struggle to find candidates for highly impoverished schools. Urban districts' difficulty in attracting and hiring teachers, says Jacob, means that urban teachers are less highly qualified than their suburban counterparts with respect to characteristics such as experience, educational background, and teaching certification. But they may not thus be less effective teachers. Jacob cites recent studies that have found that many teacher characteristics bear surprisingly little relationship to student outcomes. Policies to enhance teacher quality must thus be evaluated in terms of their effect on student achievement, not in terms of conventional teacher characteristics. Jacob then discusses how supply and demand contribute to urban teacher shortages. Supply factors involve wages, working conditions, and geographic proximity between teacher candidates and schools. Urban districts have tried various strategies to increase the supply of teacher candidates (including salary increases and targeted bonuses) and to improve retention rates (including mentoring programs). But there is little rigorous research evidence on the effectiveness of these strategies. Demand also has a role in urban teacher shortages. Administrators in urban schools may not recognize or value high-quality teachers. Human resource departments restrict district officials from making job offers until late in the hiring season, after many candidates have accepted positions elsewhere. Jacob argues that urban districts must improve hiring practices and also reevaluate policies for teacher tenure so that ineffective teachers can be dismissed.

Milanowski, T., Lonwell-Grice, H., Saffold, F., Jones, J., Odden, A., & Schmish, K. (2008). *Recruiting new teachers to urban school districts: What incentives will work* (Working Paper 11, March 30). Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education. Retrieved on May 22, 2015, from http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/wp_sfrp11_milanowski_aug08_0.pdf

Abstract: Often the districts most in need of quality teachers have the greatest difficulty attracting and retaining them. In response, states and districts are experimenting with financial incentives to attract and retain high quality teachers in high-needs, low-achieving or hard-to-staff urban schools. Such financial incentives include signing bonuses, pay supplements ("combat pay"), loan forgiveness, tuition subsidies, and housing assistance. Relatively little is known, however, about how effective financial incentives are likely to be in attracting and retaining teachers in high-needs urban schools. This study explores the value teachers place on financial incentives and how much of a salary incentive is needed to attract new teachers to high-needs schools.

Morgan, M. M., & Kritsonis, W. A. (2008). National focus: The recruitment, retention, and development of quality teachers in hard-to-staff schools. *National Journal for Publishing and Mentoring Doctoral Student Research*, 5(1). Retrieved on May 26, 2015, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED499232.pdf>

Abstract: A shortage of quality teachers in high-risk urban schools has compelled school leaders to examine innovative methods of recruiting and retaining new teachers to hard-to-staff campuses. Principals must work aggressively to attract new teachers to their campuses by forming university partnerships for early recruitment, and initiating on the job training for new recruits as early as the previous school year. Early immersion in the school environment is key to a smooth transition. Additionally, principals must allocate the necessary fiscal resources to the task of retaining new teachers, particularly in mentorship and professional development. Hard-to-staff campuses must invest in a full-time teacher mentor as well as retired teachers to provide intense mentorship and relevant professional training. Principals must also integrate other critical components to building teacher quality and commitment, such as on-site certification preparation, graduated retention bonuses, and most importantly, weekly formal and informal interactions between the principal and new teachers. The development of new teachers in hard-to-staff schools should be of the highest priority for principals, as stability is key to long-term school improvement. The commitment to this initiative must not only be evident in a principal's agenda and campus improvement goals, but the campus expenditures as well.

National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center. (2008). *Supporting a skilled and stable workforce: Compensation and retention initiatives*. Fairfax, VA: Author. Retrieved on May 26, 2015, from http://www.ccw.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=56

Excerpt: The sample of initiatives included in this document have been designed to reward early and school-age care professionals who complete training, attain credentials and degrees, and who exhibit commitment to the field of early childhood and/or their current workplace.

Strunk, K. O., & Zeehandelaar, D. (2011). Differentiated compensation: How California school districts use economic incentives to target teachers. *Journal of Education Finance*, 36(3), 268–293. Retrieved on May 26, 2015, from [https://www.usc.edu/dept/education/cegov/focus/teacher-ilm&p/publications/journals/Diff Comp KS DZ.pdf](https://www.usc.edu/dept/education/cegov/focus/teacher-ilm&p/publications/journals/Diff%20Comp%20KS%20DZ.pdf)

Abstract: Many districts and schools have trouble recruiting and retaining teachers who have the necessary credentials and skills to meet the needs of their students. This trend is particularly severe in low-income, “high-needs” schools and districts. As such, districts and schools are implementing policies that are intended to reform compensation in order to increase teacher recruitment and retention. Although much of the recent discussion surrounding teacher compensation has centered around districts’ use of merit pay, many districts are already using differentiated compensation incentives to target specific kinds of teachers in an attempt to attract and retain not only the highest quality teachers, but also the teachers districts most need to teach in their specific local contexts. Using a self-collected dataset of California school districts from the 2005–2006 and 2008–2009 school years, the frequency with which districts in California use targeted economic incentives and the kinds of districts that are most likely to implement such policies are examined. While many school districts in California have economic incentive policies targeted at teachers with specific skills or credentials, most incentive policies are focused on teachers with rough proxies for “quality.” Those that do target teachers in high-need subjects, for the most part, focus on rewarding those certified to teach special education students and English language learners (ELLs)—few are aimed at teachers of other hard-to-staff subjects such as math or science. In addition, there is limited evidence that particularly “hard-to-staff” districts—such as those with high proportions of minority and poor students and those with low academic achievement—are more likely to

implement economic incentives that target teachers with specific subject credentials and are less likely to focus their efforts on attracting and retaining “high-quality” teachers.

Strunk, K., & Zeehandelaar, D. B. (2013). Added bonus? The relationship between California school districts’ specialized teacher staffing needs and the use of economic incentive policies. *Educational Policy*, 29(2), 283–315.

Abstract: In this paper, we explore the use and efficacy of fiscal incentive policies in California school districts. We ask whether districts with high need for teachers with English as a second language (ESL) or special education credentials are more likely to implement incentives targeting these teachers. We find mixed evidence that districts align their incentives with their staffing needs. We conclude by discussing possible rationales for our results.

Wheeler, J., & Glennie, E. (2007). *Can pay incentives improve the recruitment of teachers in America’s hard-to-staff schools?* A research summary. Durham, NC: Center for Child and Family Policy, Duke University. Retrieved on May 26, 2015, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED499014.pdf>

Abstract: The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has increased concern about the staffing difficulties faced by schools that serve a high percentage of low-achieving students. NCLB requires each student be taught in all core academic subjects by a highly qualified teacher by the 2005–06 school year. The law defines highly qualified teachers as those who have received a bachelor’s degree, attained full state certification or licensure, and proved that they know the subject they teach. By June 2006, not one state had achieved this goal. In July, each state was required to submit a plan to ensure all classrooms have a highly qualified teacher and that these teachers are evenly divided between poor and rich schools. Given that some schools have difficulty attracting and retaining qualified teachers, state legislatures and local school districts have shown increased interest in offering non-performance-based financial incentives to attract and retain teachers in high-need schools and subject areas. These incentive programs take a variety of forms, the most direct and most controversial of which are salary bonuses. Some school systems also use performance-based bonuses to reward teachers for student performance. This policy brief describes the scope and the effects of targeted salary incentives that are not based on student performance. Targeted financial incentives clearly influence teacher career choices although their impact varies with teacher gender, race, and age.

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Search

“Incentives OR Bonus” AND “teachers” AND (“ELL students” OR “English learners” OR “ELLs”) AND (“retaining” OR “recruiting”)

Search of Databases

EBSCO Host, ERIC, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, Google, and Google Scholar

Criteria for Inclusion

When REL West staff review resources, they consider—among other things—four factors:

- **Date of the Publication:** The most current information is included, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- **Source and Funder of the Report/Study/Brief/Article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols.
- **Methodology:** Sources include randomized controlled trial studies, surveys, self-assessments,

literature reviews, and policy briefs. Priority for inclusion generally is given to randomized controlled trial study findings, but the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: numbers of participants (Just a few? Thousands?); selection (Did the participants volunteer for the study or were they chosen?); representation (Were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?).

- **Existing Knowledge Base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is limited or nonexistent. In these cases, we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, and other sources.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educators and policymakers in the Western region (Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd. This memorandum was prepared by REL West under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-12-C-0002, administered by WestEd. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.