

EDUCATION



THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Report to the Education Interim
Committee

Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program Report

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Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program Report

STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

U.C.A. Section 53F-2-513 requires the Utah State Board of Education, after the third year salary bonus payments are made, to evaluate the extent to which a salary bonus improves recruitment and retention of effective teachers in high poverty schools by at least surveying teachers who receive the salary bonus and examining turnover rates of teachers who receive the salary bonus compared to those who do not. Moving forward, the State Board is required submit this evaluation annually to the Education Interim Committee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2017 General Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 212, *Incentive for Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools*, which provides an annual salary bonus to eligible teachers in high poverty schools. This report is provided to the Education Interim Committee to evaluate the extent to which a salary bonus improves recruitment and retention of effective teachers in high poverty schools. During the 2022-2023 school year, 100 teachers received a salary bonus of \$7,000.

As noted in previous evaluations, this evaluation does **not** find strong evidence that the salary bonus improves teacher recruitment and retention. It finds very little evidence that the program is being used to recruit teachers at high poverty schools. In terms of retention, for many of the teachers surveyed, their main reason for teaching in their current school is that they find satisfaction in working with students from low- income families and diverse backgrounds and the impact they make in the lives of their students. In other words, the data suggest that teachers stay in high poverty schools due to a broader subset of factors. Many teachers described the salary bonus as a form of recognition and motivation. Sixteen teachers (16%) did indicate that the salary bonus encouraged them to reconsider leaving the profession or moving to a different school. However, nine teachers (9%) shared that they expect to either leave the teaching profession or move to a different school within the next 12 months despite receiving the salary bonus.

BACKGROUND

In the 2017 General Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 212, *Incentive for Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools*, which provides an annual salary

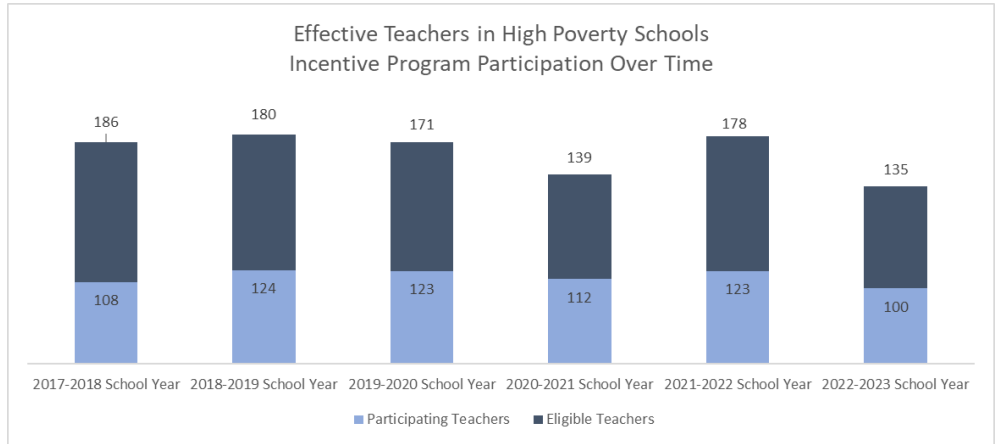
bonus to eligible teachers in high poverty schools. For the purposes of the program, a high poverty school means a public school in which more than 20% of the enrolled students are classified as children affected by intergenerational poverty (IGP) or 70% or more of the enrolled students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Alternatively, a school qualifies if it has previously met the 20% IGP criteria and for each school year since meeting that criteria at least 15% of the enrolled students at the school have been classified as children affected by intergenerational poverty or the school has previously met the 70% free or reduced lunch criteria described above and for each school year since meeting that criteria at least 60% of the enrolled students at the school have qualified for free or reduced lunch.

An eligible teacher must be employed as a teacher in a high poverty school at the time the teacher is considered for a salary bonus and, in the two years prior, achieves a median growth percentile of 70 or higher while teaching at an eligible public school in the state a course for which a standards assessment is administered. During the 2020 General Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 107, *Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program Amendments*, which increased the bonus amount from \$5000 to \$7000 and expanded the definition of an eligible teacher to include those who are employed in a high poverty school and teaches grade 1,2, or 3, and achieves at least 85% of students whose progress is assessed as typical or better at the end of the year assessment while teaching at an eligible public school in the state at which a benchmark assessment is administered as described in U.C.A. Section 53F-2-503. During the 2022 General Session, the Legislature added teachers teaching Kindergarten.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

In the initial cohort, there were 108 teachers who received the salary bonus. Since that first year of the program, participation increased with 124 teachers participating in the 2018-2019 school year, 123 teachers in the 2019-2020 school year, 112 teachers in the 2020-2021 school year, and 123 teachers in the 2021-2022 school year. In the most recent school year, 2022-23, participation has decreased to 100 teachers. In that first year, 2017-2018, 58% of eligible teachers participated in the program. In the subsequent years, the rate of participation among eligible teachers increased to 69% and 72% in 2018-2019 & 2019-2020, respectively. In 2020-21, the participation rate increased again to 81% of eligible teachers. In 2021-22 the participation rate dipped to 69%. In the most recent year, 2022-23, the participation rate increased to 74%. Program participation is illustrated in the figure on the following page. To further detail what program participants look like, participant teachers in the 2022-23 cohort had an average of 11 years of teaching experience in the year that they received the award.

A total of 408 teachers have received the salary bonus in the program's six-year existence. Ten teachers, or about 2% of all teachers, have received the bonus in five of the six years that the program has existed.



SALARY BONUS

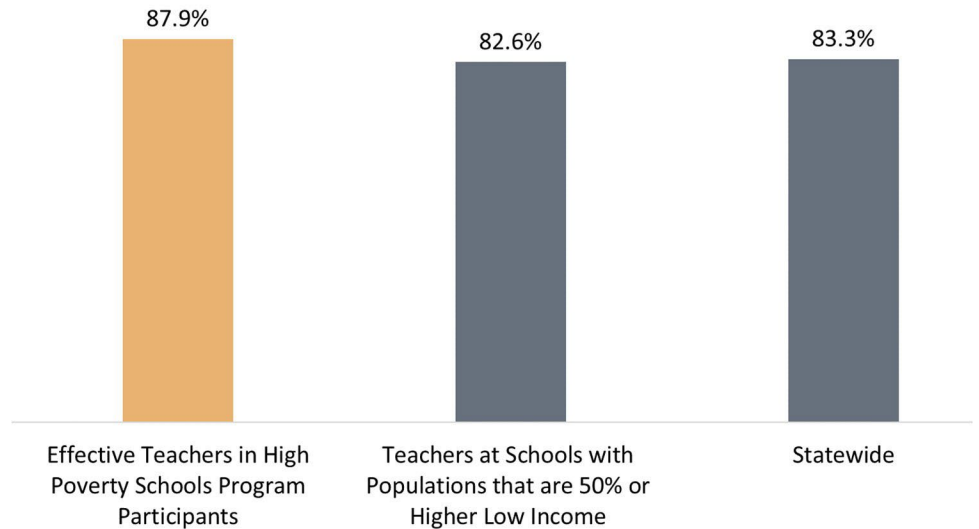
From the start of the program through the 2019-2020 school year, the annual salary bonus in statute was \$5,000 per eligible teacher. However, the Board has not been able to award the full amount in previous years because program participation has exceeded the funding appropriated for the program. The Legislature has appropriated \$801,000 ongoing for the program and charter schools and school district are statutorily required to pay half of the awarded salary bonus. Thus, program expenditures cannot exceed \$1,602,000 annually. The actual salary bonus awarded per teacher each school year is included in the figure below. The most recent bonus amount was \$7,000.00 per eligible teacher.

2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
\$4,629.62	\$4,032.26	\$3,969.80	\$4,147.04	\$7,000.00	\$7,000.00

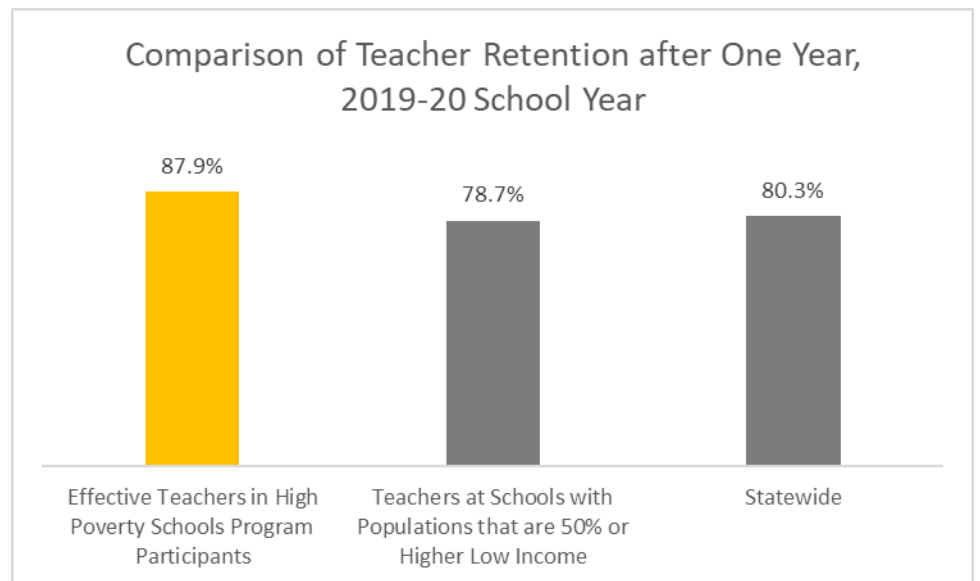
TEACHER RETENTION

As detailed above, 108 teachers received the bonus in the first year of the program. Of these teachers, 95 were employed in the same school in the following school year (2018-2019). This retention rate of 88% is higher than the retention rate for teachers in schools where 50% or more of the student population is eligible for free or reduced lunch which was 83% over the same period. Statewide the retention rate for teachers employed in the same school in the 2018-19 school year was also 83%. These retention rates are detailed in the below figure.

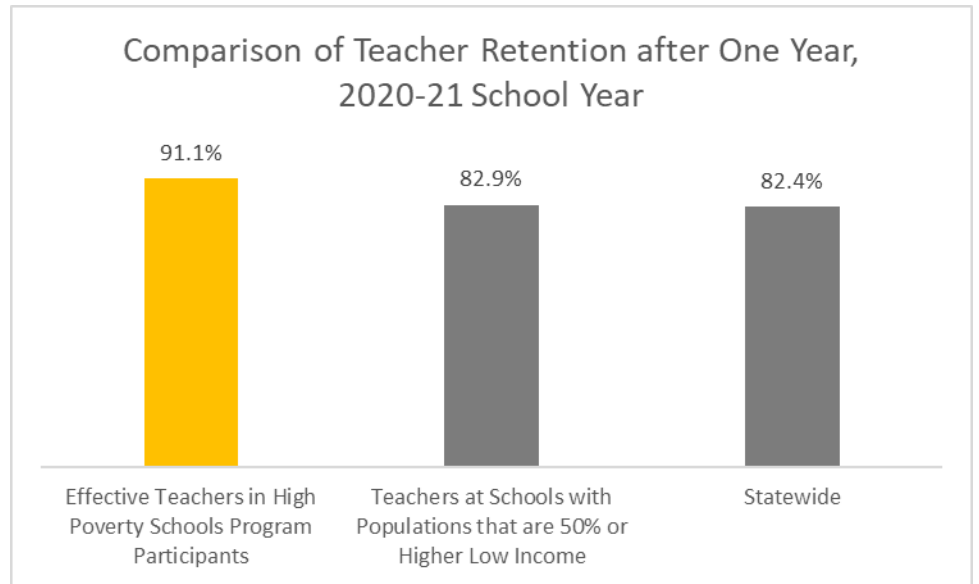
Comparison of Teacher Retention after One Year, 2018-2019 School Year



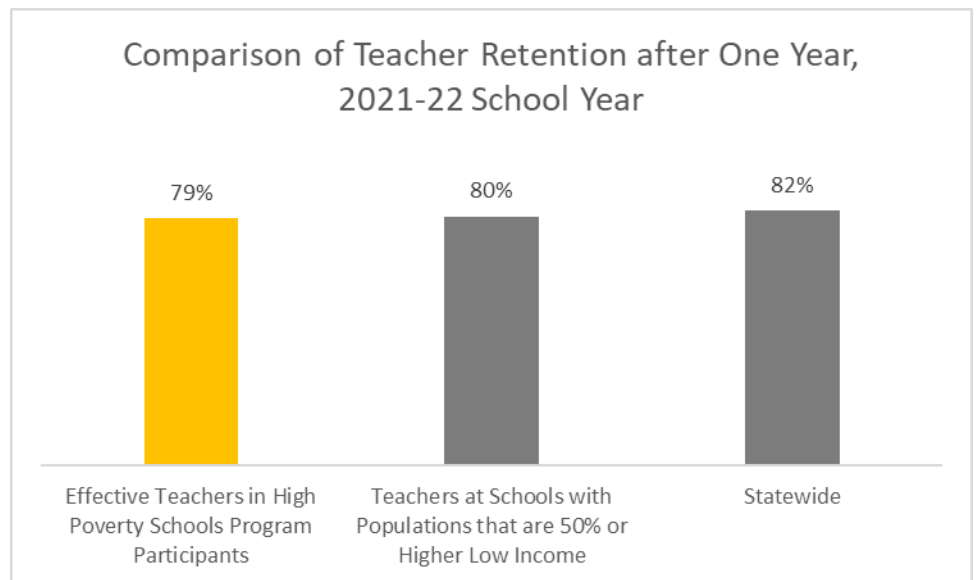
Of the 124 teachers who received the bonus in the second year of the program (2018-19), 109 were employed in the same school in the following school year (2019-2020). This retention rate of 88% was also higher than in comparable low-income schools and the state average over the same period which were 79% and 80%, respectively. These retention rates are detailed in the below figure.



Of the 123 teachers who received the bonus in the second year of the program (2019-20), 112 were employed in the same school in the following school year (2020-2021). This retention rate of 91% was also higher than in comparable low-income schools and the state average over the same period which were 83% and 82%, respectively. These retention rates are detailed in the below figure.



Of the 100 teachers who received the bonus in the third year of the program (2020-21), 89 were employed in the same school in the following school year (2021-2022). This retention rate of 79% was lower than that of previous cohorts. It was also lower than retention in comparable low-income schools and the state average over the same period which were 80% and 82%, respectively. These retention rates are detailed in the below figure.



The following survey data delve into why program participants choose to continue to teach in their current school and indicate that there are a variety of factors to which we can attribute the higher retention rate for program participants beyond just the salary bonus.

PARTICIPANT SURVEY

We administered a survey to 250 recipients of the salary bonus in the fall of school year 2023-24. Ninety-eight teachers completed the survey, reflecting a response rate of 39%. We analyzed their responses to evaluate the extent to

which the salary bonus improves recruitment and retention of effective teachers.

Reasons for Teaching at Their Current School

At the beginning of the survey, teachers were asked to answer two open-ended questions, one of which asked them to briefly explain the main reasons for choosing to work at their current school. Like last year's survey responses, results showed that teachers' reasons for teaching at their current school were highly altruistic. Many expressed a desire to work with a diverse population of students and making a difference in their communities. These factors were highly influential in deciding to teach in a high poverty school. Below are responses that are representative of teachers' strong desire to work with diverse students and make an impact in their lives:

I'm here because I know I can help and support kids in high poverty both academically, socially and emotionally. Many of my kids experience a tremendous amount of stress and trauma at home and focusing on learning is very difficult for them. I have an understanding of the pace we need as a class, and what students need individually, and my admin lets me be the professional in my classroom.

To help students get the best education they can in a remote and low income community. To provide experiences that they wouldn't get without my support and knowledge of the programs and opportunities that are available to them.

I love working with students from diverse backgrounds. I also love the challenge of helping students who are historically underserved excel at and love math!

Respondents also expressed that their proximity to the school, history in the community, and career opportunities were very influential in selecting a teaching assignment.

This is the community where I live and have raised my family in.

I like the faculty, staff and students. I am receiving additional pay for being a lead teacher at the school.

I've lived here for 30+ years and it is home. I want to help students in my community.

A smaller number of teachers listed financial factors, including the bonus as being reasons for choosing to work at their current schools.

I continue to work at a Title 1 school because of the bonus. It motivates me to stay and continue.

I work at my school because it is close to home, it is a Title 1 school, I can earn a bonus, and I can make a difference.

Influential Factors in Deciding to Continue Teaching at a High Poverty School

When asked what factors are important in deciding to continue teaching in a high poverty school, teachers generally shared factors that are not associated with monetary motives. The most common factor mentioned was having a supportive environment created by their leadership, colleagues, and the parents of students. Other intrinsic factors included those that align to the major reasons why many of the teachers choose to work at their current school, such as their opportunity to make an impact in students' lives as described above.

The acceptance of the community plays a large factor in my retention. They love to learn and the students and adults constantly voice their appreciation to me.

Opportunity for growth, the bonus for student performance, and climate of the school are important to me.

I appreciate being appreciated. The neighborhood families are grateful for all I do. The added monetary bonus for my student growth stats is also appreciated. I feel valued by my students, their families, my district, and my state

Only 13 of the 98 teachers (13%) responded that salary was one reason for staying. Eight of the teachers (8%) explicitly stated that the salary bonus is influential.

I think the sense of a meaningful mission and being part of a fun, cohesive team - but adequate compensation is definitely a factor and this bonus made a big difference.

Job Satisfaction and Salary

Teachers were also asked to rate their satisfaction with their current salary (not satisfied; somewhat satisfied; satisfied; very satisfied; extremely satisfied). About 59% of teachers indicated that they were very or extremely satisfied with their current salary, 34% were satisfied, and 8% indicated that they were somewhat satisfied or not satisfied. When asked if they had considered leaving the teaching profession because of salary, about 58% of teachers responded "Yes" and 42% responded "No".

Expectations Around Leaving the Teaching Profession

Survey respondents were asked whether they expect to leave the teaching profession within the next 12 months. In response, 87 teachers indicated "No" (95% of total respondents) while four teachers indicated that they expect to leave the teaching profession within the next 12 months (5%).

The teachers responding "Yes" were asked to specify the extent to which various reasons influenced their desire to leave the teaching profession within the next 12 months. The most common reasons provided for leaving were leaving for personal reasons (furthering education, family needs), needing a higher salary, or student discipline problems interfering with their teaching. Further review of the responses shows that one teacher expected to retire

within the next 12 months.

Expectations Around Leaving Their School

Teachers were asked whether they expect to move to a different school within the next 12 months. Only five teachers indicated that they expect to move to a different school. Of these teachers, wanting more influence over school policy, the availability of positions in their preferred grade level/teaching position, and dissatisfaction with school leadership were the most influential factors on their decision. Wanting to teach at a school in a different, desired location and being offered a higher salary were also identified as influential factors.

Recruitment and Retention

Like previous survey results, we did not find evidence that local education agencies (LEAs) are using the Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program on a broad level for recruitment. When asked, "Prior to receiving the salary bonus, did you know about the Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program", out of the 92 teachers who answered, 56 teachers or 61 percent indicated "No". Those who indicated being aware of the program prior to receiving the salary bonus shared that they learned about it in the following ways, ranked from the most to the least common:

- 1) **School communication.** Some teachers became aware of the program through email communication from the school or district, personal communication with the principal, or in a faculty meeting.
- 2) **Peers.** Several teachers learned about the incentive program because other teachers in their school received the salary bonus.
- 3) **Other media.** Other teachers heard about the bonus through newsletters or researching the program for themselves online.

To further examine if the salary bonus serves as a recruitment tool, teachers were asked if they had recently moved schools because they wanted to be eligible for the salary bonus. Out of the 40 teachers who reported having recently moved schools, 4 teachers indicated that they moved because they wanted to be eligible for the salary bonus.

The subject of retention is a more difficult one to parse. As seen above, participant teachers have generally had a higher retention rate at their schools in the year following the award year. While a high percentage of these teachers have considered leaving the teaching profession because of salary (58%), their response to open-ended questions reveals that many of the teachers teach and stay teaching in a high poverty school for reasons not related to salary or performance-pay incentives.

When asked if the salary bonus has influenced their personal career decisions, 33 out of 51 teachers (55%) responded "Yes." A review of their responses to this question shows that the salary bonus is viewed as a form of recognition and motivation by many of them.

Representative of such views, are the following responses:

It feels good to be recognized for my efforts. It also helps since I spend a lot of money on my students.

It is nice to know that our hard work is looked at on a state level and appreciated.

Along with the satisfaction and motivation that comes from being valued and recognized, some teachers expressed that the bonus helped them to grow in the profession.

I was able to pursue a master's degree using my bonus! I would not have been able to afford school without that bonus.

It was a good incentive to continue on doing my best to excel as a professional, and, consequently, strive for improved student outcomes. It's also nice to be recognized for doing a good job!

Conclusion

The survey conducted in this evaluation does not find strong evidence that the salary bonus improves teacher retention. One-year retention at the school level has been higher among the first three cohorts of the program and slightly lower in the fourth cohort in comparison to teachers statewide or teachers at comparable low-income schools. However, survey respondents indicate that their reasons for staying are dependent on a broader subset of factors than the bonus alone. Many indicated that school culture or their own altruistic motivations were more impactful in their decision to move to or remain at a high-poverty school. There is little evidence that the program is being used to recruit teachers at high poverty schools. Many teachers did describe the salary bonus as a welcome form of recognition for their efforts.