

# 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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## 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 2023-2024 school year, 165 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. Fifty-three teachers (63%) indicated that the salary bonus had influenced their personal career decisions, often encouraging them to stay in their schools. However, eight 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

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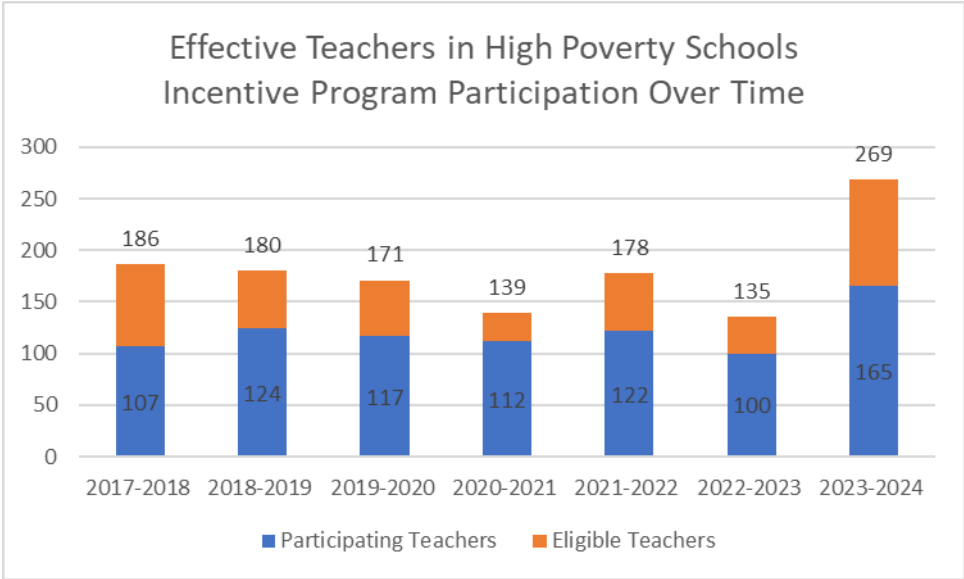
In the 2017 General Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 212, *Incentive for Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools*, which provides an annual salary

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.

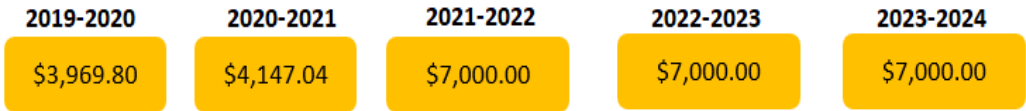
## **PROGRAM PARTICIPATION**

Since the inception of the program, the number of participating teachers has ranged from a low of 100 teachers in the 2022-23 school year to a high of 165 in the 2023-24 school year. The initial year of the program, 2017-18, saw the lowest rate of eligible teachers who participated in the program (58%). The highest percentage of eligible teachers participating was in 2020-21 (81%). In the most recent school year, 2023-24, 165 teachers participated, reflecting 61% of eligible teachers. A total of 498 teachers have received the salary bonus in the program's six- year existence.



## 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 for the last 5 years is included in the figure below. The most recent bonus amount was \$7,000 per eligible teacher.

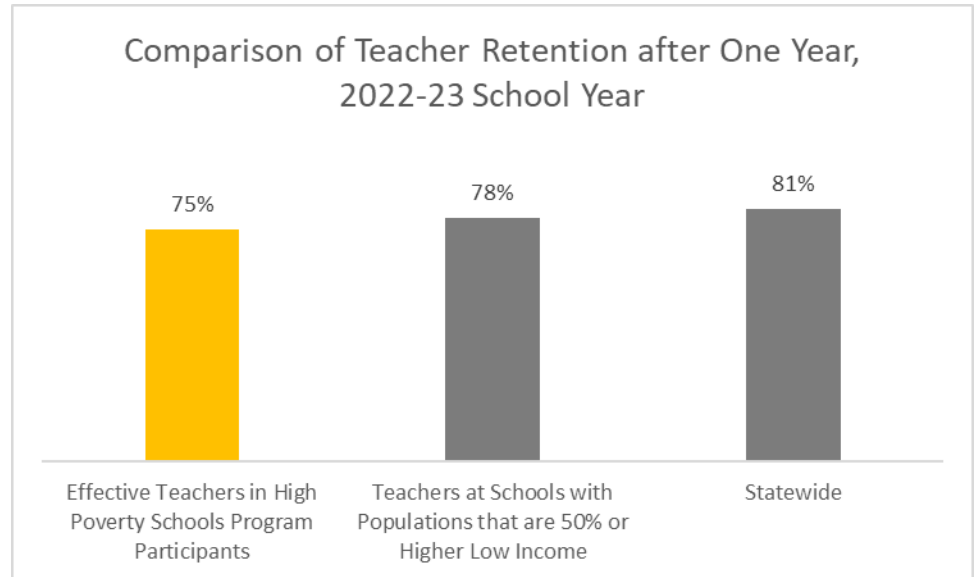


## TEACHER RETENTION

In the first three years of the incentive program, recipients of the bonus were retained at their schools at a higher rate in comparison to other teacher groups. They were retained at higher rates than both the state average and the average of other teachers at majority low-income population schools. Starting in the fourth year of the program (2020-21), teachers who participated in the incentive program were retained at slightly lower rates in comparison to the above groups.

Of the 165 teachers who received the bonus in the fifth year of the program (2021-22), 122 were employed in the same school in the following school year (2022-23). This retention rate of 75% 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 78% and 81%, 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 retention rate for program participants beyond just the salary bonus.

## **PARTICIPANT SURVEY**

We administered a survey to 165 recipients of the salary bonus in the fall of school year 2024-25. Eighty-eight teachers completed the survey, reflecting a response rate of 53%. 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 only applied to Title 1 schools when I graduated college in 2014 because I wanted to have the most impact with teaching. I have been teaching the same grade at my current school for 11 years. I love our diversity in home languages, cultures, countries of origins, and socioeconomic statuses. Having been here a decade, one of my favorite things now is getting to teach younger family members of former students. The families at my school are a huge part of what gets me coming back.*

*I love the students at my school. Many of them come from broken homes or very dysfunctional families. If I can make even a small difference in their lives I feel that I have accomplished something great.*

*The students need and deserve stability and adults who have high expectations for them.*

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

*I enjoy working with students from my community. The school is close to my home.*

*When I interviewed at my current school I see how strong the school culture was. All staff supports one another and truly cares about all students, even outside of their own classrooms.*

*I selected my school because I live in the community, and I wanted students from my community to see their lived experiences reflected in their teachers. It also benefited my family due to commute times and the educational needs of my children.*

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

*Title 1 Bonus and the money for MGP on RISE test scores.*

*I chose to work at this school because this bonus helps me financially. I love my school but this bonus really helps me financially to stay here and want to be here!*

### **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.

*I will always work at high poverty schools. I have been teaching for 19 years and all my years have been at title one schools. As mentioned earlier, I prefer that because I feel there is more of a need there and I can have a bigger impact. I love the students and the families at the schools I have worked at.*

*Factors that are important to me in deciding to stay teaching in a high poverty school include working with other highly dedicated teachers. Additionally, I*

*appreciate having access to necessary resources to effectively teach and support my students including supplies and aides for small group intervention.*

*School culture and support from administrators and the relationship with them. In addition their needs to be trust between the teacher and principal that they are their to support and know that if the teachers are successful then they and the school will be successful*

Only 6 of the 88 teachers (7%) responded that salary was one reason for staying. Nine of the teachers (10%) explicitly stated that the salary bonus is influential.

*The bonus is a huge factor in staying at a high poverty school. Without having this as an incentive, I will likely transfer if the state and district discontinue the bonus program. I have to do a lot of extra work teaching at a Title 1 school, so I desire to have the opportunity to earn the bonus.*

### **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 17% of teachers indicated that they were very or extremely satisfied with their current salary, 45% were satisfied, and 38% indicated that they were somewhat satisfied or not satisfied. When asked if they had considered leaving the teaching profession because of salary, about 60% of teachers responded “Yes” and 40% 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, 82 teachers indicated “No” (98% of total respondents) while two teachers indicated that they expect to leave the teaching profession within the next 12 months (2%).

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. One educator expected to retire and the other indicated that they were seeking employment opportunities outside of education.

### **Expectations Around Leaving Their School**

Teachers were asked whether they expect to move to a different school within the next 12 months. Only six teachers indicated that they expect to move to a different school. Of these teachers, wanting more instructional support, the availability of positions in their preferred grade level/teaching position, issues related to student discipline, 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 44 teachers who answered, 41 teachers or 93 percent indicated “No”. Those who indicated being aware of the program prior to receiving the salary bonus shared that they had learned about it through peers or staff meetings at their school

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 18 teachers who reported having recently moved schools, 5 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 in recent years have generally had a lower 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 (60%), 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, 53 out of 84 teachers (63%) 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:

*I considered leaving the profession. The extra money helped incentivize me to stay.*

*I stayed at my former Title 1 school because I continued to earn the bonus year after year. I transferred to a new Title 1 school closer to my home because I could still earn the bonus.*

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.

*It has influenced me to find the best ways to reach all of my students and help them to make as much growth as possible. I would have done it either way, but it is nice to be compensated for my work.*

## **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 and fifth cohorts 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.