

**Florida Department of Education
Better Educated Students and Teachers (BEST)
Teaching Salary Career Ladder Pilot Program
Frequently Asked Questions and Answers
September 16, 2003**

Questions Related to Submitting the District Proposal/Application

1. What is the intent of the program?

The BEST program is designed to reward excellence in teaching, foster collaboration, attract and retain high quality individuals into the teaching profession, and improve student performance. The intent of the salary career ladder pilot initiative is to ensure a quality teacher in every classroom by providing teachers with multiple career paths and highly differentiated responsibilities. Broad salary ranges should be established to provide flexibility and reward performance.

2. What is the process for selecting districts to participate in the BEST Teaching Salary Career Ladder Pilot Program?

- A completed grant application with all required signatures must be received by 5:00 p.m. EDT on October 1, 2003.
- The Department plans to convene an inter-divisional departmental team. The team will review the proposals/applications based on “Attachment F-Scoring Rubric,” provided in the Department of Education’s Request for Proposal/Application.
- Funding shall be determined by the Commissioner of Education and shall only be awarded to those selected school districts that fully and most feasibly implement the spirit and intent of the Florida BEST Teaching Program.

3. Can a district phase in career ladder positions and salaries in Phase I and award performance bonuses in Phase II?

No. According to Specific Appropriations 64A of the General Appropriations Act, “The school board shall agree to reach consensus with the Commissioner of Education over a BEST developmental model by December 31, 2003, and begin trial implementation in all of the district’s schools beginning January 2004.”

According to Specific Appropriations 64A of the General Appropriations Act, “to be eligible to participate in the BEST practices developmental models for the Florida BEST Teaching Program, a school board must adopt, in an open meeting, new permanently established positions of increasing responsibility for teachers at each of the four salary career ladder positions as defined in Section 1012.231(1), F.S.” It is the intent that all four career ladder positions would be established and performance bonuses awarded as appropriate during the 2003-2004 school year.

4. What does discretionary competitive mean?

Discretionary competitive is a type of grant whereby the Department chooses to fund projects based on applications best satisfying the funding criteria established by the Department.

5. Does the application need to address the parents and community representatives who participated in the development of the salary schedule?

Yes.

6. What are the principal leadership competencies, and what does the district have to provide in Section E: Principal Leadership Designation in Attachment D - Application?

See Page 9 of the BEST Florida Pilot Career Ladder Program Guidelines. For the purposes of this application, the district school board must adopt in an open meeting a plan for principal leadership designations. This is based on a rule to be adopted by the State Board of Education in the Fall 2003. School principals must earn said designations based on teacher retention, overall student performance, and school grade. Since the State Board of Education Rule will not be approved prior to October 1, 2003, the proposal must specify that, if funded, the district will comply with the State Board of Education Rule during the grant period.

7. On page 1 of Attachment D districts are required to report the number of charter schools. Which charter schools are to be reported?

Districts are only required to address the number of participating charter schools. If there are charter schools in the district participating in BEST, the number should be reported.

8. Is the Department expecting data on student achievement in the July 31 report?

Yes. Increasing student achievement is the number one goal of the Department.

9. What information will be acceptable if districts cannot complete a new salary schedule by October 1, 2003?

The district should provide the best projection of what the new salary schedule will be.

10. On page 2 of Attachment D in the application, the district is requested to limit its response to questions in Sections A-G to 20 pages or less. May the district's response be double or single spaced?

The response may be single or double spaced. Attachments and RFP questions do not count toward the page limit.

11. Has the Department of Education provided a glossary of terms for BEST?

Yes. Please see ATTACHMENT: BETTER EDUCATED STUDENTS AND TEACHERS (BEST), TEACHING SALARY CAREER LADDER PROGRAM, GLOSSARY OF TERMS.

12. What other technical assistance is available to districts during the grant writing process?

Questions related to processing the proposals may be directed to Martha Asbury at Martha.Asbury@fldoe.org or 850-245-0496.

Career Ladder

- 1. Does a district have to implement the career ladder program in every school in the district? If not, how many schools must be required for implementation?**

It is the intent of the Legislature that every school within the pilot districts implements the Teaching Salary Career Ladder.

- 2. Within the Career Ladder, is there a range for teacher ratios?**

There is no formula prescribed in law.

- 3. Can Mentor Teachers begin in the first year?**

Yes. As indicated on page 5 of the BEST Florida Pilot Career Ladder Program Guidelines, the following comment is found under Section (d) Mentor Teacher, number 2: “A Mentor Teacher may be considered as having met the requirement of service as a ‘Lead Teacher’ if the professional criteria were met even if the district did not have the exact designation of ‘Lead Teacher’ at the time.”

- 4. What are the eligibility requirements for Associate Teachers (i.e., any degree required/temporary certification)?**

A teacher is eligible to be designated Associate Teacher if he/she has a temporary certificate, or if he/she has a Professional certificate and was evaluated as performing “unsatisfactorily” in the last year. A district may, however, expand this eligibility. See Page 4 of the BEST Pilot Career Ladder Program Guidelines.

- 5. Can non-classroom teachers and teacher assistants participate in the pilot program?**

Other members of the school-based instructional staff such as non-classroom teachers and teacher assistants may be included in a Career Ladder Program through the use of district resources but may not be funded through the BEST Pilot Career Ladder Program grant.

- 6. Is it anticipated or expected that every school in the district will have at least one Lead Teacher and at least one Mentor Teacher? Must both be in place at the beginning?**

Yes. All four levels must be assigned at the beginning of the period. The ratio will be determined by the number of people to be served; therefore, it may be appropriate that a Lead Teacher and/or a Mentor Teacher serve more than one school where the faculty is so small that the school does not warrant full-time employees in these positions.

- 7. What is the definition of Professional Teacher (eligibility)? Can a newly certified teacher qualify?**

Section 1012.231, F.S., defines the Professional Teacher category as “Classroom teachers, in the school district who have received a professional certificate.” Any additional qualifying requirements may be specified by the district.

8. May National Board Certified Teachers teach students less than 100% of the time, become a Lead Teacher or Mentor Teacher, and still receive the Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program bonuses?

In establishing this pilot, it would appear that the Florida Legislature is seeking innovation and flexibility for Florida’s classroom teachers. Further, the Legislature is seeking to build capacity by providing increased incentives and related compensation enhancements for the sharing of teaching expertise. Therefore, National Board Certified Teachers could conceivably teach students less than 100% of the time and still receive Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program bonuses.

Mentor Teachers must participate on a regular basis in the direct instruction of low-performing students.

9. Must the evaluation of teachers in each of the career ladder levels involve school-level administrators?

Yes. Evaluations of teachers’ performance are the responsibility of school-level administrators.

10. How is “low performing” defined in relationship to teacher performance?

The district is responsible for defining “low performing” in the grant application.

11. Are “teachers in need of improvement” defined by the Department?

They are identified at the district level through implementation of state law.

12. Does a teacher being classified as out-of-field have any bearing on placement on the career ladder?

While it is preferable that teachers have “in-field” assignments, it is not an absolute requirement.

Funding

1. What will be the formula for distribution of the \$25 million dollars? Will it be prorated by student or by school?

Funds will be distributed to each qualifying district based on an unduplicated student FTE count. Each participating pilot district will receive the same amount per FTE. This amount is estimated to be between \$50.00 and \$150.00 per student.

It is not intended that the funds allocated under this grant be sufficient to fully implement the Pilot Career Ladder Program. Districts will be expected to use additional funds such as the 5 % performance-based pay allocation, federal funds, etc. See the Budget Chart at the end of Attachment D of the application form.

2. When restructuring the salary schedule, is there flexibility with paying bonuses the following year?

The career ladder must be established, the salary schedule structured, and the bonuses allotted based on performance during the pilot grant period. The pilot grant period may be extended to accommodate the payment of bonuses earned prior to June 30, 2003. This will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with participating districts.

3. Will bonuses count toward retirement?

There are specialized provisions through the Division of Retirement that address bonus issues. For guidance in this area, districts should review Section 121.021, F.S., and consult with the Division of Retirement and other relevant state agencies to provide more specific information. National Board Certification bonuses do count toward retirement.

4. Will an Innovator School District be allowed a no-cost time extension?

The intent of the allocation is that funds be spent during the 2003-2004 fiscal year for services rendered prior to July 1, 2004. No-cost time extensions may only be considered for extenuating circumstances, and then only as appropriate for performance which occurred prior to June 30, 2004. Districts should take this into account in developing their plans. Funds must be distributed to districts prior to March 1, 2004. Extensions will be negotiated with individual districts and approved only as necessary to facilitate effective program implementation.

5. Can teachers get paid for expediting their professional requirements? Can the money be used to pay people to get extra degrees?

No. Districts may not use these grant funds to pay teachers specifically for obtaining extra degrees. Funding, however, for additional employment hours or days for professional development that are directly related to improving skills in delivering instruction is permissible.

6. Can charter schools apply for grant funding?

Charter schools are public schools within a designated district. If the school district applies for the grant, the charter schools within that district may (upon mutual consent) be considered as part of the grant application. Charter schools may not apply for grants separately from the district.

7. Will indirect costs be allowed?

No. Indirect costs are never allowed for projects funded from state funds.

Questions Related to the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP)

Please be reminded that TAP is only one model that districts may select to include in their applications for the BEST Teaching Salary Career Ladder Pilot Program. The TAP model is not required. For those districts interested in the TAP model, the following questions and answers are provided.

1. Which schools in Florida are fully implementing TAP?

The following schools are fully implementing TAP in Florida:

Gardendale Elementary Magnet School, Brevard County
Hoover Middle School, Broward County
Central Charter School, Broward County
Bonita Springs Charter School, Lee County
Downtown Miami Charter School, Dade County
North County Charter School, Dade County
Ryder Elementary Charter School, Dade County

2. Does the TAP program have an impact on the teacher calendar?

Yes. In order to accomplish the added roles and responsibilities, an additional 10-20 days beyond the traditional school calendar is recommended for Lead and Mentor Teachers.

3. Can staff be shared within several schools?

It is possible to implement the TAP program by sharing personnel across the district. The important consideration is that there are adequate numbers of Mentor and Lead Teachers available to effectively fulfill these roles whatever their particular school assignments may be.

4. What is the average number of students in TAP schools in Florida?

The student populations in the TAP schools in Florida range between 600 in the smallest school and 1,200 in the largest school. Nationally, student populations in TAP schools range between 300 and 1300.

5. In what levels is TAP implemented?

TAP has been implemented largely at the elementary and middle school levels. However, there are several high schools in which TAP is being implemented.

6. How many students are in the largest high school?

The student population of the largest high school implementing TAP is under 1000 students.

7. What does it cost to implement TAP?

The cost of implementing the full TAP model is generally estimated to be between \$300 - \$400 per student, although in Florida the average is approximately \$225 per student.

8. Are all of the teachers in the classroom there at least 50% of the time?

In TAP schools, Mentor Teachers may spend up to 51% of their time in the classroom. The remainder of their time is spent overseeing cluster groups, team-teaching, providing demonstration lessons, facilitating curriculum and assessment planning, sharing instructional leadership, and participating in peer reviews. Lead Teachers have full-time teaching responsibilities, but are released for certain activities, such as learning communities/cluster groups.

9. Does the TAP program apply to Guidance Counselors, Media Specialists, etc?

TAP applies to classroom teachers participating in the regular instruction of students. In some, but not all TAP schools across the nation, other specialists and teachers responsible for classroom instruction for part of the day participate in TAP.

10. How many TAP schools in Florida are charter schools?

Five of seven Florida Mentor Teacher School Pilot Program (FMTSPP) schools are charter schools. There are 54 TAP schools nationally. The only charter schools are located in Florida.

11. Who pays the Milken Foundation for its work/involvement? Are there any state funds that are paid directly to the Foundation for TAP implementation?

The Milken Family Foundation is a non-profit organization. The Foundation provides staff, materials, training, and ongoing services to the state and participating districts/schools. The Foundation receives no payment of any kind.

12. Since districts are under such tight timelines and since it must be district-wide, can there be flexibility in getting individual school support for TAP?

Each school does not have to vote on TAP prior to the October 1st deadline. The district must come up with a plan whereby schools will develop a method for reaching consensus to indicate a majority of teachers are willing to try TAP in their schools. This may or may not be done by a vote. It is up to the district/schools.

13. How can the TAP Program be sustained over time?

Districts must consider using multiple fund sources (e.g., local, state, and federal) to implement and sustain the program over time.

14. Within the TAP Career Ladder, is there a range for teacher ratios?

The Teacher Advancement Program recommends: 1 Mentor to 15 Associate/Professional Teachers and 1 Lead to 7 Associate/Professional Teachers.

ATTACHMENT

BETTER EDUCATED STUDENTS AND TEACHERS (BEST) TEACHING SALARY CAREER LADDER PROGRAM GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1. MULTIPLE CAREER PATHS

FOUR LEVELS: ASSOCIATE, PROFESSIONAL, LEAD, MENTOR

Multiple Career Paths provide opportunities to move along a four-level career continuum for those teachers who perform at high levels and have the desire and qualifications to do so. School districts reconfigure their schools by creating mentor and lead teacher categories, where selection is based on a rigorous performance-based selection process. As a result, these expert teachers have influence over a much larger contingent of students, because it is their responsibility to improve all the teachers under their care. Teachers take on increased responsibilities with commensurate compensation as they progress in the career ladder.

2. MARKET-DRIVEN COMPENSATION

SALARY/BONUS STRUCTURE

Market-Driven Compensation provides school districts with the flexibility to compensate teachers differently based on their position (e.g. associate, professional, lead, mentor) and their performance. The market-driven model provides a platform for restructuring the existing salary schedule, including an opportunity to base salary increases on annual performance. Each school district may establish a performance award pool to pay bonuses based on an individual teacher's yearly performance.

3. PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY

PROMOTION/DEMOTION/BONUS CRITERIA

Performance-Based Accountability is a standards-based evaluation system that rewards teachers for their teaching skills, additional responsibilities, and their students' learning.

4. ONGOING, APPLIED PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

LEARNING COMMUNITIES/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The BEST Career Ladder Program establishes a structure where mentor and lead teachers design and provide ongoing professional development opportunities to meet their colleagues' content and grade-level instructional needs.

5. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP DESIGNATIONS

High-performing principals are recognized and rewarded for their demonstration of outstanding leadership based on teacher retention, overall student performance, and school grade. They possess personal vision for their schools; have instructional leadership capabilities; are able to manage the learning environment; have developed community and stakeholder partnerships; possess excellent decision-making abilities; promote diversity and technology; emphasize learning, accountability, and assessment; develop their human resources; and are ethical leaders.

6. HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION OF LOW-PERFORMING STUDENTS

MENTOR TEACHERS TEACHING LOW-PERFORMING STUDENTS

The BEST mentor teachers participate in the direct instruction of low-performing students on a regular basis so that No Child Is Left Behind.

7. **EXPANDING THE SUPPLY OF HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS**
ADVERTISING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, RETAINING EXCELLENT TEACHERS

School districts expand their teacher recruitment and outreach efforts by advertising for positions outside their school, district, and even their state; expediting the certification process for associate teachers to obtain a professional certificate; providing high quality professional development; and offering career advancement opportunities within the teaching profession.