



Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Q & A Fall 2011

5-year grant total: \$24.5 Million

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General Information

What does TIF stand for?

- Teacher Incentive Fund grant program. The Teacher Incentive Fund is a competitive grant through the U.S. Department of Education authorized in 2006. There have been 3 different rounds of grants given out since TIF grant program began.

What is the purpose of the Teacher Incentive Fund program?

- The purpose of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) program is to support projects that develop and implement performance-based compensation systems (PBCSs) for teachers, principals, and other personnel in order to increase educator effectiveness and student achievement, measured in significant part by student growth, in high-need schools.

What are the goals of the TIF program?

The goals of the TIF program include:

- Improving student achievement by increasing effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other personnel;
- Reforming teacher and principal compensation systems so that teachers, principals, and other school staff are rewarded for increases in student achievement;
- Increasing the number of effective teachers teaching low-income, minority, and disadvantaged students in hard-to-staff specialty areas and subjects (eg. Special Education, math, etc.); and
- Creating PBCSs that are aligned with a coherent strategy for strengthening the educator workforce and are fiscally sustainable.

What is a Performance-Based Compensation System (PBCS)?

- A PBCS recognizes different levels of effectiveness, skill, and performance by providing different levels of compensation. A PBCS under the TIF program refers to a system of pay that is not exclusively defined by degrees earned or longevity in a job but rather by quality and effectiveness of performance.
- Under the grant, a PBCS funded under the TIF program must have a differentiated effectiveness incentive component under which incentives are provided to principals and teachers based on a measure of their effectiveness. While under the TIF program

applicants may propose specific effectiveness criteria, they must give significant weight to student growth (as defined in the grant) and consider observation-based assessments of teacher and principal performance at multiple points in the year.

How long is the project period for a TIF grant?

- The project period for a TIF grant is up to 60 months. The first year of the grant is a planning year during which time the district must demonstrate it has completed the five core elements.

What is the timeline for implementing new systems?

- Chalkboard will work with the federal government to obtain the most up-to-date information on the TIF timeline and implementation expectations. To the best of our knowledge:
 - Districts will have one year to design their models, beginning in October 2010.
 - Reporting to the Department of Education will be an important part of the grant process. There will be a report on the design year due June 30th, 2011 and a second report due that describes the work that takes place from July through September.
 - Beginning in the 2011-12 school year, districts will begin building capacity and implementing new systems.
 - Districts will continue to change and tweak systems throughout the life of the grant.

What are the five core elements as stated in the Federal Register?

The five core elements are:

- A plan for effectively communicating to teachers and administrators, and other personnel
- Involvement and support of teachers and principals, which includes a memorandum or understanding between the district and teacher's association
- Rigorous, transparent and fair evaluation system for teachers and principals that differentiates effectiveness using multiple rating categories, that includes student growth as a significant factor and observations conducted at least twice during the school year.
- A data management system that can link student achievement data to teacher and principal payroll and HR systems.
- A plan for ensuring that teachers and principals understand the PBCS and use data from it to improve their practice.

What happens if an applicant proposes a planning year to implement one or more of the core elements but does not complete implementation of those core elements within the planning year?

- The Department will assess a grantee's performance during the planning year to determine whether to continue funding.
- This assessment will consider whether the grantee has made sufficient progress in implementing the PBCS core elements. Determinations about continued funding are made on a case-by-case basis and are based primarily on the grantee's progress in achieving project goals.

What is going to happen to the TIF money that was designated for the Oregon City School District?

- Chalkboard received approval from the USDOE to keep the TIF money in Oregon by reallocating Oregon City's funds to the other six TIF districts. The funds will be used to reach more schools, carry out the evaluation component of the grant, and provide further training for each of the districts.

Participating Districts

Which school districts are participating?

- Albany, Bend-La Pine, Crook County, Lebanon, Redmond, and Salem-Keizer

How can districts work together on TIF?

- We see new collaborative models emerging with alignment of work across districts. The Central Oregon Consortium of CLASS districts provide one successful model.
- Coaches will be pivotal in aligning shared work, tracking joint needs, and encouraging cross-district collaboration.
- Chalkboard also sees opportunities to bring in national experts, consultants, and requested presenters to provide support for all TIF districts.
- All-TIF meetings will provide a time for sharing ideas and strategizing next steps across districts.

Why were only seven of the CLASS districts selected?

- TIF eligibility is based on school-level data. Qualifying schools had to have at least 50% high-need students (students receiving free or reduced price lunch).

Can districts continue with TIF if the district's focus is not compensation, but, say, evaluation instead?

- We expect that the TIF districts will focus on all four components of CLASS, including compensation. Districts will work through the design process afforded by the planning year to create new career pathways, job-embedded professional development, effective performance evaluation systems, and new compensation models. The application calls for thoughtful designs for each of these elements, with the federal government most interested in the compensation piece.
- TIF is focused on designing and implementing Performance-Based Compensation Systems to increase teacher effectiveness. We know that effectiveness is not driven by compensation – increased effectiveness is realized through a comprehensive approach (i.e. CLASS) that provides teachers with the tools and support they need, want, and design themselves. Compensation must be a part of that approach and is in the CLASS design.

What do the requirements of TIF mean for the CLASS Project?

- Chalkboard is committed to continuing CLASS in Oregon beyond the TIF grant.
- Districts in Oregon continue to contact Chalkboard to express interest in participating in the CLASS Project. Chalkboard will continue to pursue options that would give every district the opportunity to take part in this work.
- CLASS models have thus far been developed at the district level. Districts will continue to drive the design process, but for the TIF grantees, certain funds will be designated for high-need schools.

TIF Design Process

Will the TIF blueprint process be different than the CLASS blueprint process?

- The comprehensive design work that the CLASS districts have already undertaken will provide the foundation for TIF.
- While building on the CLASS process, the TIF blueprints will be framed a bit differently. In order to meet the federal requirements, districts will have to design the four components of CLASS (career paths, evaluation, professional development, and compensation) in ways that specifically address the TIF priorities mentioned above, including: aligning both teacher and principal evaluations with professional standards; developing new compensation models that take effectiveness into account; and increasing the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers in high-need schools and subjects.

Is TIF only for teachers?

- TIF specifies that project designs incorporate plans to support, strengthen and reward teacher and principal effectiveness.
- Many CLASS districts have chosen to include classified staff in their project designs as well. While the TIF grant does not include specific funds for classified staff, due to budget constraints, districts will still be encouraged to make a local decision about including classified staff in the project.

How are “teacher” and “principal” defined for the purposes of the TIF program?

- For purposes of the TIF program, the term “teacher” may include not only classroom teachers but also resource teachers and other staff, such as paraprofessionals and classroom aides, who provide direct instruction. The term “teacher” is not defined in Federal statute or regulation and, therefore, the term encompasses those individuals who are considered teachers under applicable State and local law or policy.
- Similarly, the term “principal” refers to those individuals who are considered principals under applicable State and local law or policy.

Evaluation and Compensation

What is a Value-Added Model (VAM)?

- The value-added model takes students’ previous state test scores and other factors into account to create predicted test scores using a statistical model. The difference between the predicted test scores and actual test scores are the growth scores.
- A Value-Added Model (VAM) is required for all TIF grant recipients.
- A VAM is intended to be a statistical analysis of a teacher’s impact on student growth. There is no one way to create a VAM and each district will be asked to inform the creation and implementation of a local model.
- The Value-Added Model provides just one measure and will not be used on its own to determine effectiveness.

How does the TIF grant impact the current district salary schedule?

- The TIF grant does not change the current district salary schedule. Performance Based Compensation is in addition to the current district salary schedule.

How is student achievement defined?

- Student achievement means a student's score on the State's assessment under ESEA and other measures of student learning that are rigorous and comparable across schools. For non-tested grades and subjects, alternative measures of student learning and performance, such as pre and post-tests: ELPA, etc. that are comparable across schools.

How is student growth defined?

- Student growth is the change in student achievement for an individual student between two or more points in time. Districts may also use other measures that are rigorous and comparable across schools.

How is student growth different from the current use of AYP to evaluate schools?

- AYP is determined based on the percentage of students who meet or exceed the RIT score established at each of the tested grades in Math and Reading. It does not account for how much a student learning growth during the school year.

What kind of Value-Added Model is being used in districts?

- Each TIF district is currently using a School-wide VAM. Schools' contributions to student learning are determined based on the average of all students' growth scores within the school. The schools are then ranked with other schools within the state that have the same grade levels and given a percentile ranking.

Are any other factors used to calculate the percentile rankings?

- Yes, the model controls for the proportion of a school year that students spend at a school (this is the "dosage") as well as the following:
 - Race/ethnicity (AYP single-race/ethnicity categories plus a multiple-race category)
 - Age (as of September 1 during the academic year) and gender
 - Economically disadvantaged status; AYP indicators: special education status, LEP status, TAG status, Indian education, migrant education
 - Repeated and skipped grade indicators
 - Attendance; whether a student changed schools during the summer; whether the student attended multiple schools during the year

Some districts have also selected other controls.

What are the basic components of the Schoolwide VAM model?

- Three-year school-level "dosage" model of achievement growth. The model evaluates achievement growth for grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10.
- Schools are compared by grade level: schools with 4th/5th grade compared to each other; schools with 6th/7th/8th grade compared to each other; schools with 10th grade compared to each other. 9th grade takers of the 10th grade test also included.
- Students are assigned their highest score in each subject in a given year. Each test receives an equal weight.

- The model includes prior-year test scores as a control (10th grade analysis uses 8th grade scores from two years earlier as the most consistent baseline), and includes year, grade, and subject indicators.

Will school VAM data be released to the public and/or the media?

- Neither ECONW or Chalkboard are public agencies and therefore they are not subject to public records requests. Chalkboard is required to report improvements in school-wide VAM data to the USDOE. Chalkboard may also use highlights of the school-wide VAM data proactively with media to help create better understanding around the project.
- Since districts are public agencies they are subject to public records requests. They do not have to differentiate between what stipends, additional salary, or incentives that are paid to teachers for such a request.

Why is this not “merit pay”?

- The conversation happening nationally around student performance and teacher pay is oversimplified and divisive. We hope to bring a new level of depth and thoughtfulness to that conversation.
- Great teachers teach differently and must be assessed in multiple ways. Teachers cannot and should not be judged effective based on test scores alone.
- CLASS districts develop their own definitions of effectiveness that reflect their beliefs and priorities. Within the TIF framework a teacher’s effectiveness becomes one factor in pay. A meaningful, rigorous evaluation system is the cornerstone of this process and is supported by relevant professional development. Multiple measures of student growth will be just one part of the comprehensive system.
- Tying teacher pay to a single test score is not the goal of the TIF grant or the CLASS Project. Merit pay is top down, does not leave room for teacher input, and has not been shown to raise student achievement. In 2008, Chalkboard opposed a statewide ballot measure to implement merit pay.

Will value-added models be directly linked to compensation?

- Value-added model scores (whether at the individual, team or school level) will be one piece of how a district determines the effectiveness of its teachers and principals. Districts can include a range of other measures in determining effectiveness and weight measures as they see fit. Other measure of effectiveness could include: classroom observations, peer reviews, student surveys, educator portfolios, leadership roles, formative student assessments, etc.
- Each district will develop plans to differentiate compensation based on a comprehensive definition of effectiveness, not on VAM scores alone.

Does every district have to include individual teacher value-added scores in determining teacher effectiveness?

- Mathematica, a nationally-recognized policy research organization, has stated that there is no TIF requirement that necessitates that districts use individual teacher value added scores in defining effective teaching. Mathematica stated that districts could use individual teacher value-added scores, teacher team value-added scores, school-level value added scores or any combination of the three as measures in determining individual teacher and principal effectiveness.

What performance-based incentives are teachers and principals eligible to earn?

- Teachers and principals are eligible to receive performance-based incentives based on observation-based measures, student achievement growth measures, as well as other measures. Districts were required to develop criteria for the observation-based measures and student growth measures, criteria for other measures were optional. The amount of the compensation was determined by each design team utilizing the parameters of the grant listed below.

Is there a maximum or minimum amount of performance-incentive pay that a grantee must provide as part of its PBCS?

- While the US Department of Education has not specified any particular amount of funds that must be used for incentives for teachers, principals, and other personnel who work either full time or part time each applicant must (1) demonstrate that it “will provide incentive amounts that are substantial,” and (2) provide justification for the level of incentive amounts chosen.

May an applicant propose to include in its PBCS school staff who work part-time at the applicant’s high-need school(s)?

- Yes.

Must the incentives proposed for the PBCS be monetary, or may an applicant propose other incentives such as tangible items, career opportunities, or tenure?

- The US Department of Education recognizes that some tangible items and opportunities for career advancement can motivate teachers and provide good incentive opportunities. However, the purpose of the TIF program is to provide funding to support the design and implementation of “performance-based compensation systems”. As such, in addition to opportunities for teachers and principals to take on additional responsibilities and leadership roles, a significant component of the PBCS must be the availability of monetary compensation based on effectiveness.

Must incentive payments be tied to the results of the observation-based assessments of teacher and principal performance?

- Yes. Incentive payments must be tied to the results of both observation-based assessments of teacher and principal performance and to student growth.

Are there any funds available for expanding teacher career paths?

- Yes, design teams at each district are able to create leadership roles and responsibilities for teachers for which there is compensation. The amount of compensation is determined by each district design team.

How can VAM data be used in PLCs?

- School level VAM data may be disaggregated by grade level as well as subjects for use within PLCs. The VAM data is another way to look at student achievement data. Chalkboard has contacted with ECO NW to disaggregate the data based for districts based on their individual needs.

TIF Evaluation

Will all TIF districts be evaluated?

- All districts participating in the TIF grant will take part in a local evaluation of their CLASS designs and outcomes.

What is the TIF National evaluation component?

- As part of the TIF grant, two districts qualified and agreed to participate in an additional component of the grant. Those two districts are Bend-La Pine and Albany.
- The TIF evaluation component, that Bend-La Pine and Albany will participate in, is intended to help generate more research about the effects of new compensation models.

How are Bend-La Pine and Albany different than the other TIF participants?

- In addition to the comprehensive CLASS design for all TIF districts, Bend and Albany agreed to have their compensation models studied by Mathematica, a nationally-recognized policy research organization.

How did Bend- La Pine and Albany qualify for the TIF evaluation component?

- In order to qualify for the TIF evaluation component, a district had to have eight or more high need schools in grades 3 through 8. At least two of the schools had to be within the same grade configuration.
- Like all participating districts, local association support was required to participate in the evaluation component.

Resources

Who will be available to provide technical assistance to TIF districts?

- For questions related to technical topics such as, VAM, multiple measures of effectiveness, differentiated compensation, principal evaluation, etc. there are a number of research and policy organizations that Chalkboard and the CLASS coaches can connect with. Those organizations include: Mathematica, Westat, and Vanderbilt University.
- Chalkboard plans to host technical assistance meetings for all TIF districts, but feel free to make a request to your CLASS coach if you have technical questions and would like to reach out to one of the partner organizations.
- More information about CLASS and TIF is available at www.chalkboardproject.org, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/teacherincentive/index.html>, <http://cecr.ed.gov/>, and at www.educators4reform.org