



ANNOUNCEMENT - DECEMBER 8, 2006

Great News

On October 29, 2006 we received the great news that Eagle County Schools had been selected by the U.S. Department of Education to receive a 6.8 million dollar Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant. This grant was designed to support programs that develop and implement performance-based teacher compensation systems, based primarily on increases in student achievement. We were one of only 16 grants awarded nation-wide.

Beyond TAP

Eagle County Schools is proud of our accomplishments in implementing the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), of which one component is a district-wide performance-based compensation program. We have always believed that what began as a new "program" would evolve into simply the way we do business in Eagle County Schools. This funding will allow us to further develop truly exemplary methods for rewarding excellence in teaching that will take us far beyond TAP and serve as a model for school districts across the nation.

About Federal Grants

Federal grants, such as the Teacher Incentive Fund, are designed with very specific objectives in mind. The application submitted must show how your school district will meet those objectives. In other words, we didn't receive \$6.8 million to spend in whatever way we wish. Along with the award dollars comes the responsibility to implement plans with the grant objectives and goals in mind and to report progress as a result of the programs made possible through the grant. In many ways, school districts receiving federal grants become part of a federal research project.

About the TIF Grant

TIF was developed to support programs that develop and implement performance-based teacher compensation systems, based primarily on increases in student achievement. The stated objectives of the Federal TIF grant are:

1. Reform teacher and principal compensation systems so that teachers and principals are rewarded for increases in student achievement.
2. Increase the number of effective teachers teaching poor, minority, and disadvantaged students in hard-to-staff subjects such as mathematics and science.
3. Increase teacher and principal effectiveness and thereby improve student achievement.
4. Create sustainable performance-based compensation systems.
5. Examine multiple approaches to providing teacher incentives.

Our Grant

As you can see by looking at the grant objectives listed above, Eagle County Schools is already in the process of implementing programs to meet most of the objectives. We asked for funding to expand our efforts to provide even greater rewards for excellence in teaching. More specifically, we wrote our grant for funding to be used to:

- Increase performance incentives for teachers in our highest-poverty schools;
- Increase performance awards for teachers demonstrating the greatest sustained student achievement gains;
- Expand the number of teachers able to be rewarded for individual classroom achievement;
- Differentiate contracts for core subject teachers to increase training and instructional planning time;
- Increase training and support for teachers;
- Increase training and support for Master and Mentor Teachers and Principals to improve overall quality of leadership;
- Increase Master and Mentor Teacher stipends; and
- Improve the effectiveness of student assessments and data collection and analysis at the district, building and classroom levels.

*\$6.8 million,
wow!*

*This funding will
take us beyond
TAP.*

*It's not a
blank check.*

*It's all about
increasing student
achievement and
rewarding excellence
in teaching.*

*Teachers in every
one of our schools
will be eligible
for new financial
incentives.*

*Additional training
and support will be
offered, too.*

*It's a great
package!*



Details, Details, Details

The implementation of the new opportunities made possible by the TIF grant will require a great deal of planning and careful thought. District Leadership is working closely with Principals from each building to develop the best possible plan for rolling out these new opportunities. In the first year of the grant, we will make announcements in four phases beginning the week of December 11th. Below is an overview of the kind of information you can expect in each Phase.

Phase I - December 11 - 15

This first announcement will be made as part of building-level staff meetings. Check with your Principal to see when the meeting in your building will be held. Topics covered in this announcement will include:

- Hiring of Data & Assessment Analyst
- Overview of data collection and analysis system
- Master & Mentor Teacher stipends
- K-2 & 9-12 classroom-level assessments
- Instructional best practices training

Phase II - January 18

- New training opportunities
- Overview of new bonus opportunities

Phase III - February 22

- Differentiated contracts

Phase IV - May 17

- More bonus opportunities

Q&A

If I have a question about the grant, who should I talk to?

Building Principals are very involved in the development and implementation of the new opportunities resulting from grant funding so you should speak with them about your questions. Beginning December 11, we will post frequently asked questions about the grant along with answers to those questions at www.eagleschools.net under Staff Resources/TIF Grant Information. To log in to this area of our website, your user name will be "teacher" and the password is "ecs."

Please share your questions with others by emailing them to Traci Wodlinger, TAP Coordinator and Project Director for the grant. We will try to get them posted with answers within 48 hours for the benefit of all.

How long do we have to spend the \$6.8 million?

The TIF grant is a five-year grant. We have approximately \$1.5 million in the first year of the grant, which runs through September 30, 2007.

What happens at the end of five years? Do the programs funded by the grant go away?

Eagle County Schools is committed to sustaining its performance-based compensation efforts, along with new opportunities made possible by the grant award, long after the five-year grant period ends. In fact, careful financial analysis confirming our commitment to sustaining these efforts was a key component of our grant application. We will continue to make financial incentives available to teachers who increase student achievement through existing general operating dollars, new operating dollars made available each year through the Colorado School Finance Act, and through the use of General Fund reserve dollars for one-time annual bonuses.

How will the district decide how to spend the money?

In order to receive the grant, the school district submitted an application that outlined our funding requests in specific areas that included increased performance incentives for teachers, expanded training opportunities, and improved data and assessment systems and analysis. District Leadership along with Principals from each building are now working together to refine each of the new opportunities. Todd Huck, of the Eagle County Education Association, has also been a part of the meetings with Principals when grant opportunities have been discussed. As components of the grant are finalized, they will be announced to staff.

It seems like there is a lot of emphasis on high-poverty schools. Why is that?

We believe, and research supports, that students from poverty are generally behind their peers academically and therefore to be successful deserve the most effective teachers to close the achievement gap. Eagle County Schools has defined highest-poverty schools as those with a student population of greater than 50 percent qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

Will the grant benefit all teachers?

All teachers will benefit from some components of the grant, but not all teachers will benefit from all components. The Teacher Incentive Fund grant positions Eagle County Schools to further develop a truly exemplary method for "rewarding excellence in teaching." Teachers will benefit from the improved data and assessment systems and analysis, expanded training opportunities and the potential of increased performance incentives based on student achievement.

These things take time.

There's no such thing as a stupid question.

Thank you for your commitment to increasing student achievement.