

THRIVE – Teacher Incentive Fund Grant

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can district teachers choose not to participate in the grant?

District certificated staff will participate in the development and implementation of standards based local assessments, establishing subject-specific student learning goals, and colleague observations and feedback. It will be up to the individual certificated employee whether s/he wishes to participate in the Performance-Based Compensation Program.

How will the Performance-Based Compensation System (PBCS) be developed? How will it be applied?

The four components of the PBCS are:

- (1) Student performance on the California Standards Tests (STAR) in English-Language Arts, Mathematics, End-of-Course Science, and Social Science;***
- (2) Student academic progress measured using subject-specific local (benchmark and formative) assessments;***
- (3) Observations by colleagues as to the use of best practices in classroom instruction; and***
- (4) Participation in leadership roles throughout the development and implementation of the grant.***

A committee under the direction of the Leadership Team will establish criteria for each of these components, including a sliding scale that links outcomes with compensation.

What are the main goals of the grant?

- (1) Increase student achievement;***
- (2) Increase percentage of teachers serving high needs students, and in hard-to-staff subjects, who have a record of effectiveness;***
- (3) Increase the effectiveness of teachers, principals and other personnel;***
- (4) Implement differentiated levels of compensation for effective teachers and principals; and***
- (5) Implement sustainable change in the teacher and principal compensation system of the district.***

Will there be an opportunity for parents and community members to provide feedback on the development of the grant?

During the initial grant development, parents and community members will be invited to participate in an online survey to express their views on the objectives of the grant. Local school and community groups will have the opportunity to hear about the grant through presentations at a variety of school, district and community meetings. The THRIVE website will have a feature dedicated to community input. Each spring the district will administer a parent evaluation survey, and will use that data to help shape future grant outcomes.

The grant states that “evaluations” (observations) will be used to measure teacher effectiveness and “to determine teacher assignments.” Can teachers be re-assigned based on the perceived success or failure of students?

One measure of teacher effectiveness will be an observation form developed by the Departmental Working Groups and the Leadership Team with the participation and approval of the NOHUM Faculty Association.

Teacher assignments are made yearly by school administration taking into account such factors as teacher effectiveness and student achievement. THRIVE is not an evaluation tool for teachers or administrators. Its use in the assignment of teachers has not been addressed as yet by the Leadership Team.

How does the grant address the issues of divisiveness and bias that may occur when teachers are providing feedback on other teachers?

Colleague observations and feedback have been present in the Northern Humboldt District through programs such as TESA (Teacher Expectation, Student Achievement) and BTSA (Beginning Teacher Support and Assistance). As proposed in this grant, colleague observation is designed to provide feedback on the use of subject-specific best practices in the classroom. When conducted by trained department observers using a format both designed and approved by the teaching faculty, this system can provide excellent support for classroom instruction.

Where has this model worked? What was the result/outcome of “incentive pay” at Humboldt State University?

There is a growing body of research on the implementation of Performance Based Compensation, highlighting school districts where the program has raised student achievement and where it has not. Reference to these studies will be posted on the THRIVE website as they become available.

The website will post research/outcomes relative to the “incentive pay” program at Humboldt State University if it is believed to be relevant to THRIVE. Anecdotal information about the HSU program is mixed. As a post secondary institution, there may be no valid comparison between the program implemented at HSU and programs currently in place in K-12 districts.

Will merit pay affect or in any way influence negotiated salary and benefits for teachers at any point in time?

The TIF grant is a five-year federally supported grant that seeks to increase student achievement through goals and objectives that support and improve teacher effectiveness. The Northern Humboldt Union High School District has obligated itself to provide \$100,000 in incentive compensation in Year 4 of the grant, and \$200,000 of incentive compensation in Year 5. This money and the federal incentive compensation is completely independent of, and will not affect or influence negotiated salary and benefits for teachers.

Has your committee established a transparent, standards or rubric-based selection system for selecting awardees of incentives which if used by any reasonable person, student, faculty member or community member would yield the same or similar results?

One of the objectives of the TIF grant is to establish a Performance-Based Compensation System that includes rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that differentiate levels of effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth, as well as classroom observations. It is intended that this system will account for differences in course objectives, student baseline data, and teacher outcomes. The Performance-Based Compensation Committee, under the direction of the

Leadership Team, will be responsible for developing this system. The THRIVE grant calls for a preliminary plan to be “completed” in spring 2011, which will then be subject to review and modification prior to implementation in the 2011-2012 school year.

How was the timeline for the grant established? What are the year one commitments for the grant?

The grant timelines were established prior to submitting the grant application in July, 2010. The timelines were designed to satisfy the requirements of the TIF Request for Applications.

During Year One work will be completed on the preliminary form of all grant benchmark assessments, student learning objectives, colleague observation guidelines and the Performance-Based Compensation System. These models will then be evaluated and modified during Years Two through Five based upon their effectiveness in promoting the objectives of the grant. Grant timelines and outcomes will be regularly posted on the THRIVE website.

What role will HROP teachers play in the grant process? Are HROP employees eligible for the same incentives/benefits as regular district employees?

The TIF Grant was developed to include all certificated faculty employed by the Northern Humboldt Union High School District. The level of participation in THRIVE of certificated staff teaching in NOHUM district schools who are employed by the Humboldt Regional Occupation Program has yet to be determined.

Does the TIF grant include any funding to reduce class sizes within the school district?

The TIF grant program does not provide any funding for class size reduction among grant recipients. The U.S. Department of Education has identified as the primary objective of the grant to increase student achievement through professional development designed to improve teacher effectiveness. Funding supports these efforts in a number of ways, including a Performance-Based Compensation System (PBCS) that provides financial incentives to teachers based upon their attainment of instructional and student achievement goals developed in unison by faculty, school administration and district stakeholders..