

**District Awards for Teacher Excellence (D.A.T.E.)**  
**Texas Educator Excellence Award (TEEG)**  
**Performance Award Payout FAQ's**

**1) When should districts distribute Part I and Part II award funds to teachers and other district personnel?**

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

**2) What should a district do with any leftover funds?**

Any leftover funds should be distributed according to a district's contingency plan. Districts will have until February 28, 2010 to payout any funds under its contingency plan.

**3) Is it permissible to carry over unearned or otherwise unspent D.A.T.E funding into the next school year?**

No. A 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 28, 2010. A district will carry out its contingency plan to spend any undistributed award funds.

**4) Do districts 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.

**5) Are districts required to pay health, social security, or other benefits on award payments?**

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, this may reduce the award amounts to teachers and other staff. Districts may supplement the grant with other funds to pay for these benefits.

**6) How does a 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.

**7) Are districts required to pay out awards with a separate check?**

No, districts are not required to pay out performance awards with a separate check. Many districts include the payout amount as a separate line item in teacher and staff monthly paychecks. A district may payout with separate checks.

Please contact your district's payroll point of contact for specific guidance.

**8) How much time should we allow for payroll to cut checks?**

This will vary from district to district, but most district payroll offices need at least 30 days notification to include award on a monthly paycheck or to cut a separate check.

Please contact your district's payroll point of contact for specific guidance.

**9) Who should be involved in the payout process?**

Communication and planning are key to ensure a successful, seamless payout distribution. It is important to involve all people and departments that will be instrumental in the distribution of performance awards. Consider the following departments or individuals in your district:

- Accountability, Research and Evaluation, or Data Department
- Payroll department
- Human Resources department
- Person in charge of managing the D.A.T.E. and/or TEEG program
- Grants division, Business division, and/or person(s) in charge of drawing down grant funds
- Campus principals to verify data, award amounts, and communicate with teachers and staff
- Communications division or person in charge of informing teachers, staff, and external stakeholders of payout timelines and award amounts

**10) What is an award or payout verification process?**

Payout verification is a process to verify that all data and award amounts are correct prior to paying out awards to teachers and staff. The verification process may include the following steps:

- Verify that all data that determine award amounts are correct. This may include verifying teacher/student linkages, teacher and staff assignments, all documentation for grant activities, and student achievement data.
- Provide teachers and staff with an estimated award amount and documentation explained how the award was calculated. Have teachers and staff review and sign off to confirm accuracy.
- Allow a time period (30 days, for example) within which teachers and staff can inquire about their estimated award amount. Assign a person or persons to collect, investigate, and respond to inquiries.
- Once all award amounts have been verified, send information to HR and payroll for processing.

**11) Should a district communicate with stakeholders about the payout process?**

Yes. Communication is key to the success of a district's award payout. Districts should consider devising a communication plan to address payout timelines and the communication of award amounts given to teachers and staff. Consider all internal and external stakeholders and determine what method of communication is necessary and what message should be conveyed. Stakeholders may include:

- Payroll and human resources departments
- Local banks to make them aware that payouts will be included on monthly payroll checks (particularly in small communities)
- Teachers and staff
- Any other district department that may be impacted by the payout process
- School board
- Community and local media- be proactive!

**12) 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.

**13) What information should a district maintain with respect to award payouts?**

A district is required to submit documentation of award payout amounts for the external evaluation of the D.A.T.E. and TEEG grants. Districts are required to submit the following information on every teacher that received an incentive award payment from D.A.T.E. and TEEG funds. Teacher's:

- Full name
- Job title
- Last 4 digits of social security and/or PEIMS employee identification number
- Birth date
- Part I funds incentive award payment
- Part II funds incentive award payment
- Use of Part II funds for other allowable activities

Please consult your local district policies for guidance on document retention.

**14) Is a district required to make budgetary amendments to execute their contingency plan?**

Budget amendments may be submitted to implement the approved contingency plan in Part II of the D.A.T.E. and TEEG grants. The contingency plans were originally approved with grant submission, however there were no funds allocated since it was not known how much, if any, funds would be available. Standard budget amendments for contingency plans include moving funds from personnel to professional development and supplies. Districts and campuses may also move funds to extra

duty pay to allow time for professional development. These activities must be included and outlined in the original contingency plan.

Districts and campuses must follow their approved contingency plan. Changing contingency plans would not be acceptable. When submitting contingency plan budget amendments, new personnel cannot be included to receive incentive funds if they were not in the original application. The final day to submit a budget amendment for both D.A.T.E. and TEEG is November 28, 2009.