

## **Performance Compensation Model Brief Description**

### **Local School System:**

Prince George's County Public Schools

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### **Title of Model:**

Financial Rewards for Supervisors and Teachers (FIRST)

### **Purpose of the Compensation Model:**

The FIRST program has four primary goals:

- 1) Develop and refine a comprehensive teacher and administrator compensation system that rewards improved student achievement
- 2) Increase teacher and administrator effectiveness through rigorous professional development and the implementation of a standards-based, research proven evaluation system to identify and place the most effective teachers in front of students with the greatest needs
- 3) Attract, develop and retain highly qualified, effective teachers and administrators in schools with the greatest needs
- 4) Conduct formative and summative evaluations to determine the impact of a pay for performance system on student achievement

In PGCPs, Children Come First. We believe that victory is in the classroom, that continuous improvement in teaching, leadership and accountability is the key to our success and that every member of the community shares responsibility for successful schools. FIRST, a voluntary pay for performance program provides financial awards to educators who embody these sentiments and are willing to engage in the designated program activities designed to drive student achievement. Program participants receive awards for earning high evaluations, showing evidence of improving student achievement and for completing rigorous professional development and leadership components. The FIRST program's performance based compensation model is funded by a five year USDE Teacher Incentive Fund grant.

**Brief Description** (Please include links, if available, for access to further information on the model):

The FIRST program was designed to improve teaching and learning and increase student achievement in schools with the greatest need and provide incentive awards for educators who excelled in program component areas and increased student achievement. A true hallmark of the program has been and continues to be the high level of collaboration and partnership between PGCPs and our union partners. Together Prince George's County Educator's Association (PGCEA), Association of Supervisory and Administrative School Personnel (ASASP) and management participated on joint committees that included teachers and administrators and designed a program to reward teachers and administrators who elevated student achievement. These committees designed the pay incentive structure, the professional development and leadership components and the overall program implementation. Now merged into one the FIRST Joint Advisory Committee continues to serve as the steering committee for the program supporting and monitoring implementation. Strong union partnership and collaboration continues to be a cornerstone of the program.

FIRST provides financial rewards for teachers and administrators who work hard to staff schools and subject areas, who assist students in meeting achievement standards in tested areas, participate in professional development and utilize a rigorous research-based evaluation process. Teacher participants can earn up to \$10,000 and administrators can earn up to \$12,000 in incentive pay per year.

There are a total of 42 high needs schools selected to participate in the FIRST program. These schools were phased into the program on average of 10-12 schools each year. Schools were set up using a cohort model to provide differentiated training and support based on their implementation year. There are more middle schools selected to participate in the FIRST program based on student achievement data in comparison to elementary and high schools.

FIRST uses a new standards-based, research proven observation/evaluation system (based on Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching) and growth over time models to document growth and excellence in teaching practice and student achievement respectively. Additional program components of professional development and leadership help to reinforce skills sets and expand educator capacity. FIRST also incorporates distributive leadership through the teacher leadership project component to encourage expansion of leadership roles and opportunities within each participating

To earn financial incentive awards, participating teachers and administrators are expected to engage in all aspects of the FIRST program. The incentive award frameworks are listed below. Links to the FIRST program website:

**Teacher Incentive Framework** (up to \$10,000)

Incentive Area	Amount	Explanation
Student Achievement	Up to \$5000	Up to \$2500 for school wide achievement (School makes AYP and meets or exceeds local growth targets for all subjects and student groups)  Up to \$2500 for Classroom Value Added if a teacher meets or exceeds individual targets for selected tested subjects (MSA/HSA)
Hard to Staff	\$1500	Hold a valid MSDE teaching certificate in a hard to staff /critical subject area as identified MSDE and PGCPs. Teachers must also be teaching in the critical subject area
Evaluation	Up to \$1500	Teachers are awarded up to \$750 for growth and up to \$750 for excellence as determined by a rigorous observation and evaluation process based on Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching
Professional Growth	Up to \$2000	Up to \$1000 for professional development that promotes student achievement  Up to \$1000 for leadership projects that promote student achievement

**Administrator Incentive Framework:** Each participating Principal is eligible to earn up to \$12,000 and each Assistant Principal (or equivalent position) is eligible for up to \$11,000.

Incentive Area	Award Percentage	Explanation
Student Achievement	Up to 60%	Award percentage based of the overall award is based if a school makes AYP  A percentage is based on if a school meets or exceeds local growth targets for all subjects and student groups
Evaluation	Up to 20%	Award based on an administrator's performance on a rigorous evaluation based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards
Professional Growth	Up to 20%	Engaging and completing professional development that promotes student achievement

**Targeted Employees:** Educators in 42 selected high need elementary, middle and high schools

Administrators: Principals, Assistant Principals, Academic Deans and Comprehensive Special Education Program Coordinators. At a minimum each administrator must hold a valid certificate in administration issued by MSDE.

Teachers: Classroom based teachers in all content areas assigned as the Teacher of Record for a group of students for whom they provide instruction. Positions such as Media Specialists and Guidance Counselors are ineligible to participate.

**Pros:**

- Utilization of Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (FFT) provides PGCPs with a more robust, proven, researched- based observation protocol which has been a tremendous improvement over the binary rating checklist protocol currently used throughout the school system to observe and evaluate teaching practice.
- Implementation of a new observation process that required a high level of engagement from both teachers and administrators. Observation steps include: self- assessment, goal setting and pre-observation conferences, the classroom observation and the post observation conference. The new system was a dramatic departure from a system of classroom observations that included non-standard often subjective comments/ratings, which required minimal evidence of practice and limited conversation between parties to a system based on evidence driven conversations to improve teaching practice.
- Administrator and teacher instructional conversations have more depth and overall are more reflective. This provides tighter links and agreement on specific strategies and professional development to improve instruction based on observation data. Observations are more collaborative.
- Increased collaboration between teachers around instruction and the collective push to increase student achievement
- Implementation of administrator FFT certification to ensure all administrators demonstrated proficiency using FFT as well as ensuring calibration of FFT observations in all schools. FFT certification helps to ensure and maintain a high level of administrator calibration and reliability in observation and evaluation ratings in all FIRST schools.
- Administrators and teachers received similar training so there was collective knowledge about the protocol which led to richer and deeper instructional conversation to improve teaching practice and drive student achievement.
- Program flexibility – while participants were encouraged to participate in all program strands, FIRST participation is voluntary (except for evaluations) which allowed teachers create balance between their schedules and other responsibilities.
- FIRST program components were easily aligned with other systemic initiatives
- Opportunities for school based and district leadership with compensation. Often teachers are asked to perform additional work with no compensation. FIRST provided teachers with awards up to \$1000 for completing school based or district leadership projects that helped to structure new teacher leadership roles systemically.
- FIRST implementation of the FFT observation process informed systemic implementation of the observation protocol.
- Professional development provided was rigorous and well aligned with systemic initiatives. The majority of FIRST professional development was led by teachers using a train the trainer model.
- The initial message about the FIRST program was all about increased compensation for working in challenging schools. The under lying message after the initial year was more about improving teaching practice.
- Program retention was relatively stable from cohort to cohort each year. However in some years due to challenging budget issues, teachers were moved from FIRST to non-FIRST schools which impacted school and program retention.
- Thoughtful use of external consultants to provide professional development and FFT certification training for principals.

**Cons:**

- FIRST is a voluntary program which required all schools to utilize two different processes for observation/evaluations, the FIRST model and the district's approved Standards for Excellence rubric. This created some confusion and frustration with staff in many schools since no school reached greater than 50% program participation levels.
- The majority of FIRST activities occurred after the school day with the exception of evaluations. This coupled with the perception that FIRST was "more work" limited participation for some teachers with competing responsibilities.
- 50% of the award incentives are linked to student achievement. Unfortunately, the majority of FIRST participants taught courses for which there is no available student assessment data. This decreased the potential award amounts participants teaching in non-tested subjects could earn.
- Program relied heavily upon building administrators to encourage teacher participation. At times FIRST was perceived as "more work" for all participants. Therefore unless there was a high level of trust and support in a building or the administrator was fully supportive of the program and showed how the program aligned with school goals and objectives, participation was low.
- Low participation - annually FIRST enrolled on average 31% of the teachers eligible to participate and experienced a range between 6% - 16% attrition depending on the program year.
- Program flexibility (driven by the voluntary participation component) influenced participation levels in the respective strands. For example if a teacher did not want to complete all 5 professional development sessions the only penalty was that a percentage of the award was not earned.
- Some administrators experienced demonstrated difficulty aligning FIRST program components with strands of work or programming already implemented within their building. This created a sense of fragmentation and competing priorities for staff.
- Challenges efficiently linking evaluation results with student achievement. The respective program components were awarded independently and were not linked.
- Challenges with recruitment and retention of all staff in high needs schools. These were in many instances based on the economic status of the school system (budget cuts and reductions in force) which dramatically impacted staffing in high needs schools which typically were staffed with new teachers each year. Challenging economic situations made it difficult to draw correlations between recruitment and retention and the impact FIRST had on staffing.
- FIRST had many components that required management at the school level which was challenging for many administrators with full plates already.
- Program difficult to scale up to all schools (implementation support and financially)

**Lessons Learned:**

- In order to truly make an impactful change in teaching practice, professional development must be ongoing and embedded during the school day to enable teachers to practice what they learn, strengthen areas identified as needing improvement through the observation process and provide the opportunity to share and demonstrate best practice to each other.
- Provide teachers embedding the program during the school day would increase participation and collaboration between educators within their respective buildings
- Expansion of student assessment data to determine student growth inclusive of non-tested subjects with a goal to enable all teachers to accurately account for value added student growth and increase teacher buy in and participation numbers.
- Include multiple measures of student achievement and teacher performance to include but not limited to addressing issues related to how students are linked to what teachers and how,

assessment data for non-tested subject areas and address other multiple measures to assess student achievement and teacher performance (not just test data).

- Work with principals in advance of the program year to ensure a well-planned implementation that is directly linked to current school based programs.
- Begin with a clear and concise definition of effective teaching and how it will be measured for all educators in the system whether you are participating in a pay for performance program or not. While the teaching and learning evolves, the initial starting definition helps establish a strong foundation and direction for the work and allows the system to communicate what was learned as the program evolves.
- Look for additional ways to leverage the learning gained throughout the program implementation as well as the identification of best practices to be shared more broadly with all educators in the school system
- Communication is critical from a systemic perspective especially addressing how to message performance compensation and equity between the varying performances of all schools in the system (i.e. award amounts for high versus low performing school balanced). Basically address the equity versus equality issue.
- Consider full school models to reduce fragmented implementation
- Provide varied mediums for professional development to include the incorporation of webinars, and on line professional development.
- To improve program results replicate best practices in schools where teachers and administrators embraced the model and used it to improve retention of staff, recruit new staff and improve teaching practice
- Thoughtful implementation of technology to support any program that is aligned with the overall system's technology plan is critical.
- Ensure there is clarity and high level planning around data collection prior to program implementation.

**Future Plans:**

The focus of the final year (2011-2012) will be to review the program's successes and challenges to determine what components are viable to be included in a systemic compensation reform as part of the larger human capital plan. For the remainder of the program year FIRST will be completing the final formative and summative evaluations, required reporting and any articles on the program. This will inform PGCPs' work on future compensation reform.