

District Awards for Teaching Excellence
Frequently Asked Questions
March 1, 2008

Table of Contents

A. General Information

- A-1 What is D.A.T.E.?
- A-2 What is the fundamental purpose of D.A.T.E.?
- A-3 How is the District Awards of Teacher Excellence program different from the Texas Educator Excellence Grant?
- A-4 Are campuses receiving the Texas Educator Excellence Grant able to receive awards under the District Awards for Teacher Excellence?
- A-5 Can D.A.T.E. funds be used to provide all professional educators in a district with a pay raise?

B. Grant Information

- B-1 How can a district obtain materials needed to apply for a D.A.T.E. award?
- B-2 When are D.A.T.E. applications due?
- B-3 What are the important grant dates?
- B-4 What criteria were used to determine district eligibility?
- B-5 Is list of eligible districts final?
- B-6 For the purposes of this grant, does the definition of a classroom teacher include permanent substitutes?
- B-7 Are half time teachers eligible for funding, like those assigned to career and tech settings?
- B-8 If a campus included in the District Award Plan will be closed or reorganized in the 2006-07 school year, will D.A.T.E. funds for that campus be available to teachers and other personnel who have been reassigned to other campuses that are not eligible?
- B-9 Can districts choose to award funds to teachers who are new to the school or teachers who are retiring?
- B-10 How can a district obtain their grant award amount?
- B-11 Do teachers in a district or in individual schools applying to participate in D.A.T.E. have to vote acceptance of the plan?
- B-12 Are principals and other administrators eligible for D.A.T.E awards?
- B-13 Can a less than satisfactory D.A.T.E submission be negotiated with the TEA and be resubmitted?
- B-14 Can a district that already has a performance award program submit that program for D.A.T.E funding?
- B-15 Can one person submit the applications for the whole district?
- B-16 Is local school board approval of the district award plan required?
- B-17 What is the difference in purpose between Part I and Part II of D.A.T.E?
- B-18 What is a classroom teacher, for purposes of Part I funds?
- B-19 Are individual awards required to be at least \$3,000? Can we provide awards in other amounts?
- B-20 What is the purpose of requiring a contingency plan section in the D.A.T.E. proposal submission?
- B-21 Is the requirement that 60 percent of D.A.T.E funds be allocated to Part I program efforts a maximum or can a district allocate a larger share of its D.A.T.E grant to Part I award activities?
- B-22 How should the 5% allowable deduction for administrative costs be determined?
- B-23 Can you clarify between an administrative cost and an indirect cost?
- B-24 What are allowable administrative costs?
- B-25 When should districts and campuses plan to distribute funds to teachers and other district personnel?

- B-26 The district award is not sufficient to adhere to the grant requirement that each teacher cannot receive less than \$1000 and award all the teachers in the district. How will we be able to give them this amount, and will we still qualify if we are not able to give the least amount stipulated?
- B-27 Do Part II awards have to be a minimum of \$1000?
- B-28 Is it allowable to contract with a consultant to help prepare the application? (e.g., schedules, attachments, etc.).
- B-29 How should districts and campuses handle legal suits or complaints as a result of this program?

C. Funding

- C-1 Is D.A.T.E a competitive award? Can only a few of the districts applying receive funding?
- C-2 How are the district awards determined and are the award amounts final?
- C-3 How can a district determine the amount of funding for which it is eligible under D.A.T.E?
- C-4 How will funds from districts that do not apply be redistributed?
- C-5 If approved, when will D.A.T.E. award funds be supplied to my district?
- C-6 Will D.A.T.E. receive future appropriations by the state?
- C-7 Is the district award amount for more than one year of funding or for two years?
- C-8 Is it permissible to carry over unearned or otherwise unspent D.A.T.E funding into the next school year?
- C-9 If after submitting the D.A.T.E application, more state or local funding becomes available, can a district alter its plan to accommodate additional or larger dollar awards?
- C-10 In what form can a local district's contribution to the 15 percent matching funds to D.A.T.E take?
- C-11 Since award amounts have changed as districts have opted out of the D.A.T.E. program, what figure should a district use to determine the amount of their fifteen percent matching contribution?
- C-12 Can TEEG funds be used as a part of a district's required fifteen percent contribution to D.A.T.E?
- C-13 Can a district receive all of their award money at one time?
- C-14 How long will it take to receive a reimbursement payment?
- C-15 When can funds for Part II professional development be drawn down?
- C-16 How does the district need to modify its policies or contracts for teachers and other employees who receive awards?
- C-17 Does the district need to pay into the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) for awards to campus personnel?
- C-18 Are districts required to pay health, social security, or other benefits on award payments (question not referring to TRS)?
- C-19 How does the district agree to carry on the program after funding ends?
- C-20 If our district's estimated award amount increases, do we have to accept the entire amount?
- C-21 Is the match in year 2 also 15 percent?

D. Monitoring and Evaluation

- D-1 How *might* a district appropriately evaluate the effectiveness its D.A.T.E award program?
- D-2 If D.A.T.E. continues into subsequent years, will a district be able to alter its operational plan?
- D-3 Can an accepted D.A.T.E proposal be altered during its implementation period?
- D-4 How will the TEA monitor D.A.T.E project operation in local districts?
- D-5 What kind of reporting requirements for D.A.T.E operation are expected of local districts?

E. Technical Assistance

- E-1 Are there technical assistance requirements for D.A.T.E. participants?
- E-2 How can a school district communicate with and receive assistance from the TEA regarding D.A.T.E matters?
- E-3 What type of D.A.T.E. technical assistance will be available in the future?

- E-4 Are there any national resources or websites that might provide additional information and research results for school district personnel contemplating the submission of a D.A.T.E. proposal?
- E-5 What will the learning modules mentioned as part of the technical assistance entail?

F. Program Design/Use of Funds

- F-1 How should a school district get started in designing a plan for submission to D.A.T.E.?
- F-2 How can D.A.T.E relate to a school district's overall goals?
- F-3 Can D.A.T.E funds be used to retain effective teachers or to attract teachers in hard to fill subjects?
- F-4 Must a D.A.T.E plan include all schools and all grade levels in a district?
- F-5 What is wrong with a district simply copying a good plan from another district and submitting that as its D.A.T.E proposal? Does the state have a "model" submission package after which a district may pattern its D.A.T.E plan?
- F-6 May districts withhold awards from teachers who meet performance objectives, but who leave their school at the end of the school year in order to motivate teachers to remain on the campus?
- F-7 Must all core subject teachers be included in the Part I plan?
- F-8 Can a team (e.g., fourth-grade team of nine teachers) be evaluated by the administrator regarding student improvement, growth, and/or achievement?
- F-9 Because of block scheduling, certain department chairs on my campus teach two 90-minute classes, thus providing 3 hours of instruction. Does the "classroom teacher" definition include teachers who teach 3 hours but have related administrative duties?
- F-10 Can you award every staff member in the school if a campus reaches recognized status?
- F-11 How should Part I plans balance the performance of AP and honors teachers with those teaching students with special needs?
- F-12 Can full-time administrators receive award payments?
- F-13 Can part-time or full-time instructional aides receive award payments?
- F-14 If we target schools, do the schools included in the district award plan have to stay the same for two years? Can we "retarget" according to need?
- F-15 Can we award teachers based on campus ratings?
- F-16 Are we able to use grant funds to improve out data management and analysis?

G. Performance Measures

- G-1 What measures, in addition to TAKS results, can a district use to evaluate student and school academic progress?
- G-2 By what means, if any, can instructors of non-core courses (e.g., P.E. teachers, music teachers, guidance counselors, and librarians) be included and thus be considered eligible for a D.A.T.E award?
- G-3 What are some examples of performance measures and goals that could be incorporated into a D.A.T.E reward plan?
- G-4 Do individual awards to teachers have to be based on their students' TAKS performance?
- G-5 How can student achievement for teachers whose students do not take TAKS be measured?
- G-6 How should student achievement for fine arts and physical education classes be measured?
- G-7 The Part I plan examples provided by TEA include more than one performance level for each criteria. Is it acceptable to use only one performance level?
- G-8 What criteria or performance levels will NOT be accepted by TEA?
- G-9 How can a district determine in advance what is or is not a realistic performance goal or set of goals to which teachers and others should be motivated to achieve? How does one avoid being too simple or too rigorous?
- G-10 Can a school district use its own test in a D.A.T.E plan?
- G-11 What test can be used if a district opts for TAP?
- G-12 What is the difference between TAKS and valued added systems?

G-13 Are there any achievement or student/school progress measures that a district's D.A.T.E proposal should absolutely avoid using?

H. Data Management and Analysis

H-1 How do we determine whether we have the data to support calculation of value-added measures?

H-2 Is it permissible to budget Part II D.A.T.E funds to pay for outsourcing value added measurements?

I. Value-Added

I-1 What is meant by systems of value added improvement?

I-2 Is a district required to use value-added?

I-3 What if we want to do value-added, but do not have the data necessary to support it?

I-4 If we implement value-added now, do we have to use it as a basis for awards?

I-5 Do we have the capacity in the district to calculate value-added measures?

I-6 What is the most valid and fair measure of student academic progress, a measure of attainment or value added scores?

I-7 How can we communicate to teachers and others what value-added measures really mean?

I-8 Who can we go to for assistance in calculating value-added measures?

I-9 Can we use both teacher and school level performance measures?

I-10 What do we do if we are small school and do not have a large number of classrooms that form the basis for a value-added based awards system?

I-11 What about students who are assigned to interventions in a particular content area outside of the classroom? How do you account for this in an awards system?

I-12 Which students should be included in the sample for analysis and which are not?

I-13 What about students who happen to have had a particularly bad day on the day the test was administered? Doesn't that make the value-added measure for those students' teachers unfair?

I-14 Do you include students in a teacher's value-added calculation who had poor attendance?

I-15 Do you include students who were transferred into a class one month, for example, before the assessment is administered?

I-16 Do you include students who have experienced a tragedy in their lives?

J. Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

J-1 Why is a district communication plan crucial for D.A.T.E?

J-2 What are the crucial components of a D.A.T.E communication plan?

J-3 Who should be on a school district D.A.T.E design team?

J-4 Are there examples of school district performance reward plans that have substantial teacher support?

J-5 What are some suggestions/examples for district support?

J-6 Please clarify the role requirement that plans be made publicly available (i.e., the "publishing" requirement).

J-7 In regard to the publishing requirement, does the plan have to be published by the application due date, or can we provide information in the application about how it will be published when our application is accepted?

A. General Information

A-1 What is D.A.T.E.?

D.A.T.E. is the State of Texas' District Awards for Teacher Excellence grant program. For more information, visit the D.A.T.E. website at:

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/eeg/datex/

<http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards/date.html>.

A-2 What is the fundamental purpose of D.A.T.E.?

The purpose of D.A.T.E. is to award educators for outstanding work above and beyond their normal job duties, specifically for their contributions to improving student achievement.

A-3 How is the District Awards of Teacher Excellence program different from the Texas Educator Excellence Grant?

The District Awards for Teacher Excellence (D.A.T.E.) is a district level grant, while the Texas Educator Excellence Grant (TEEG) is a campus level grant. Unlike TEEG, D.A.T.E. does not have an eligibility list rather all districts in Texas are eligible to apply to D.A.T.E.

A-4 Are campuses receiving the Texas Educator Excellence Grant able to receive awards under the District Awards for Teacher Excellence?

Yes, districts can have both TEEG and D.A.T.E. awards. If districts have TEEG awards as well as a D.A.T.E. award, districts will want to coordinate with all the involved campuses so that teachers and other campus personnel are aware of eligibility for either award program. Districts will have to decide to include or exclude TEEG campuses in their D.A.T.E. plan.

A-5 Can D.A.T.E. funds be used to provide all professional educators in a district with a pay raise?

No, a district must make difficult decisions when designing their D.A.T.E. plans. A district must align their D.A.T.E. goals with district goals to justify the practice of awarding certain educators. While there is a strong egalitarian mindset in education, and all educators in Texas schools work hard, a performance award system is meant to reward those educators who are most effective in producing learning gains in their students. It is not feasible that D.A.T.E funds be used to provide pay raises to all teachers in the district.

B. Grant Information

B-1 How can a district obtain materials needed to apply for a D.A.T.E. award?

Districts can download the D.A.T.E. Request For Application (RFA) and other grant application materials at the TEA Grant Opportunities page at: <http://burlson.tea.state.tx.us/GrantOpportunities/forms/>.

B-2 When are D.A.T.E. applications due?

The D.A.T.E. application is due to the TEA Document Control Center by **5:00pm CST on Tuesday, April 8th**.

B-3 What are the important grant dates?

Date	Event
Friday, October 26, 2007	Notice of Intent to Apply due
Friday, October 26, 2007	Publication of Grant Application, Application Guidelines, Schedules and Schedule Instructions on TEA Website
Early November 2007	Districts receive estimated award amount notification
Monday, December 31, 2007	Districts receive revised award amount notification
Monday, March 3, 2008	Districts receive revised award amount notification
Tuesday, April 8, 2008	<i>Application is due to the TEA Document Control Center, 5:00 p.m., Central Time</i>
Monday, September 1, 2008	Beginning date of project
Sunday, February 28, 2010	Ending date of project
Wednesday, March 31, 2010	Final Expenditure Report due to TEA
Wednesday, March 31, 2010	Final Evaluation Report (and final product, if applicable) due to TEA

**Note: All of these dates *except* the final completion date may vary slightly as conditions require.

B-4 What criteria were used to determine district eligibility?

All districts were eligible to opt into D.A.T.E.. The district was eligible as long as it submitted a Mandatory Notice of Intent to Apply by October 26, 2007 by 5:00pm CST; agreed to participate in the required technical assistance activities as established by the Commissioner and published in the RFA; agreed to participate for at least two consecutive grant cycles (contingent on appropriations), including budgeting for matching funds; and agreed to complete required activities as described by the established timelines set forth in the RFA and found at: http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/eeg/datex/timeline.html.

B-5 Is list of eligible districts final?

Yes, only districts that opted into D.A.T.E. by October 26, 2007 and agreed to the required assurances make up the final list of eligible districts for D.A.T.E., Cycle 1. No other districts will be added to the list after October 26, 2007 by 5:00pm CST.

B-6 For the purposes of this grant, does the definition of a classroom teacher include permanent substitutes?

Part I funds of the grant applies to teachers that meet the classroom teacher definition, as defined in the TEC, §5.001(2). According to this definition, a substitute teacher is not considered as a school district employee employed under contract. The school district is not mandated by law to place a substitute on the minimum salary schedule (the district pays the sub's pay), and the substitute is not mandated by law to be given the 5 state days per year that are given to school district employees. Therefore, under this definition, a substitute teacher does not fall under the classroom teacher definition. Including full-time substitute teachers will be at the discretion of the school district.

B-7 Are half time teachers eligible for funding, like those assigned to career and tech settings?

As long as the teachers meet the definition of a classroom teacher as defined in TEC §5.001 and are able to meet the performance criteria, they may be awarded under Part I.

Please note that decisions to include or not include certain teachers are made at the discretion of the eligible district.

B-8 If a campus included in the District Award Plan will be closed or reorganized in the 2006-07 school year, will D.A.T.E. funds for that campus be available to teachers and other personnel who have been reassigned to other campuses that are not eligible?

Yes, for the 2008-09 cycle of D.A.T.E., districts are allowed, at their discretion, to provide Part I or Part II awards to teachers who were involuntarily transferred off one campus to another campus for 2008-09. If Part I funding is used, teachers must meet the criteria laid out in the district award plan.

Applicants opting to do this must state this activity clearly in the program narrative of their applications. Please note that decisions to include or not include certain teachers are made at the discretion of the eligible district.

B-9 Can districts choose to award funds to teachers who are new to the school or teachers who are retiring?

Yes, as long as the teachers meet the definition of a classroom teacher and are able to meet the performance criteria, they may be awarded under Part I. Teachers who retire at the end of the 2007-08 school year are allowed to receive awards; those who retired before the 2007-08 school year began are not allowed to be included. Teachers who retire mid-year are allowed to receive awards. Please note that decisions to include or not include teachers are made at the discretion of the eligible district.

Applicants opting to do this must state this activity clearly in the program narrative of their applications, as well as budget accordingly. Please note that decisions to include or not include certain teachers are made at the discretion of the eligible district.

B-10 How can a district obtain their grant award amount?

Districts can find a link to the most up-to-date award amounts on [the D.A.T.E. website](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/eeg/datex/award.html) at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/eeg/datex/award.html Click on “District Award Amounts.”

B-11 Do teachers in a district or in individual schools applying to participate in D.A.T.E. have to vote acceptance of the plan?

If a district plans to implement their program district-wide, then a vote on participation and approval of the plan is not required. If a district plans to implement their program within selected campuses, a simple majority through a campus wide vote at minimum including classroom teachers is required from the campuses chosen to participate in the program.

Although the TEA does not require districts to obtain a vote of acceptance of a plan from teachers and administrators, it is recommended that districts do in fact take a vote and obtain feedback in order to gain support and buy-in.

B-12 Are principals and other administrators eligible for D.A.T.E awards?

Yes, principals and other administrators can be awarded under Part II funds of the D.A.T.E. grant. Please see the requirements for the use of Part II funds in the D.A.T.E. RFA.

B-13 Can a less than satisfactory D.A.T.E submission be negotiated with the TEA and be resubmitted?

Yes, TEA will conduct a thorough review of all D.A.T.E. applications and negotiate when necessary.

To avoid a lengthy negotiation process, you can send your plan to the technical assistance team for review before submitting your application to the TEA. You can use the template on our website under Tools and Resources and email to teaperformanceawards@utsystem.edu.

B-14 Can a district that already has a performance award program submit that program for D.A.T.E funding?

Yes, a district may submit its current performance award program to receive D.A.T.E. funding. A district must ensure, however, that they are properly using Part I and Part II funds. For detailed information on the uses of funds, please see the D.A.T.E. program requirements.

B-15 Can one person submit the applications for the whole district?

Yes, the person who is designated as the Grantee Official, usually the Superintendent, can certify and submit grant application for the eligible district.

B-16 Is local school board approval of the district award plan required?

Yes, local school board approval of the district award plan is required. Districts are required to act pursuant to a board policy for submitting district plans to the Texas Education Agency.

B-17 What is the difference in purpose between Part I and Part II of D.A.T.E?

Grant awards to districts are divided into two parts. Part I funds represent a minimum of 60 percent of the total district award. These funds are used to award classroom teachers based on student improvement, growth, and/or achievement. Part II funds represent a maximum of 40 percent of the total district award. These funds can be used for stipends and awards for:

- (1) the recruitment and retention of teachers in critical shortage subject areas, in subject areas with high percentages of out-of-field assignments, certified and teaching in their main subject area and/or with postgraduate degrees in their teaching areas;
- (2) career, mentor, and master teachers;
- (3) on-going applied professional growth – To re-examine and restructure a campus school schedule to provide time during the regular school day for teachers to collaborate, receive professional development and learn new instructional strategies to become more effective teachers;
- (4) increasing local data capabilities to support instruction and accountability – To enable districts to design, develop, and implement data systems to efficiently and accurately manage, analyze, disaggregate, and use individual student to teacher data. An improved data system should assist a district in generating and using accurate and timely data to meet reporting requirements; support decision-making at the district, campus, and classroom levels; and facilitate research needed to eliminate achievement gaps and improve learning of all students;
- (5) awards for principals who increase student performance; and
- (6) other campus employees who demonstrate excellence through job-related performance criteria.

B-18 What is a classroom teacher, for purposes of Part I funds?

The Texas Education Code §5.001 defines a classroom teacher as “an educator who is employed by a school district and who, not less than an average of four hours each day, teaches in an academic instructional setting or a career and technology setting. The term does not include a teacher’s aid or a full-time administrator.”

B-19 Are individual awards required to be at least \$3,000? Can we provide awards in other amounts?

Research shows that in order for award amounts to be meaningful, it is highly suggested that award amounts be at least \$3,000 per teacher. Teachers listed in Part I must have the opportunity to receive a minimum award of \$1,000 as approved by the local school board. Part II funds have no minimum award amounts.

B-20 What is the purpose of requiring a contingency plan section in the D.A.T.E. proposal submission?

A district's contingency plan will provide guidance in the event that the total grant amount allocated to both Part I and Part II funds are not utilized (including unawarded awards). If funds remain, a district's contingency plan will identify how the district will distribute and/or use those funds.

B-21 Is the requirement that 60 percent of D.A.T.E funds be allocated to Part I program efforts a maximum or can a district allocate a larger share of its D.A.T.E grant to Part I award activities?

A district can allocate 100 percent of funds to Part I if they wish. A district cannot allocate more than 40 percent to Part II funds, however.

B-22 How should the 5% allowable deduction for administrative costs be determined?

If taken, the 5% for administrative costs should be calculated as a percentage of the total district award amount and should be taken from Part II funds.

B-23 Can you clarify between an administrative cost and an indirect cost?

Please see page 19 of 33 in the Part 2: Program Guidelines of the RFA for information on distinguishing between administrative and indirect costs.

B-24 What are allowable administrative costs?

Direct administrative costs may include those associated with accounting and other fiscal activities, auditing, and overall program administration. Direct administrative costs also include salaries and benefits for staff who supervise activities of program staff and insurance that protects your organization.

B-25 When should districts and campuses plan to distribute funds to teachers and other district personnel?

Districts should expect to pay out awards under Part I between May 15, 2009 and October 15, 2009.

B-26 The district award is not sufficient to adhere to the grant requirement that each teacher cannot receive less than \$1000 and award all the teachers in the district. How will we be able to give them this amount, and will we still qualify if we are not able to give the least amount stipulated?

We recognize that districts will have to make difficult decisions as they implement their district plans. The award program was intended to award the districts' highest performing teachers and to target student improvement, growth, and achievement, in doing so the district award may not be sufficient to award every teacher in the district with a meaningful award amount. District awards may increase if districts choose not to move forward with D.A.T.E..

Within a district award plan, teachers listed in Part I must be able to receive (at a minimum) an award of \$1000 through the Part I funds. Please note, to ensure meaningful award amounts and improve the effectiveness of the grant award program, the TEA recommends the minimum award amount under Part I funding should be \$3000.

B-27 Do Part II awards have to be a minimum of \$1000?

No, the district can decide the appropriate award amounts for Part II funds.

B-28 Is it allowable to contract with a consultant to help prepare the application? (e.g., schedules, attachments, etc.).

Campuses and districts may use their own funds for consultants. However, the D.A.T.E. grant funds may not be used for this purpose.

B-29 How should districts and campuses handle legal suits or complaints as a result of this program?

There have been a very small number of isolated complaints to districts about this program. TEA has not learned of any legal suits to this date. Campuses and districts are encouraged to consult with their legal counsel in developing and implementing their plans. Personnel with complaints should follow district grievance process to settle any issues related to the district award plan.

C. Funding

C-1 Is D.A.T.E a competitive award? Can only a few of the districts applying receive funding?

No, D.A.T.E. is not a competitive grant. All school districts in the state are able to apply for the grant.

C-2 How are the district awards determined and are the award amounts final?

District grant award amounts will be based on the average daily attendance (ADA) for the 2007-2008 school year calculated among the total number of districts opting into the grant program. District award amounts may change with an increase or decrease in ADA in the second year of implementation. Districts will receive estimated award amounts in early November and revised amounts in January and February. However, additional funding may be added to the district awards if eligible districts decline to participate or become ineligible.

C-3 How can a district determine the amount of funding for which it is eligible under D.A.T.E?

Districts can find a link to the most up-to-date award amounts on [the D.A.T.E.](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/eeg/datex/award.html) website at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/eeg/datex/award.html Click on “District Award Amounts.”

The TEA will divide the total amount of grant funds available (\$147.5 million) by the total number of students in average daily attendance (ADA) of the districts that submit the mandatory notice of intent to apply. This calculation will result in the per student dollar amount to determine district grant awards [per student amount = (PS)]. If districts choose not to apply for the grant funds and remove themselves from consideration, the dollar per student amount for the remaining districts will increase. Districts will receive a grant award estimate based on 2006-07 ADA data.

Calculation: $\frac{\$147.5 \text{ million}}{\text{(ADA of the D.A.T.E. districts)}} = \text{(PS)}$

Your district 2006-07 ADA X (PS) = your district grant award.

TEA reserves the right to reduce funding in the event projections are determined not to have been realistic based on actual participation. Should additional unexpended funds become available for distribution, the commissioner will determine how these will be distributed. Grant funds may change from year to year, contingency upon appropriations. District awards are available at:

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/eeg/datex/ under “Participating Districts.”

C-4 How will funds from districts that do not apply be redistributed?

These funds will be redistributed to the districts that do apply to D.A.T.E..

C-5 If approved, when will D.A.T.E. award funds be supplied to my district?

Part II funds can be drawn down from the date of notice of grant award (NOGA) to the end of the grant period, excluding funds for awards to teachers or other district staff. The districts can draw down funds from Part I and Part II for awards to teachers or other district staff between May 15, 2009 through October 15, 2009.

C-6 Will D.A.T.E. receive future appropriations by the state?

The renewal of D.A.T.E. funds is contingent on legislative appropriations. The Legislature has authorized \$147.5 million for this program. D.A.T.E. is currently funded for implementation in 2008-2009.

C-7 Is the district award amount for more than one year of funding or for two years?

No, the current award amount is for one year of funding for implementation during 2008-2009. Districts will receive an award amount for the additional years, contingent on future legislative appropriations.

C-8 Is it permissible to carry over unearned or otherwise unspent D.A.T.E funding into the next school year?

No, district may not carry over unearned or unspent D.A.T.E funds. Part II funds not used for awarding teachers and staff do however last until February 10, 2010.

C-9 If after submitting the D.A.T.E application, more state or local funding becomes available, can a district alter its plan to accommodate additional or larger dollar awards?

Yes, districts will be able to submit amendments to the D.A.T.E. application based on new award amounts.

C-10 In what form can a local district's contribution to the 15 percent matching funds to D.A.T.E take?

Districts can provide matching funds in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. Districts can find a list of potential matching funds on the technical assistance website, <http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards/Resources.html> and click on "Matching Funds".

C-11 Since award amounts have changed as districts have opted out of the D.A.T.E. program, what figure should a district use to determine the amount of their fifteen percent matching contribution?

A district should use the first D.A.T.E. award amount list published in October 2007 to determine their matching requirement amount.

C-12 Can TEEG funds be used as a part of a district's required 15 percent contribution to D.A.T.E?

No, funds from TEEG, GEEG, TAP, or BTIM grant programs are not eligible to be used as matching.

C-13 Can a district receive all of their award money at one time?

No, districts are required to distribute teacher awards allocated from Part I (a minimum of 60 percent) of the total grant award by no later than October 15, 2009. If the district chooses to use all of the funds for awards, the total grant amount may be requested as long as the final expenditure report and any final program reports are submitted at that time. Grantees will enter not more than 90 percent of the **final** cumulative expenditures in evaluation report. Upon TEA's receipt of the final program evaluation report, TEA staff will release the 10 percent reserve on the NOGA.

C-14 How long will it take to receive a reimbursement payment?

Depending on the payment request it can take up to approximately 10 working days to process.

C-15 When can funds for Part II professional development be drawn down?

Part II funds (a maximum of 40 percent) can be drawn down from the date of notice of grant award (NOGA) to the end of the grant period.

C-16 How does the district need to modify its policies or contracts for teachers and other employees who receive awards?

District employment contracts or local compensation policies must specify that qualifying employees may receive award payments to the extent authorized under the district award plan. Please consult your legal counsel with respect to this issue.

C-17 Does the district need to pay into the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) for awards to campus personnel?

Yes, districts must pay into TRS for awards to campus personnel. "Compensation paid under the awards for Student Achievement Program under Subchapter N, Chapter 21, Education Code and the Educator Excellence Awards Program under Subchapter O, Chapter 21, Education Code are eligible compensation for TRS purposes. Accordingly, compensation for service paid pursuant to award programs **initiated beginning with the 2006-2007 school year** under the authority of either Subchapter N or O of Chapter 21 of the Education Code, is eligible compensation for TRS purposes and must be reported to TRS and member contributions withheld" (TRS representative).

Please contact your local TRS point of contact or district personnel office for specific guidance.

C-18 Are districts required to pay health, social security, or other benefits on award payments (question not referring to TRS)?

Because employee benefits programs have different requirements and are administered through different agencies and organizations, there is no single answer to this question. Please consult with your legal counsel, business officer, or the appropriate agency or organization.

The benefits may be paid with D.A.T.E. funds. However, since this may reduce the award amounts to teachers and other staff the payment of benefits should be clearly explained to staff members. Districts may supplement the grant with other funds to pay for these benefits.

C-19 How does the district agree to carry on the program after funding ends?

TEA asks that the district consider financial sources that could be used to continue the program after the end of the grant period. The funding sources would have to be identified by the district. Districts may decide not to set aside funding for an awards program after the grant funds expire. Since applicants are required to contribute in-kind or cash matching funds, TEA would like districts to consider the feasibility of continuing the district award plan once funding has expired, although the continuation is not required.

C-20 If our district's estimated award amount increases, do we have to accept the entire amount?

No, the district does not have to accept additional award amounts if award amounts increase from the estimated amount given in November 2007.

C-21 Is the match in year 2 also 15 percent?

Yes, the matching requirement for year 2 will also be 15 percent.

D. Monitoring and Evaluation

D-1 How *might* a district appropriately evaluate the effectiveness its D.A.T.E award program?

Following the 2008-2009 school year, a third party designated by the TEA through the RFP process will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of D.A.T.E.

A district should also evaluate their own program to determine program effectiveness. The primary goal of the D.A.T.E program is to improve student academic achievement and award those educators who are most effective in doing so. As such, when evaluating the effectiveness of D.A.T.E. award programs, the following dimensions must be addressed:

- **Student achievement impact:** the evaluation should examine the relationship between systems changes (professional development, curricular and instructional supports, enhancements in data quality and access) and actual results in student achievement.
- **Teacher impact:** the evaluation should examine the relationship between the award program and alterations in employee attendance, leadership, and instructional practices.
- **School culture impact:** the evaluation should examine the impact of the award program on broader school level factors such as discipline referrals, student satisfaction, participation in extra curricular activities and school level student achievement.
- **Implementation fidelity:** the evaluation should examine the degree to which the performance award program was implemented according to the proposed plan.
- **Satisfaction:** the evaluation should examine the relationship between the performance award plan and the opinions and perspectives of key stakeholders such as teachers, administrators, students, association members, and community members.

D-2 If D.A.T.E. continues into subsequent years, will a district be able to alter its operational plan?

Yes, after Cycle 1 of the D.A.T.E. program (school year 2008-09) a district will need to resubmit its D.A.T.E. plan to receive subsequent funding. At this time, a district may make changes.

D-3 Can an accepted D.A.T.E program be altered during its implementation period?

Possibly, a D.A.T.E grant program may be amended anytime **before** the last 90 days of the grant period upon TEA approval. This process is not recommended. Any changes may be subject to a re-vote by the district planning committee.

D-4 How will the TEA monitor D.A.T.E project operation in local districts?

The district is required to submit progress reports as well as a final evaluation report to the TEA.

D-5 What kind of reporting requirements for D.A.T.E operation are expected of local districts?

Activity reports and the final evaluation report are expected, as follows: The first interim activity report is due on 1/31/09, the second interim report is due 5/31/09, the third interim report is due 9/30/09, and the final evaluation report is due on 3/31/10.

E. Technical Assistance

E-1 Are there technical assistance requirements for D.A.T.E. participants?

Yes, in partnership with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Institute for Public School Initiatives (IPSI) at the University of Texas System will provide statewide technical assistance to support the implementation of these programs. The primary goal of this technical assistance will be to provide Texas

school districts and charter schools with ongoing applied guidance in developing and implementing successful, research-based educator performance pay systems and to build capacity for long term support of these programs across the state. Technical assistance providers will include various partners.

A team of 2-5 individuals from each district is expected to attend one of the eight working sessions during Fall 2007 in addition to online modules and other TETN meetings. Please visit the D.A.T.E. website for specific dates and locations at:

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/eeg/datex/techassist.html

E-2 How can a school district communicate with and receive assistance from the TEA regarding D.A.T.E matters?

The TEA, in partnership with the University of Texas System, is providing technical assistance to assist schools and districts with the design and implementation of their district award plans. For technical assistance materials, tools, and other resources, you can visit

<http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teapeformanceawards>.

If you have any questions, you can email teapeformanceawards@utsystem.edu. To speak with a technical assistance representative, you can call our technical assistance help line at 512-579-5050 Monday through Friday from 8:00am-5:00pm.

E-3 What type of D.A.T.E. technical assistance will be available in the future?

Ongoing technical assistance is provided to districts through the technical assistance website, email, and call center. Subsequent technical assistance workshops will be available in the summer and fall (dates TBD).

E-4 Are there any national resources or websites that might provide additional information and research results for school district personnel contemplating the submission of a D.A.T.E. proposal?

Yes, the US Department of Education is providing technical assistance for the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF). Their website provides information on TIF plans, research, and other tools that can help in the design of a district's D.A.T.E. plan. For more information, visit <http://www.cecr.ed.gov>.

E-5 What will the learning modules mentioned as part of the technical assistance entail?

The scheduled Learning Modules are a set of web-based modules that can be completed by the members of your technical assistance team. Modules will ask participants questions, offers some guidance on the various issues that can arise in the creation and implementation of a district award plan, and provides resources from documents to online interviews with experts in performance pay programs.

F. Program Design/Use of Funds

F-1 How should a school district get started in designing a plan for submission to D.A.T.E.?

A district should first review their district goals and needs, and then choose the main areas that they would like to improve upon, at which point the district should develop district award plan goals. Districts will then design their D.A.T.E. plan around their goals and will consider issues such as the number and type of personnel to include in the plan, and type of support that will best help the district meet their goals. For more information, please see the step-by-step guide to designing a districts performance award program on the technical assistance website at

http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teapeformanceawards/tools_and_resources/index.html

F-2 How can D.A.T.E relate to a school district's overall goals?

A district's D.A.T.E. plan should directly align with district goals and aim to improve certain elements of student achievement.

F-3 Can D.A.T.E funds be used to retain effective teachers or to attract teachers in hard to fill subjects?

Yes, Part II funds of the D.A.T.E. grant can be used for recruitment and retention incentives.

F-4 Must a D.A.T.E plan include all schools and all grade levels in a district?

No, a district can choose selected campuses and grade levels to include within their plan. Based on district goals, a district may choose to structure their D.A.T.E. plans around certain subject areas, grade levels, or schools where the district is struggling. If a district chooses to implement a selected campuses plan, more than half of the campuses selected must be target campuses. Please refer to the program requirements for target campuses criteria.

F-5 What is wrong with a district simply copying a good plan from another district and submitting that as its D.A.T.E proposal? Does the state have a "model" submission package after which a district may pattern its D.A.T.E plan?

A district should cater their D.A.T.E. plan to their specific areas of need and the established district goal; simply copying a plan from another district does not specifically target these needs. The program goals, target campuses, target teachers/grade levels, and additional activities incorporated into one district's plan will not necessary work in another district. Districts are able to adapted components of other plans that support the district's goals.

F-6 May districts withhold awards from teachers who meet performance objectives, but who leave their school at the end of the school year in order to motivate teachers to remain on the campus?

Yes, applicants who choose to do this must specify this stipulation clearly in the program narrative of their applications and ensure that this stipulation is included in the public presentation of the plan. Please consult with your local legal counsel to develop appropriate requirements.

Districts may also choose to specify separate awards for returning teachers under the optional teacher initiative and commitment criterion in Part I. This award would be provided to teachers who meet the required performance criteria in Part I and also return to the campus the following year. Teachers who meet required criteria but do not return would receive the awards for meeting those criteria, but not the retention award.

F-7 Must all core subject teachers be included in the Part I plan?

No, each district may determine which teachers may participate in their Part I plan.

F-8 Can a team (e.g., fourth-grade team of nine teachers) be evaluated by the administrator regarding student improvement, growth, and/or achievement?

Yes, this is allowable.

F-9 Because of block scheduling, certain department chairs on my campus teach two 90-minute classes, thus providing 3 hours of instruction. Does the "classroom teacher" definition include teachers who teach 3 hours but have related administrative duties?

Teachers that receive awards from Part I funds must meet the TEC definition of a classroom teacher, including teaching in an academic setting for not less than an average of four hours. Teachers who operate in a more administrative capacity and do not meet this requirement can receive awards from the campus's Part II funds.

F-10 Can you award every staff member in the school if a campus reaches recognized status?

Possibly, student performance measures must allow teachers to be evaluated at either the individual or team level. Under Part I funds campus performance ratings alone are not sufficient measures of student performance. Campus ratings may be used as one measure of student performance under Part II, but must be combined, for every teacher participating in the Part I plan, with a team or individual measure. Teams may be grade level teams, departments, interdisciplinary teams, vertical teams, or other teacher groupings that are used on your campus. If you choose to evaluate teachers in teams, you must describe the team structure in your application.

F-11 How should Part I plans balance the performance of AP and honors teachers with those teaching students with special needs?

This is up to the discretion of the district. All districts are encouraged to develop award plans that will best further the learning needs and goals of their students and show student improvement, growth, and achievement.

F-12 Can full-time administrators receive award payments?

Yes. administrators at participating campuses may receive awards with Part II funds. Districts may also choose to make available matching funds to provide awards to campus administrators. Individual awards made under Part I of the grant may only be used for classroom teachers.

Please note that decisions to include or not include certain administrators are made at the discretion of the eligible districts and should be based on student improvement, growth, and/or achievement.

F-13 Can part-time or full-time instructional aides receive award payments?

Yes. Part II funds allow awards to be given to other campus personnel who demonstrate excellence. Districts can make the decision at a local level to include the personnel they feel help with student improvement, growth, and achievement including instructional aides.

F-14 If we target schools, do the schools included in the district award plan have to stay the same for two years? Can we "retarget" according to need?

No, you can retarget – the requirements state that you would target the same type of schools but not necessarily the same schools.

F-15 Can we award teachers based on campus ratings?

Yes, districts can award teachers based on campus rating only under Part II funds.

F-16 Are we able to use grant funds to improve out data management and analysis?

Yes, districts can use Part II funds to improve their data capacity, management, and analysis.

G. Performance Measures

G-1 What measures, in addition to TAKS results, can a district use to evaluate student and school academic progress?

There are many measures that a district can use to evaluate student achievement; multiple-measures lead to more robust results. For examples, please visit the technical assistance website at <http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards/resources> and click on “Performance Measures.”

G-2 By what means, if any, can instructors of non-core courses (e.g., P.E. teachers, music teachers, guidance counselors, and librarians) be included and thus be considered eligible for a D.A.T.E award?

As D.A.T.E. funds are comprised of Part I and Part II funds, there are multiple ways to include instructors of non-core courses into the award plan.

Any objective and credible measure – not just TAKS – that fits the district goals and objectives can be used as a basis of awards. Examples might include: PE: Percent of students who improve their time on a timed long-distance race; music – percent of students who make all-district; guidance counselors: increase in the percent of students who take the SAT/ACT, or complete a FAFSA; librarians: X percent increase in students passing 4th grade reading TAKS.

Whichever measures are adopted, it is strongly encouraged that they meet the requirements for credibility as discussed in the workshops and included in the presentation at <http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards/resources> and click on “Models of Performance Award Programs”. These models provide several suggestions for including non-core instructors in both Part I and Part II funds.

G-3 What are some examples of performance measures and goals that could be incorporated into a D.A.T.E reward plan?

A district can find examples on the technical assistance website at <http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards/resources> and click on “Performance Measures.”

G-4 Do individual awards to teachers have to be based on their students’ TAKS performance?

No, individual awards may be based on any objective, quantifiable measure of student improvement, growth, and/or achievement. TAKS fulfills this requirement, but other assessments, such as benchmark exams, end-of-course exams, portfolio assessments, or other assessments may be used as long as they are objectively administered and produce quantifiable results. These other assessments may be used along with or in place of TAKS.

G-5 How can student achievement for teachers whose students do not take TAKS be measured?

Individual awards may be based on any objective, quantifiable measure of student improvement, growth, and/or achievement. Assessments such as benchmark exams, end-of-course exams, portfolio assessments, or other assessments may be used as long as they are objectively administered and produce quantifiable results.

G-6 How should student achievement for fine arts and physical education classes be measured?

Individual awards may be based on any objective, quantifiable measure of student achievement. Assessments such as benchmark exams, end-of-course exams, portfolio assessments, or other assessments may be used as long as they are objectively administered and produce quantifiable results.

G-7 The Part I plan examples provided by TEA include more than one performance level for each criteria. Is it acceptable to use only one performance level?

Yes, the data sources, measures, performance levels, weights, and awards amounts provided in the TEA examples are not required.

G-8 What criteria or performance levels will NOT be accepted by TEA?

This is a non-competitive grant and thus TEA will negotiate with districts if their plans do not meet all grant requirements. Please refer to the online technical assistance documents for some examples of criteria that meet the requirements.

G-9 How can a district determine in advance what is or is not a realistic performance goal or set of goals to which teachers and others should be motivated to achieve? How does one avoid being too simple or too rigorous?

It is important for a district to establish performance goals that are rigorous yet attainable. District receive a limited amount of D.A.T.E funds, and therefore if performance goals are set too low, too many teachers will meet the goal, not enough funds will be available, and student achievement growth will not be meaningfully targeted.

One way to ensure goals are rigorous but attainable is to look at school, district and state-level trend data. The data must be disaggregated by sub-groups and analysis must take into account any demographic shifts impacting the data. In order to set rigorous but attainable performance targets, one approach is to compare the most effective teachers in each school to the district and state averages. If the most effective teachers have traditionally outperformed the district and state averages by 10%, then this may be an appropriate goal to set for all teachers in the school – one that is attainable, but also meaningful.

G-10 Can a school district use its own test in a D.A.T.E plan?

Yes, a district can use benchmark exams in its D.A.T.E. plan, but must ensure that all measures used are credible, reliable, and valid.

G-11 What test can be used if a district opts for TAP?

The TAP program uses the TAKS test to calculate value-added and award amounts.

G-12 What is the difference between TAKS and valued added systems?

TAKS is a state-wide system of assessment that helps districts determine the level of student achievement in their schools. Value-added is a methodology that uses TAKS (and/or possibly other measures) to determine a measure of the educational impact of a teacher and/or school of a given set of students in a given year in a given content area. TAKS scores are measures of student attainment and do not provide any indication of student growth. Since TAKS is not vertically aligned, it is not feasible to accurately assess the growth, or value-added, across school years for a given cohort of students.

G-13 Are there any achievement or student/school progress measures that a district’s D.A.T.E proposal should absolutely avoid using?

Yes, the primary goal of the D.A.T.E. program is to increase student academic performance and award those educators who are most effective in doing so. As such, a district should avoid using any measure of student or school progress that does not directly relate to the goals that the district or schools have for increasing student growth and performance. Any measure that does not satisfy the criteria for credible measures discussed in the workshop and available at <http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards> should NOT be used.

Consider benchmark exams that are common in districts. Although they are objective and standardized, they are problematic since most teachers administer the exam to their own students. If a district is convinced that the benchmark exam is the student measure it wants to use, it should implement a testing system that avoids teachers administering the exam to their own students without a proctor.

H. Data Management and Analysis

H-1 How do we determine whether we have the data to support calculation of value-added measures?

District data systems come in many forms and in many packages. In order to calculate teacher specific measures of any kind, you must be able to answer the following question affirmatively: Do you know

which students were with which teachers for each content area for each grade in each year? In other words, does your system support a unique teacher identifier over time?

Districts typically fall into one of the following categories:

We do not have the capability to match students to teachers.

We can match students to teachers, but not reliably.

We can match students to teachers, but it would take forever.

We can match students to teachers.

H-2 Is it permissible to budget Part II D.A.T.E funds to pay for outsourcing value added measurements?

Yes, a district can use Part II funds of their D.A.T.E. grant to pay an outside vendor for value-added calculations.

I. Value-Added

I-1 What is meant by systems of value added improvement?

The systems of value-added improvement involve data collection that divides the annual academic growth of students into two parts. Growth that can be attributed to the student based on the expected academic growth a student should make from year to year and growth that exceeds the expected academic growth and can be attributed to a teacher, school, and/or district. The latter is considered value-added. We hope to offer districts examples of systems of value-added.

I-2 Is a district required to use value-added?

No, the performance measures you use for Part I funding are entirely up to district discretion. However, value-added measures are the best available – but not perfect – performance measure for teachers and schools. For a discussion of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the options available to you, see <http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards>.

I-3 What if we want to do value-added, but do not have the data necessary to support it?

One way a district can build the capacity to measure value-added is to use D.A.T.E. funds to upgrade your data management system, or improve your capabilities of your current system with Part II funds to support subsequent implementation of value-added. Districts can also use D.A.T.E. funds to contract with a vendor or an ESC to calculate value-added. The TEA is currently in the process of compiling a list of approved value-added vendors and ESC's.

I-4 If we implement value-added now, do we have to use it as a basis for awards?

No, many districts have expressed an interest in using D.A.T.E. as a mechanism to implement value-added measures to be used as part of their overall effort to improve instruction and student performance. They are contemplating the delay of the decision to use value-added measures as a basis for distribution of Part I funds until after they have more experience with them.

I-5 Do we have the capacity in the district to calculate value-added measures?

Even if your district has the necessary data, most districts do not possess the capacity to calculate value-added measures which are based upon multivariate regression analysis. Many districts, however, have personnel who have experience using these techniques on their student-level records. With additional training, these districts could develop the internal capacity to conduct their own analysis.

Although not perfect, value-added systems are more fair and more valid than attainment systems. For an illustration of why this is the case, please see the presentation at <http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards> under “Tools and Resources.”

I-6 What is the most valid and fair measure of student academic progress, a measure of attainment or value added scores?

Value-added or growth measures are superior to attainment measures for a variety of reasons. Even if derived from highly valid assessment, attainment indicators are biased because they: Reflect prior achievement and family and student factors associated with achievement growth; reflect out-of-date productivity effects from prior grades and years (back to pre-school and early grades); are contaminated due to student mobility (and the bias differs across schools); and fail to localize school productivity to a specific grade level, but rather capture (at best) productivity effects from pre-school and onward.

Additionally, attainment measures provide institutions with the perverse incentive to “cream”, that is, to raise measured performance by educating only those students that tend to have high test scores, or those right at the borderline between attainment levels. The objective of value-added is to statistically isolate the contribution of schools to student achievement growth by controlling for prior achievement and all of the nonschool factors that contribute to growth in student achievement.

I-7 How can we communicate to teachers and others what value-added measures really mean?

Conceptually, value-added is not difficult to understand. Value-added measures growth in student achievement, rather than attainment, while taking student characteristics and past performance into account.

The calculation of value-added, however, requires some additional explanation that the workshop presentations at <http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards> is intended to illustrate. If you have any additional questions, please contact the technical assistance help line at 512-579-5050.

If you choose to use an external technical assistance provider for your value-added measures, the provider should have a strategy to explain their meaning, methodology, and reporting structure. Their efforts to communicate their value-added system and results should be considered a prime criterion for your internal deliberations regarding which provider you opt to use.

If you choose to calculate your own value-added measures, it is strongly recommended that you develop a robust strategy (e.g. in-service training) for teachers to explain what value-added is and how their value-added measures will be calculated and reported.

I-8 Who can we go to for assistance in calculating value-added measures?

TEA is establishing a list of external technical assistance providers that have the capacity to produce value-added measures for your district. A list of these resources is available at the TEA D.A.T.E. technical assistance website.

I-9 Can we use both teacher and school level performance measures?

Yes, many districts are employing just such a strategy. They are attempting to encourage collaboration with a school level award (e.g. all math teachers at a high school) and at the same time recognize individual teachers.

I-10 What do we do if we are small school and do not have a large number of classrooms that form the basis for a value-added based awards system?

Small schools do not have the statistical power to support teacher-level value-added measures and awards calculated the same way that medium and large districts do. In large and medium sized districts, all 5th grade reading teachers for example, are used as the sample for calculation.

If your district has only one 5th grade reading classroom, the alternative would be to compare the value-added measure of that classroom in the current year to that of the former year. There are some extra technical steps that have to be performed in order to do this, but conceptually it is rather straightforward.

An alternative might be to join with other small districts in the area, possibly through the Education Service Center, to enlarge the comparison pool for each grade and subject. Of course, each district's results are proprietary and can not be shared with other districts without contractual permission.

I-11 What about students who are assigned to interventions in a particular content area outside of the classroom? How do you account for this in an awards system?

One approach is to use a combination of school (or department in the case of high schools) level awards with teacher level awards. The effect of outside interventions implemented by the school is shared among the math teachers and the other staff involved in the math intervention. The distribution of awards would be derived from the design of each school's intervention.

In regards to the effect on the calculation of teacher-level value added measures, the effect of the external interventions are equated across all students *if all the eligible students receive the same treatment*. What remains, therefore, is the *teacher's* value-added to each student's academic progress.

I-12 Which students should be included in the sample for analysis and which are not?

It is strongly recommended that the criteria (e.g. minimum attendance) for inclusion and exclusion of students should be an integral part of the communication and engagement strategy of the district.

I-13 What about students who happen to have had a particularly bad day on the day the test was administered? Doesn't that make the value-added measure for those students' teachers unfair?

For measures based on large numbers of students, the effect of the "bad test" day for any one student is not substantial. Furthermore, in the same sample of students, you also have students who experience "good test" days that balance out the effect of the "bad test" day students.

For measures based upon small numbers of students – say less than 10 in a teacher-level system – this a legitimate concern. For a teacher or classroom to be included in value added calculations will require at least some minimum number of students. Researchers often use 10 or more.

I-14 Do you include students in a teacher's value-added calculation who had poor attendance?

For medium and larger districts, the answer is yes since there is sufficient statistical power to account for attendance in the value-added calculation. Small districts do not have the statistical power to account for attendance. They will need to make student specific determinations regarding whether to include students in the calculation.

I-15 Do you include students who were transferred into a class one month, for example, before the assessment is administered?

No, the amount of time that a student is assigned to a classroom to be included in a value-added calculation is a decision that you as a district needs to make.

I-16 Do you include students who have experienced a tragedy in their lives?

This is unfortunately all too common of an occurrence that affects students' ability to perform in the classroom and on state assessments. For measures based upon a large number of students in medium and large districts, the effect of any one student is not substantial. Furthermore, other students in the comparison samples are likely to have experienced similar tragedies, effectively accounting for the effect of such tragedies in the calculation of value-added measures.

Small schools will need to make this decision on a student-by-student basis.

J. Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

J-1 Why is a district communication plan crucial for D.A.T.E?

Buy-in and transparency have been proven to be key to the success of performance award programs. A strong communication plan can ensure that all stakeholders involved in the program will receive adequate information on the program's structure and design. For more information on communication plans, visit the technical assistance website at <http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards/Resources.html> and click on "Workshop Materials" and "Stakeholder Engagement and Communication".

J-2 What are the crucial components of a D.A.T.E communication plan?

A communication plan should aim to build support among all stakeholders for the new pay structure. You should determine your target audiences and design multiple means of communication (electronic, written, and face-to-face) to engage stakeholders. The communication plan should include goals, a timetable, and a feedback mechanism to insure your communication is being received and understood.

Three of the primary goals of a communication plan include: establishing regular and timely communication between district level leaders and each participating school; raising awareness of the program among teachers, principal and community members; and using positive publicity to promote the program. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the performance award program, a communication plan should include the following components: involve teachers at the outset; engage multiple communication formats on a frequent basis; the ability to clearly communicate the goals and structure of the award plan to multiple audiences, and the development of an ongoing relationship with the local media.

For more information on stakeholder and engagement, see www.cecr.ed.gov.

J-3 Who should be on a school district D.A.T.E design team?

A variety of stakeholders who will be impacted by the performance award plan should be on a district design team. Teachers must have a significant involvement in designing the plan. Districts should include (but not be limited to) various grade-level and subject teachers, administrators, district office staff, data or research staff, grant writers, school board members, and community members. As a rule of thumb, no more than 10 members should be on a design team. For more information, please see the Stakeholder Engagement and Communication section on the technical assistance website, <http://www.utsystem.edu/ipsi/teaperformanceawards/Resources.html>.

J-4 Are there examples of school district performance reward plans that have substantial teacher support?

Yes, Denver ProComp, for example, has received tremendous support for their district-wide alternative compensation plan. The teachers unions in the district and classroom teachers were included in the design of the program from the beginning. Texas districts, such as Austin ISD, have received teacher support for

their performance award programs as well. Plans that involve teachers in the design process and ensure that plans are well communicated and transparent generally foster teacher support.

J-5 What are some suggestions/examples for district support?

This is up to local control. Districts must approve district award plans, but the plans should be developed by district-level and/or decision making committee.

J-6 Please clarify the role requirement that plans be made publicly available (i.e., the “publishing” requirement).

We ask for district award plans to be presented to ensure that leaders, teachers, and the public in your district are informed and aware of your plan. The purpose of publishing the plan is to make the plan and award criteria available to campus personnel and other interested parties.

J-7 In regard to the publishing requirement, does the plan have to be published by the application due date, or can we provide information in the application about how it will be published when our application is accepted?

If the plan is not published by the start of the implementation year, please specify in your application where and when you intend to publish it.