

www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-met-cps-teacher-performance-pay-20100602,0,909542.story

chicagotribune.com

Teacher compensation fails to pay off

Potential bonuses fail to lift schools' performance in two-year CPS pilot program

By Azam Ahmed, Tribune reporter

9:55 AM CDT, June 2, 2010

One of the nation's most ambitious efforts to link teacher compensation to student achievement has done little to improve test scores or retain teachers at participating Chicago Public Schools, according to a report released Tuesday.

More than three years after the pilot program was announced to great fanfare by Mayor Richard Daley and former schools chief Arne Duncan, now U.S. education secretary, selected schools are performing no differently than schools that did not implement the program, according to the research group Mathematica.

One of the schools taking part in the Chicago Teacher Advancement Program has been closed for poor performance. A few others have opted out of it. Perhaps most surprising, schools in the program for two years actually scored lower on assessments than schools in their first year of implementation, the study found.

While some view the study as evidence that such programs are ineffective, advocates say that with just two years of data, it's too early to judge the program, funded with a \$27.5 million federal grant, and the larger concept of performance pay.

School officials say that while they are disappointed, they are not surprised. Until the way teachers are evaluated and paid is changed, any effort to create compensation incentives will likely fall short, they say.

"Fundamentally, you still have the same performance evaluation and the same compensation system that every other school has," said Alicia Winckler, the chief of human capital at the school district. "Until you really change the base structures, I don't anticipate we'll see different outcomes."

The findings come amid national reform efforts to alter teacher pay and evaluations. Applications for the latest round of federal money to test such programs are due in little more than a month. Duncan is leading those efforts through grants like the Race to the Top and the Teacher Incentive Fund.

But research on such efforts has been mixed. A previous study of the national TAP model, which operates in more than 200 schools across the country, found some gains at the elementary level.

The program started with just 10 schools and is planned to roll out to 40 by 2011. The Chicago Teachers Union signed on after helping to shape how the program looked.

The pilot program pays bonuses to teachers based on student achievement and an evaluation rooted in a series of classroom observations. If test scores increase on the school level, everyone in the building is paid a bonus — from the custodian to the principal.

There are many hypotheses for why the effort has not measured up to what officials had hoped back in 2006.

Technical difficulties prevented linking student test scores to individual teachers. That meant assessments focused instead on the entire school's performance in the first year and across individual grade levels in the second year. In addition, average bonuses ended up being about half of what teachers were expected to get.

But the study tells only part of the story, proponents say. It looked at school performance in the collective, not individually, and does not measure things like the quality of teachers who remain in the school.

"We are eager to dig into this, to learn more about this and (examine) the schools that are on the right trajectory," said Patrick Haugh, a program manager at the private Chicago Public Education Fund. "I don't think two years of data are going to make or break final conclusions on the program."

Advocates of the program say a few schools have seen increased test scores.

Sumner Math and Science Academy on the city's far West Side, an elementary school in the first group in the program, has shown steady improvements in math and reading, they

say.

One recent TAP-related meeting at Sumner found fourth- and fifth-grade teachers congregated around a large desk as a lead teacher, Jacqueline Karriem, offered a lesson titled "Characteristics of Locating Text Examples."

They shared tactics in the classroom while Karriem, a national board certified teacher, took notes. She managed an efficient operation, with a timer sounding every few minutes to mark the progression of the lesson plan.

The practice allows teachers to collaborate weekly and review the same material at the same time, a real-time benefit that allows them to be on the same page when discussing curriculum, said Principal Delores Robinson.

She said the program offered a structure to get the school beyond the academic plateau they had reached.

"It's not about the money," she said. "It's more about the collaboration."

Winckler, the schools' human resources chief, said the district will leave out the TAP program when they apply for a slice of the \$437 million in Teacher Incentive Fund grants in July.

aahmed@tribune.com

Copyright © 2010, [Chicago Tribune](#)