

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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MEMORANDUM

To: District School Superintendents

From: Jim Horne

Date: June 18, 2003

Subject: **BONUS ELIGIBILITY FOR NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS WHO BECOME READING COACHES**

Recently, a question has arisen regarding National Board Certified Teachers who leave the classroom but remain employed by the school district, especially those teachers who choose to become reading coaches.

I am proud to have been a part of the effort in the Legislature that created the Excellent Teacher Act. I was the principal author of the legislation in 1997 while serving in the Senate; therefore I am able to speak to its original intent. The Excellent Teacher Act, which has been recently renamed in honor of the late Dale Hickam, was designed to accomplish two primary objectives. First and foremost, this act was created to keep accomplished teachers in the classroom and reward them financially for their performance. Secondly, the act was designed to provide incentives for experienced and effective teachers to mentor newly-inducted teachers and other teachers who may need that extra helping hand.

While there may be valid and compelling reasons for a National Board Certified teacher to choose to become a reading coach, it clearly contradicts the intent of the original legislation. I recognize the potential value and contributions that National Board Certified teachers can make in a different role, but it could potentially create a Pandora's box that might jeopardize the entire program. Reading coaches are a very important ingredient in Governor Bush's Just Read, Florida! Initiative, and we are committed to placing the very best talent in our schools to ensure that the Governor's goals are reached. Nevertheless, our highest priority is to ensure that every Florida classroom has a highly qualified teacher. One of my greatest challenges is to create an environment in which our best teachers make conscious decisions to remain in the classroom where they can have the greatest impact on our students.

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I hope this memorandum clarifies any potential confusion. Please find attached a copy of the statute for your reference.

If you have questions or need additional information regarding the Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program, please contact Beatrice Monroe at (850) 245-0554 or via email at Beatrice.monroe@fldoe.org. If you have questions regarding Reading First reading coaches, please contact Christy Hovanetz at (850) 245-0503 or via email at Christy.hovanetz@fldoe.org.

JH:mjbo

Attachment

cc: Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program Contacts
Reading First Contacts
Reading Supervisors
Language Arts Supervisors

1012.72 Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program.--

(1) The Legislature recognizes that teachers play a critical role in preparing students to achieve the high levels of academic performance expected by the Sunshine State Standards. The Legislature further recognizes the importance of identifying and rewarding teaching excellence and of encouraging good teachers to become excellent teachers. The Legislature finds that the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has established high and rigorous standards for accomplished teaching and has developed a national voluntary system for assessing and certifying teachers who demonstrate teaching excellence by meeting those standards. It is therefore the Legislature's intent to provide incentives for teachers to seek NBPTS certification and to reward teachers who demonstrate teaching excellence by attaining NBPTS certification and sharing their expertise with other teachers.

(2) The Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program is created to provide categorical funding for monetary incentives and bonuses for teaching excellence. The Department of Education shall distribute to each school district or to the NBPTS an amount as prescribed annually by the Legislature for the Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program. For purposes of this section, the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind shall be considered a school district. Unless otherwise provided in the General Appropriations Act, each distribution shall be the sum of the amounts earned for the following incentives and bonuses:

(a) A fee subsidy to be paid by the Department of Education to the NBPTS on behalf of each individual who is an employee of a district school board or a public school within the school district, who is certified by the district to have demonstrated satisfactory teaching performance pursuant to s. 1012.34 and who satisfies the prerequisites for participating in the NBPTS certification program, and who agrees, in writing, to pay 10 percent of the NBPTS participation fee and to participate in the NBPTS certification program during the school year for which the fee subsidy is provided. The fee subsidy for each eligible participant shall be an amount equal to 90 percent of the fee charged for participating in the NBPTS certification program. The fee subsidy is a one-time award and may not be duplicated for any individual.

(b) A portfolio-preparation incentive of \$150 paid by the Department of Education to each teacher employed by a district school board or a public school within a school district who is participating in the NBPTS certification program. The portfolio-preparation incentive is a one-time award paid during the school year for which the NBPTS fee subsidy is provided.

(c) An annual bonus equal to 10 percent of the prior fiscal year's statewide average salary for classroom teachers to be distributed to the school district to be paid to each individual who holds NBPTS certification and is employed by the district school board or by a public school within the school district. The district school board shall distribute the annual bonus to each individual who meets the requirements of this paragraph and who is certified annually by the district to have demonstrated satisfactory teaching performance pursuant to s. 1012.34. The annual bonus may be paid as a single payment or divided into not more than three payments.

(d) An annual bonus equal to 10 percent of the prior fiscal year's statewide average salary for classroom teachers to be distributed to the school district to be paid to each individual who meets the requirements of paragraph (c) and agrees, in writing, to provide the equivalent of 12 workdays of mentoring and related services to public school teachers within the state who do not hold NBPTS certification. The district school board shall distribute the annual bonus in a single payment following the completion of all required mentoring and related services for the year. It is not the intent of the Legislature to remove excellent teachers from their assigned classrooms; therefore, credit may not be granted by a school district or public school for mentoring or related services provided during student contact time during the 196 days of required service for the school year.

A teacher for whom the state pays the certification fee and who does not complete the certification program or does not teach in a public school of this state for at least 1 year after completing the certification program must repay the amount of the certification fee to the state. However, a teacher who completes the certification program but fails to be awarded NBPTS certification is not required to repay the amount of the certification fee if the teacher meets the 1-year teaching requirement. Repayment is not required of a teacher who does not complete the certification program or fails to fulfill the teaching requirement because of the teacher's death or disability or because of other extenuating circumstances as determined by the State Board of Education.

(3)(a) In addition to any other remedy available under the law, any person who is a recipient of a certification fee subsidy paid to the NBPTS and who is an employee of the state or any of its political subdivisions is considered to have consented, as a condition of employment, to the voluntary or involuntary withholding of wages to repay to the state the amount of such a certification fee subsidy awarded under this section. Any such employee who defaults on the repayment of such a certification fee subsidy must, within 60 days after service of a notice of default by the Department of Education to the employee, establish a repayment schedule which must be agreed to by the department and the employee, for repaying the defaulted sum through payroll deductions. The

department may not require the employee to pay more than 10 percent of the employee's pay per pay period under such a repayment schedule or plan. If the employee fails to establish a repayment schedule within the specified period of time or fails to meet the terms and conditions of the agreed upon or approved repayment schedule as authorized by this subsection, the employee has breached an essential condition of employment and is considered to have consented to the involuntary withholding of wages or salary for the repayment of the certification fee subsidy.

(b) A person who is employed by the state, or any of its political subdivisions, may not be dismissed for having defaulted on the repayment of the certification fee subsidy to the state.

(4) The State Board of Education may adopt rules pursuant to ss. 120.536 and 120.54 as necessary to administer the provisions for payment of the fee subsidies, incentives, and bonuses and for the repayment of defaulted certification fee subsidies under this section.

(5) The Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program Trust Fund shall be administered by the Department of Education pursuant to s. 1010.72.

History.--s. 750, ch. 2002-387; s. 1, ch. 2002-403.