



**The Best & Brightest Teacher and Principal Program
Frequently Asked Questions
July 29, 2019**

In order to assist districts and charter schools in implementing the 2019 changes to the Best and Brightest Programs the attached document includes frequently asked questions and answers. The 2019 legislative changes amended section (s.) 1012.731, Florida Statutes (F.S.), The Florida Best and Brightest Teacher Program, s. 1012.732, F.S., The Florida Best and Brightest Principal Program, and s. 1011.62, F.S., Funds for Operation of Schools. The answers in the document are derived from these statutes, as well as the General Appropriations Act, Chapter 2019-115, Laws of Florida, §2, line 93, pages 21-22. Except for one area, the information provided in this document should be understood as guidance to districts and charters. The exception to this is the criteria for subject matter content areas for recruitment awards for teachers under s. 1012.731(3)(a), F.S. The agency is pursuing rulemaking for this area, and adopted an emergency rule on Monday, July 29, 2019. Thus, the information provided below on “content experts” must be followed when providing recruitment awards. See page 3 for information on the emergency rule to define “content experts.”

The department issued an FAQ document on the retention award and the principal award on July 17, 2019. That can be found at <https://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-8600/dps-2019-109a.pdf>. It describes three methodologies to identify schools with an average of three percentage point increase for retention and the principal awards. The department recommends giving these awards to teachers and principals who meet any of these methodologies in order to benefit the greatest number of educators.

General Questions

What is the purpose of the Best and Brightest Teacher Program?

The stated intent of the Best and Brightest Teacher Program is “to recruit, retain, and recognize teachers who meet the needs of this state and have achieved success in the classroom.”

What is the purpose of the Best and Brightest Principal Program?

The stated intent of the Best and Brightest Principal Program is “to designate school principals whose schools make noticeable academic improvement as Florida’s best and brightest principals.”

How are these programs funded?

The Florida Best and Brightest Teacher and Principal Allocation is funded through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). Subject to annual appropriation, each school district receives an allocation based on the district’s proportionate share of FEFP base funding. The Legislature may specify a minimum allocation for districts in the General Appropriations Act. For the 2019-2020 school year, all districts will be provided a \$100,000 minimum allocation.

Can awards be prorated?

Yes; s. 1011.62(18), F.S., provides that if a district’s calculated awards exceed the allocation, the school district may prorate awards.

How should awards be prorated if district FEP funds are insufficient to pay for the recruitment, retention and principal awards at the specified amounts?

While the law provides that all recruitment, retention and principal awards must be paid before recognition awards can be made by a district, it does not specify the manner to prorate awards when funds are insufficient to cover the recruitment, retention and principal awards. Therefore, this is a matter committed to the district's discretion, subject to the requirements of other laws, such as collective bargaining. However, since the appropriation provides that recruitment awards are "up to \$4,000" and the retention and principal awards are for set amounts, it appears that the recruitment award should be reduced before the retention and principal awards are prorated.

Are SAT or ACT scores required for award eligibility?

No.

Are Prekindergarten teachers eligible for a Best and Brightest teacher award?

No. All recipients must be K-12 staff members. This is because awards are limited instructional personnel or classroom teachers as defined in s. 1012.01(2), F.S., and these definitions are limited to K-12 personnel.

Are instructional personnel that are not designated as a classroom teacher eligible for a Best and Brightest award?

You must be a K-12 classroom teacher to be eligible for a recruitment or retention award. K-12 instructional personnel who are not classroom teachers are statutorily eligible for a recognition award. However, since a district school board or charter school governing board must establish performance criteria and policies for the award, which K-12 instructional personnel will receive awards will depend upon district or charter criteria.

Are district decisions subject to collective bargaining?

Without knowing what has already been bargained or waived in individual collective bargaining agreements, the best advice we can provide is to consult counsel to resolve this question.

Can a district establish a cut-off date for the recruitment, retention and principal awards? This will allow for districts and charter school governing boards to set timelines around the recognition awards.

Once funds are made available to districts, it is up to the school districts to manage the procedures for providing awards consistent with the statutes addressing the program.

When will funds be distributed to districts?

The funds will be distributed to school districts as soon as possible. We should have more definite information at the beginning of August.

What does a district need to submit to the department to receive the funds?

A district does not need to submit documentation to receive the funds.

Do unused funds roll forward from year to year?

Unused funds are carried forward to the next fiscal year. It is expected that most if not all of a district's allocation will be awarded during the year of the appropriation.



Recruitment Award Questions

What is a recruitment award?

To be eligible for a one-time recruitment award, a newly hired classroom teacher must be a “content expert,” based on criteria established by the department, in mathematics, science, computer science, reading or civics.

Are recruitment awards limited to classroom teachers?

Yes; recruitment awards are limited to classroom teachers as defined in s. 1012.01(2)(a), F.S.

How much will an eligible recruitment award recipient receive?

This amount is set annually by the Legislature. This year, the one-time recruitment award is up to \$4,000. However, the award may be prorated by a district if there are insufficient funds to pay eligible teachers.

How is “content expert” defined?

The State Board of Education adopted an emergency rule on July 29, 2019, to establish a definition in order for districts to distribute funds allocated for 2019-20. Rule 6AER19-01 will be in effect for 90 days, and during that time the standard rule development process will ensue to establish a definition for future years.

Rule 6AER19-01, Content Expert for Best and Brightest Recruitment Award, can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/policy/state-board-of-edu/meetings/2019/2019-07-29/index.stml>. It reads:

In order to allow school districts to distribute recruitment awards in the 2019-20 school year, a content expert in mathematics, science, computer science, reading, and civics means the following:

(1) For all areas, a person who has sufficient subject matter expertise as set forth in Rule 6A-1.0503(2)(a), Definition of Qualified Instructional Personnel, F.A.C.;

(2) For the areas of mathematics, science, or computer science, a person who has either:

(a) Earned at least a master’s degree in the areas of mathematics, science, or computer science from an institution accredited by the United States Department of Education; or

(b) Earned at least a bachelor’s degree in the areas of mathematics, science or computer science from an institution accredited by the United States Department of Education and who has at least five (5) years’ teaching experience in the associated subject area or at least five (5) years’ work experience in the associated subject area.

(3) For the area of civics, a person who has either:

(a) Earned at least a master’s degree in political science, American history, social studies, or social science from an institution accredited by the United States Department of Education; or

(b) Earned at least a bachelor’s degree in political science, American history, social studies, or social science from an institution accredited by the United States Department of Education and who has at least five (5) years’ teaching experience in the associated subject area or at least five (5) years’ work experience in the associated subject area.

(4) For the area of reading, a person who has either:

(a) Earned at least a master’s degree in English, English literature, reading, or literacy instruction from an institution accredited by the United States Department of Education; or



(b) Earned at least a bachelor's degree in English, English literature, reading, or literacy instruction from an institution accredited by the United States Department of Education and who has at least five (5) years' teaching experience in English language arts or reading.

Does the eligible teacher need to teach mathematics, science, computer science, reading or civics to receive the recruitment award?

The statute is silent on this question and only requires that the teacher be a “newly hired classroom teacher” and a “content expert” in these areas.

What is the definition of a “newly hired classroom teacher?”

The statute does not provide a definition of “newly hired classroom teacher.” The definition could encompass persons who are new to teaching, new to the state of Florida, new to the district or other definitions. It is suggested that districts apply the funds so that the purpose of this portion of the statute, namely to recruit content experts as classroom teachers, is met and that the district maintain documentation to show that the recipient satisfies the district’s criteria for “newly hired.” This is meant to be implemented with as much flexibility as possible.

If a classroom teacher is new to the state, is there a state database to verify that this teacher did not teach in the State of Florida in the preceding year?

There is not a state database that can be used for this purpose.

Recognition Award Questions

What is a Recognition Award?

To be eligible for a recognition award, instructional personnel must be rated as highly effective or effective, and be selected by his or her school principal, based on performance criteria and policies adopted by the district school board or charter school governing board.

Are recognition awards limited to classroom teachers?

No; unlike recruitment and retention awards, which are limited to classroom teachers, this award is statutorily available to instructional personnel as defined in s. 1012.01(2), F.S. However, since a district school board or charter school governing board must establish performance criteria and policies for the award, which K-12 instructional personnel will receive awards will depend upon district or charter criteria.

How much will an eligible recognition award recipient receive?

There is no set amount for this award and the amount will be determined by the district. In establishing this amount, be aware that recognition awards must be provided from funds remaining after the payment of all teacher recruitment and retention awards and all principal awards.

Does a charter school follow the district’s criteria and policy for identifying instructional staff to receive the recognition award, or does the charter establish its own criteria and policy?

A charter school is authorized to adopt its own performance criteria and policies for recognition awards. However, awards may only be made to instructional personnel rated as highly effective or effective.



What is the formula for allocating remaining funds for the recognition award to schools after all other funds are disbursed?

The formula will be determined by the district or charter school governing board.