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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 2019-2020 school year, 117 teachers received a salary bonus of \$3,969.80.

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. While higher salary did come up as an influential factor for teachers who expect to leave the teaching profession or move to a different school in the next 12 months, it was not the most influential factor cited. Some teachers see the salary bonus as a form of recognition and find it motivating, but there was some acknowledgment that it might be discouraging for individuals who are not eligible for the bonus, but are working alongside eligible teachers. Furthermore, descriptive data suggest that recipients of the salary bonus have been persisting in high poverty schools for many years and would likely continue teaching in their current school regardless of any monetary incentives. Although twenty teachers (about 14%) did indicate that the salary bonus nudged them to reconsider leaving the profession or moving to a different school, a similar percentage of teachers 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.

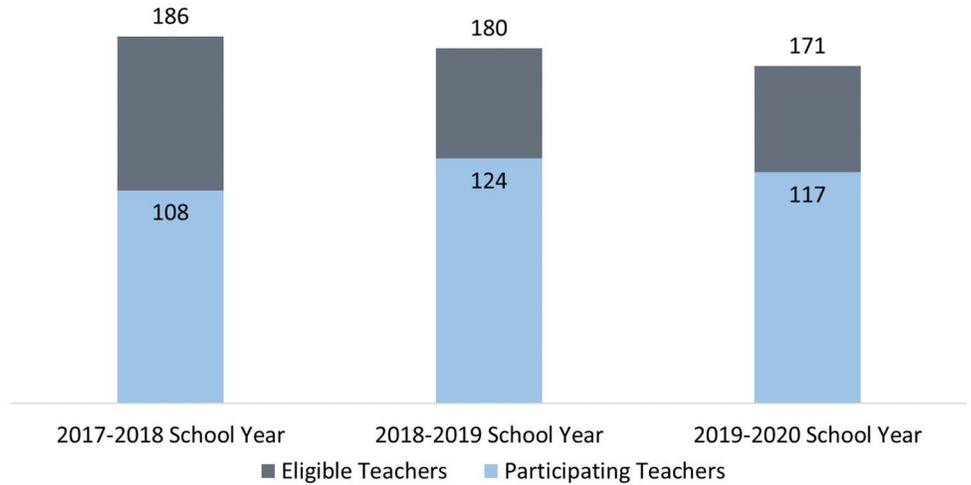
An eligible teacher must be employed as a teacher in a high poverty school at the time the teacher is considered for a salary bonus and, in the prior school year, achieves a median growth percentile of 70 or higher while teaching at any public school in the state a course for which a standards assessment is administered. During the 2020 General Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 107, *Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program Amendments*, which expanded the definition of an eligible teacher to also include a teacher who is 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 any public school in the state at which a benchmark assessment is administered as described in U.C.A. Section 53F-2-503. Initially, the annual salary bonus was \$5,000. In House Bill 107, the bonus was increased to \$7,000. However, the funding for the additional bonus amount was removed in the Fifth Special Session in June 2020.

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 and 117 teachers participating in the 2019-2020 school year. 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 68% respectively. Program participation is illustrated in the figure on the following page. To further detail what program participants look like, participant teachers in the 2017-2018 school year had an average of 11 years of teaching experience in the year that they received the award.

A total of 225 teachers have received the salary bonus in the program's three-year existence. Twenty-two teachers have received the salary bonus in all three years or about 10% of the overall recipients. Another 37% of the teachers received it in two out of the three years.

**Effective Teachers in High Poverty
Schools Incentive Program Participation Over Time**



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 because program participation has exceeded the funding appropriated for the program. The Legislature has appropriated \$250,000 ongoing for the program and charter schools and school district schools are statutorily required to pay half of the awarded salary bonus. Thus, program expenditures cannot exceed \$500,000 annually. The actual salary bonus awarded per teacher each school year is included in the figure below. As program participation has increased and the appropriation has remained the same, the bonus amount has been reduced with the most recent bonus being \$3,969.80 per eligible teacher.

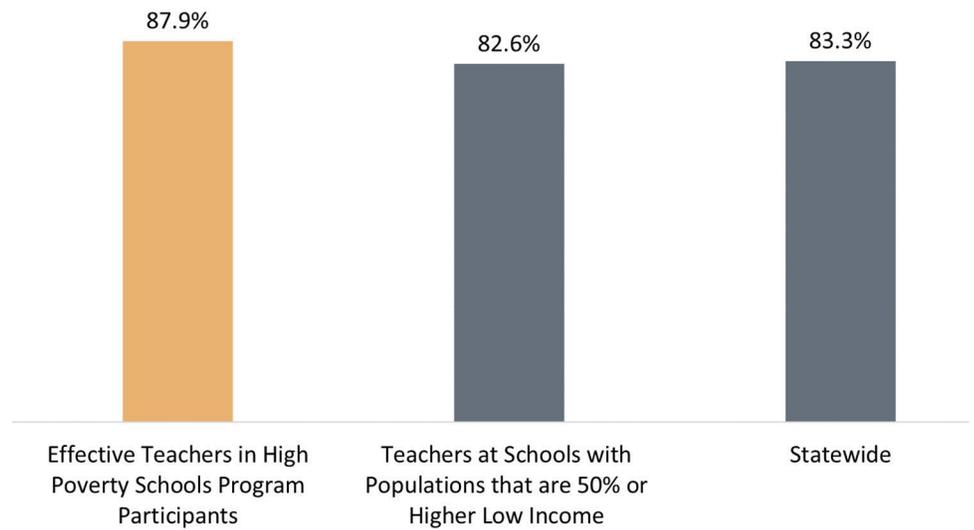


TEACHER RETENTION

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 2018-2019 school year as they were in the 2017-2018 school year was also 83%. These retention rates are detailed in the figure below. 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.

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



PARTICIPANT SURVEY

As discussed above, a total of 225 teachers have received the salary bonus in the program’s three-year existence. We administered a survey to these 225 teachers to evaluate the extent to which the salary bonus improves recruitment and retention of effective teachers in high poverty schools. Overall, 145 teachers completed the survey representing a 64% response rate.

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. The responses demonstrate that many of these teachers find satisfaction in working with students from low-income families and diverse backgrounds and the impact they make in the lives of students.

*“I first got the job because I just wanted to teach, and would take a job anywhere. However, after teaching here for 20 years, I would never move to a school in a higher-income area. **My students NEED me, I am vitally important to***

them. *There are many students in my past years of teaching and this year that needed a stable influence in their lives. I was the most stable adult in their lives, and I provided a safe environment for them for 6 hours a day, where they could learn more than academia, and feel loved and taken care of. They needed and deserved this is [sic] their lives, I love teaching at the school I do because I get to give them this."*

*"I wanted to work in a low socio-economic neighborhood **where I would have more of an impact in the students' future.**"*

*"I choose to work at my current school because I have always taught at title I schools. I feel that these kids need extra academic and emotional support regardless of their families [sic] income level. **I like being in a place where I feel I make a difference.**"*

Another common reason for choosing to work at their current school provided by respondents is linked to relational aspects of teaching that includes their positive relationships and collaboration with fellow teachers, effective school leadership, and the positive climate and culture of the school. Beyond that, other reasons included the teacher's proximity to the school, history in the community, and the first job that was offered.

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, largely teachers shared factors that are not associated with monetary motives. The most common influential factor mentioned was having a supportive environment. Other intrinsic factors included those that align to the major reasons why many of the teachers choose to work at their current school which is their opportunity to make an impact in students' lives as described above.

*"**Support from a principal** is important. It is a very challenging job to teach at a school like mine. If I feel the principal does not have my back and will not support me, I won't feel I am in a safe place. I need **support from other teachers.** All the faculty need to be able to support each other and do their part..."*

*"In deciding to stay teaching in a high poverty school, it is important to me that I have the same access to resources as teachers who are teaching at schools of higher socio economic status. It is important to me that I receive [sic] the same support as other teachers in the community and that my students' needs and the **need for true equity within the school and community are both actually considered by administration and that those needs are met.**"*

*"1. The **support I receive from district and school leadership.** 2. The **support I receive from parents.** 3. The incredible satisfaction from seeing academic and behavioral growth in students. 4. The **feeling of truly making a difference.** 5. My love for these children and their families."*

*“My coworkers, my students, **the support I have** to perform my job to the best of my ability.”*

*“The **students** in high poverty schools deserve the same opportunities as other students. They need teachers who understand their circumstances and love them. Teachers who hold them to a high standard and expect them to achieve. They need continuity. For many we are their safe place, we are the only thing they can count on. **I stay for them.**”*

Only 10 of the 145 teachers (6.9%) responded that salary was one reason for staying. However, it was one among many reasons, and not their top for staying. Four of the teachers explicitly stated that the salary bonus is influential while another six teachers appeared to suggest that their current satisfaction with their salary is a factor for staying.

Job Satisfaction and Salary

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their current job (not satisfied; somewhat satisfied; very satisfied; extremely satisfied). Overall, 82% of them reported that they were satisfied with their job and 18% were somewhat or not satisfied with their job (4.1%).

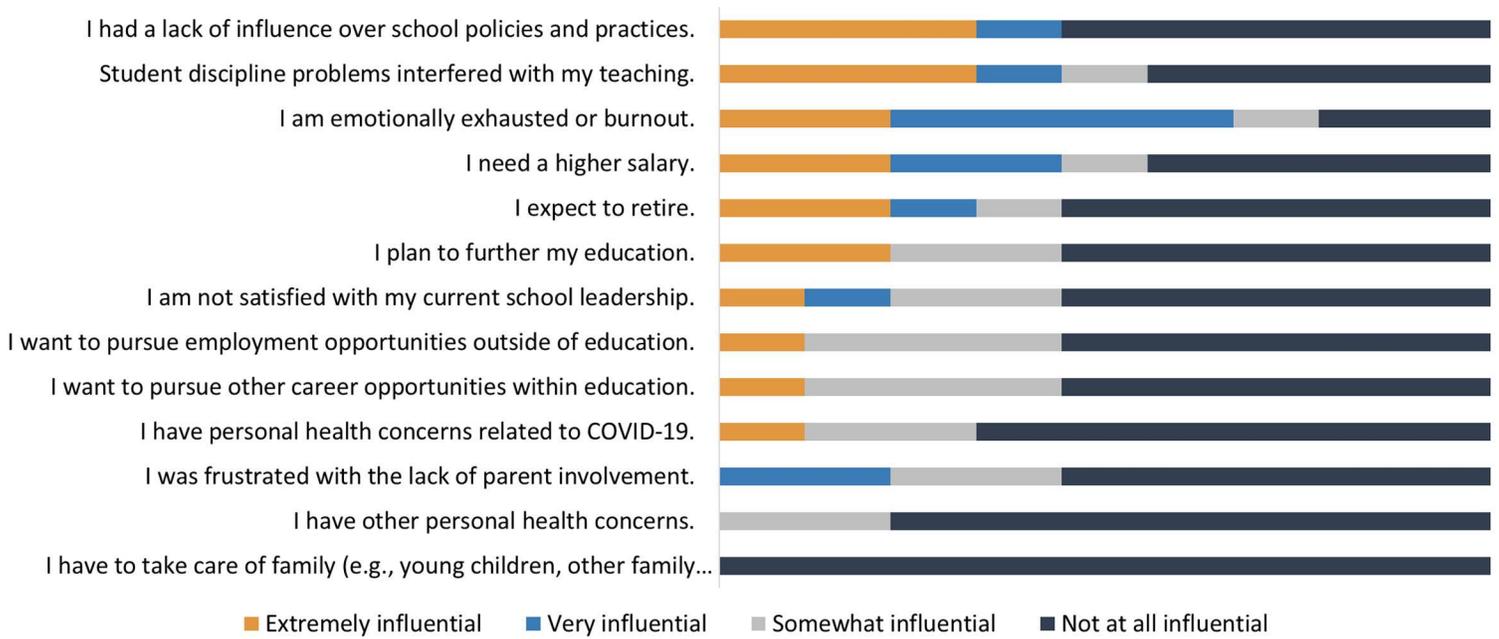
Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with their current salary (not satisfied; somewhat satisfied; very satisfied; extremely satisfied). About 56% of teachers indicated that they were satisfied with their current salary while 41% were somewhat satisfied or not satisfied (9.7%). When asked if they had considered leaving the teaching profession because of salary, 62% of teachers responded “Yes” and 35% 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, 131 teachers indicated “No” (90.3% of total respondents) while 10 teachers indicated that they expect to leave the teaching profession within the next 12 months (6.8% of total respondents).

The teachers responding “No” were asked to specify the extent to which various reasons influenced their desire to leave the teaching profession within the next 12 months (one teacher did not respond). The most frequent reason provided for leaving was being exhausted or experiencing burnout with 7 out of 9 respondents citing this factor as being influential. The second most common reason was that they needed a higher salary or student discipline problems interfered with their teaching (5 out of 9 respondents cite each of these factors as influential). At the other end of the spectrum, all nine respondents rated the reason of having to take care of family as not at all influential. The responses for each of the reasons is detailed on the following page.

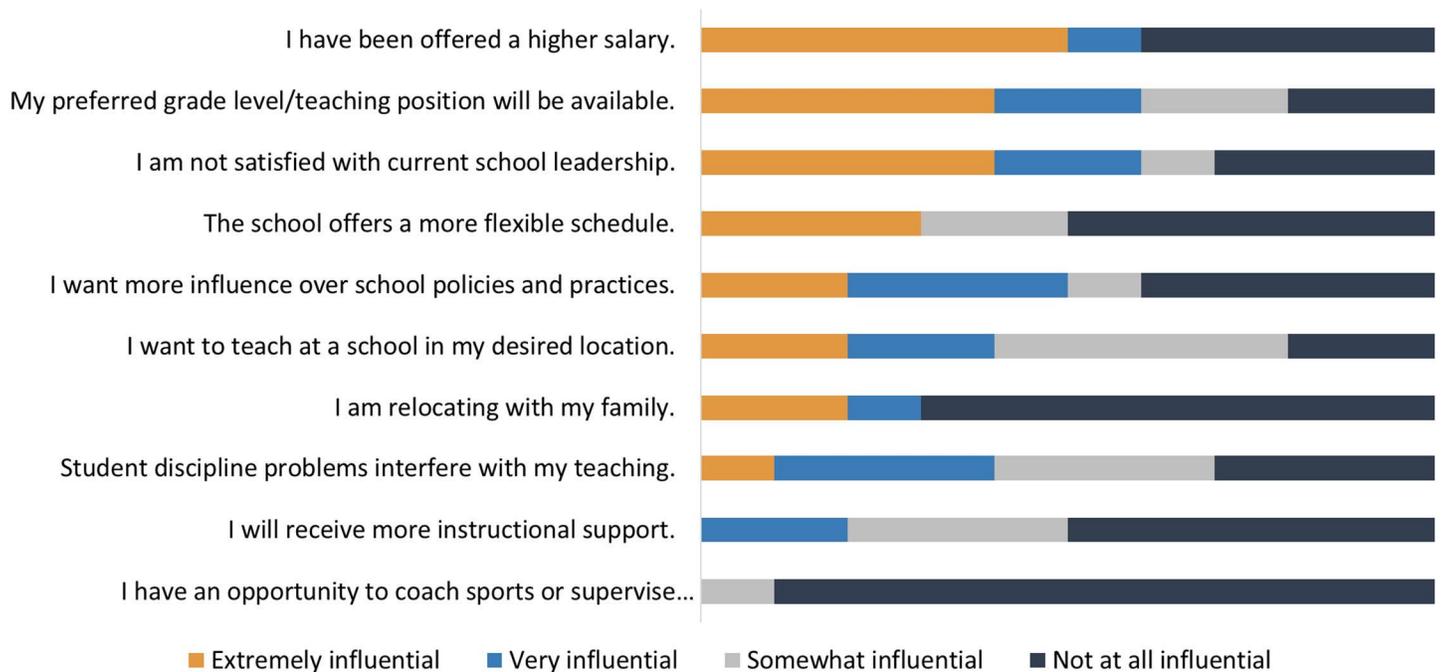
Reasons that Influence Teachers' Decision to Want to Leave Teaching



Expectations Around Leaving Their School

Survey respondents were asked whether they expect to move to a different school within the next 12 months. In response, 120 teachers indicated “No” (82.8% of total respondents) and 11 teachers indicated that they expect to move to a different school within the next 12 months (7.6% of total respondents). Teachers who responded “Yes” were asked to specify the extent to which the following reasons may influence their desire to move to a different school within a year (one teacher did not respond). The responses for each of the reasons is detailed below.

Reasons that Influence Teachers' Decision to Want to Move to a Different School



Location of the school and availability of preferred position are important reasons for moving to a different school with 8 out of 10 respondents citing each of these factors as influential. The next most influential reasons are related to dissatisfaction with school leadership and classroom climate associated with student discipline problems. Interestingly, the most respondents at 5 cited higher salary as being an extremely influential factor in the decision to want to move to a different school.

Recruitment and Retention

Based on the survey results, we do 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. The majority of respondents, 102 (72%), were not aware of the program prior to taking the position for which they were eligible for the award.

The 39 teachers who said they were aware of the program prior to receiving the salary bonus shared how they learned about the program. The top three ways were:

- 1) **Peers.** Fifteen teachers learned about it because one of their coworkers in their school received it.
- 2) **School communication.** Ten teachers became aware of the program through email communication, personal communication with the principal, or in a faculty meeting.
- 3) **Other media.** This included legislative session (n=3), newspaper (n=2) and degree program (n=1).

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. Only 2 out of the 32 teachers (6%) who reported having recently moved schools responded "Yes."

The subject of retention is a more difficult one to parse. As seen above, participant teachers have a higher retention rate at their schools in the year following the award year. However, descriptive statistics and survey data show that prior to the salary bonus program, recipients were already persisting in teaching at a high poverty school. For example, the school year 2017-18 cohort is made up of teachers where almost 44% of the teachers had five to 10 years of teaching experience, followed by about 32% having 11 to 20 years of teaching experience, and 23% with 21 or more years of teaching experience. While a high percentage of these teachers have considered leaving the teaching profession because of salary (62%), their responses to open-ended questions revealed that many of the teachers teach and stay teaching in a high poverty school for reasons not related to salary or performance-pay incentives.

Moreover, when asked if the salary bonus has influenced their personal career decisions, 68 out of the 141 teachers (48%) responded "Yes." A review of their responses to this question revealed that the salary bonus is viewed as a form of recognition and motivation by many of them, but not as a monetary incentive to

remain teaching at a high poverty school. Representative of such views, one teacher said the following:

“I don't think that it has changed my personal career decisions. My hope is to remain teaching in a high-poverty school, but it has been a welcome affirmation that not only the people at the school recognize the contribution I am making, but that society at large appreciates what I am doing. As in any career, there are many times when I feel like I am failing, but I can point to the fact that the powers that be at the state don't think I am failing, and they're willing to pay me a salary bonus to show that they seriously don't think I'm failing. It must not just be lip service if they'll actually reward me with a salary bonus.”

The survey responses also allude to a possible unintended consequence of the program.

“It help[s] motivate me to keep trying to make a difference. But I have also seen how it hurts teachers who do not receive the bonus but are in the trenches with us. I feel that the bonus is great for the one who receives it but hurtful to moral[e] for those that don't teach a tested subject or who work just as hard but have less of a quantitative effect. Your measure is very small sample of what a teacher does or accomplishes for that bonus.”

Twenty teachers did directly express that the salary bonus encouraged them to remain in teaching. As one teacher said, *“The salary bonus has nudged me to stay at a Title I school.”* Responses like this suggest that the salary bonus has potentially influenced some teachers, who may have been considering either leaving the profession or moving to a different school, to stay in their current school. Conversely, a total of 21 teachers 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.