

EDUCATIONAL



THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Report to the Education Interim
Committee

Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program Report

November 2021

Jonathan Collins
Research Consultant
Jonathan.collins@schools.utah.gov

Jimmy Hernandez
Research Consultant
Jimmy.hernandez@schools.utah.gov

Erica Horsley
TSSP, National Board, and ETHPS Program
Specialist
Erica.horsley@schools.utah.gov

Jennifer Throndsen
Director, Teaching & Learning
Jennifer.throndsen@schools.utah.gov

Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program Report

STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

U.C.A. Section 53F-2-513 requires the Utah State Board of Education, after the third year salary bonus payments are made, to evaluate the extent to which a salary bonus improves recruitment and retention of effective teachers in high poverty schools by at least surveying teachers who receive the salary bonus and examining turnover rates of teachers who receive the salary bonus compared to those who do not. Moving forward, the State Board is required submit this evaluation annually to the Education Interim Committee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2017 General Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 212, *Incentive for Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools*, which provides an annual salary bonus to eligible teachers in high poverty schools. This report is provided to the Education Interim Committee to evaluate the extent to which a salary bonus improves recruitment and retention of effective teachers in high poverty schools. During the 2020-2021 school year, 112 teachers received a salary bonus of \$4,147.04.

As noted in last year's evaluation, this evaluation does not find strong evidence that the salary bonus improves teacher recruitment and retention. It finds very little evidence that the program is being used to recruit teachers at high poverty schools. In terms of retention, for many of the teachers surveyed, their main reason for teaching in their current school is that they find satisfaction in working with students from low-income families and diverse backgrounds and the impact they make in the lives of their students. In other words, the data suggest that teachers stay in high poverty schools due to a broader subset of factors. Many teachers see the salary bonus as a form of recognition and find it motivating, but there was some acknowledgment that it might be discouraging for individuals who are not eligible for the bonus, but are working alongside eligible teachers. Furthermore, descriptive data suggest that recipients of the salary bonus have been persisting in high poverty schools for many years and would likely continue teaching in their current school regardless of any monetary incentives. Although eight teachers (17.8%) did indicate that the salary bonus encouraged them to reconsider leaving the profession or moving to a different school, a similar percentage of teachers shared that they expect to either leave the teaching profession or move to a different school within the next 12 months despite receiving the salary bonus.

BACKGROUND

In the 2017 General Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 212, *Incentive for Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools*, which provides an annual salary

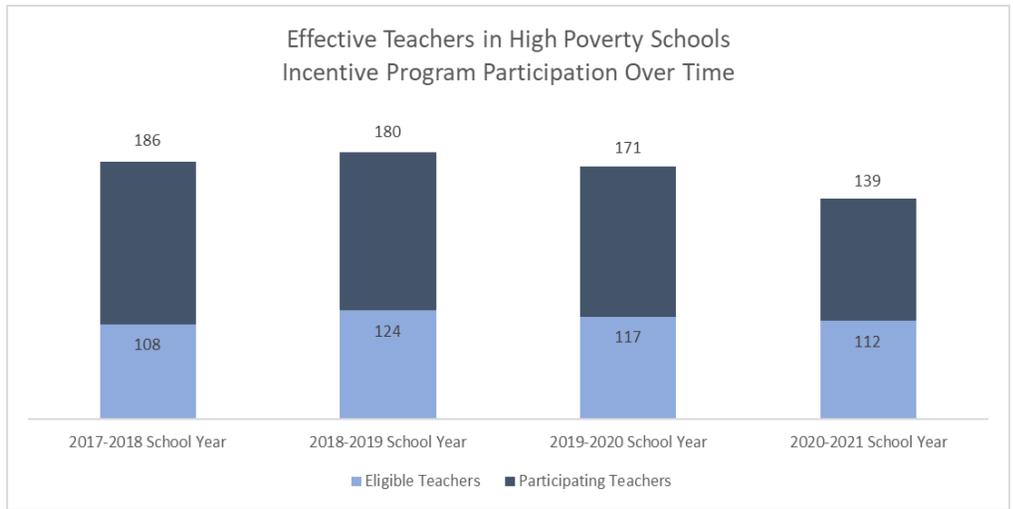
bonus to eligible teachers in high poverty schools. For the purposes of the program, a high poverty school means a public school in which more than 20% of the enrolled students are classified as children affected by intergenerational poverty (IGP) or 70% or more of the enrolled students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Alternatively, a school qualifies if it has previously met the 20% IGP criteria and for each school year since meeting that criteria at least 15% of the enrolled students at the school have been classified as children affected by intergenerational poverty or the school has previously met the 70% free or reduced lunch criteria described above and for each school year since meeting that criteria at least 60% of the enrolled students at the school have qualified for free or reduced lunch.

An eligible teacher must be employed as a teacher in a high poverty school at the time the teacher is considered for a salary bonus and, in the prior school year, achieves a median growth percentile of 70 or higher while teaching at any public school in the state a course for which a standards assessment is administered. During the 2020 General Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 107, *Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program Amendments*, which expanded the definition of an eligible teacher to also include a teacher who is employed in a high poverty school and teaches grade 1, 2, or 3, and achieves at least 85% of students whose progress is assessed as typical or better at the end of the year assessment while teaching at any public school in the state at which a benchmark assessment is administered as described in U.C.A. Section 53F-2-503. Initially, the annual salary bonus was \$5,000. In House Bill 107, the bonus was increased to \$7,000

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

In the initial cohort, there were 108 teachers who received the salary bonus. Since that first year of the program, participation increased with 124 teachers participating in the 2018-2019 school year, 117 teachers participating in the 2019-2020 school year, and 112 teachers participating in the 2020-2021 school year. In that first year, 2017-2018, 58% of eligible teachers participated in the program. In the subsequent years, the rate of participation among eligible teachers increased to 69% and 68% in 2018-2019 & 2019-2020, respectively. In the most recent year, 2020-21, 81% of eligible teachers participated. Program participation is illustrated in the figure on the following page. To further detail what program participants look like, participant teachers in the 2017-2018 school year had an average of 11 years of teaching experience in the year that they received the award.

A total of 284 teachers have received the salary bonus in the program's four-year existence. Eleven teachers have received the salary bonus in all four years or about 4% of the overall recipients. Another 11% of the teachers received it in three out of the four years.



SALARY BONUS

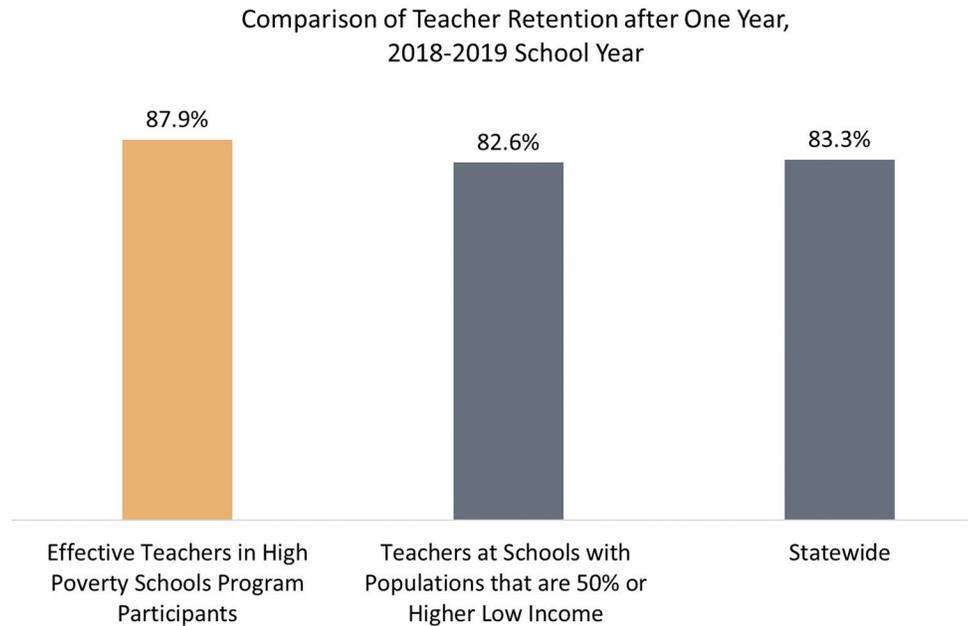
From the start of the program through the 2019-2020 school year, the annual salary bonus in statute was \$5,000 per eligible teacher. However, the Board has not been able to award the full amount because program participation has exceeded the funding appropriated for the program. The Legislature has appropriated \$250,000 ongoing for the program and charter schools and school district schools are statutorily required to pay half of the awarded salary bonus. Thus, program expenditures cannot exceed \$500,000 annually. The actual salary bonus awarded per teacher each school year is included in the figure below. As program participation has increased and the appropriation has remained the same, the bonus amount has been reduced with the most recent bonus being \$4,147.04 per eligible teacher.

2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
\$4,629.62	\$4,032.26	\$3,969.80	\$4,147.04

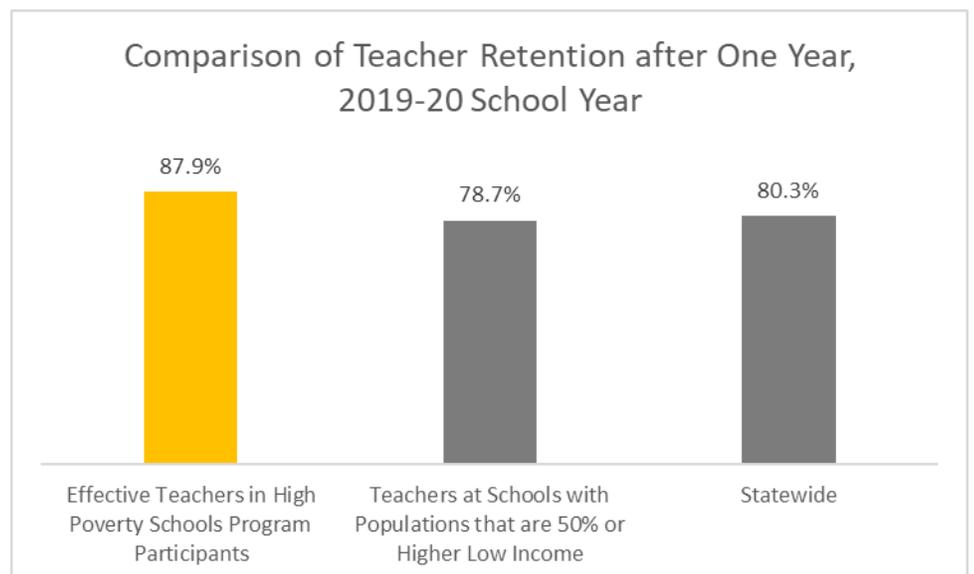
TEACHER RETENTION

As detailed above, 108 teachers received the bonus in the first year of the program. Of these teachers, 95 were employed in the same school in the following school year (2018-2019). This retention rate of 88% is higher than the

retention rate for teachers in schools where 50% or more of the student population is eligible for free or reduced lunch which was 83% over the same period. Statewide the retention rate for teachers employed in the same school in the 2018-19 school year was also 83%. These retention rates are detailed in the figure below.



Of the 124 teachers who received the bonus in the second year of the program (2018-19), 109 were employed in the same school in the following school year (2019-2020). This retention rate of 88% was also higher than in comparable low-income schools and the state average over the same period which were 79% and 80%, respectively. These retention rates are detailed in the figure below.



The following survey data delve into why program participants choose to continue to teach in their current school and indicate that there are a variety of factors to which

we can attribute the higher retention rate for program participants beyond just the salary bonus.

PARTICIPANT SURVEY

We administered a survey to the 112 recipients of the salary bonus in school year 2020-21. Thirty-three teachers completed the survey. We analyzed their responses (including 12 responses from teachers of previous cohorts) to evaluate the extent to which the salary bonus improves recruitment and retention of effective teachers. Although the response rate was lower compared to last year's (29.5% versus 64%), the results followed similar patterns.

Reasons for Teaching at Their Current School

At the beginning of the survey, teachers were asked to answer two open-ended questions, one of which asked them to briefly explain the main reasons for choosing to work at their current school. Similar to last year's survey results, results showed that teachers' reasons for teaching at their current school were highly altruistic. Their desire to work with diverse population of students and wanting to make a difference were among the main reasons for teaching in a high poverty school. This is consistent with what teachers expressed in last year's survey. Below are some responses representative of teachers' strong desire to work with diverse students and make an impact in their lives:

My school is like a mini U.N. I love the heterogeneous diversity of the student body, and I love the challenge of helping my students empower themselves in their learning...we need many different voices at the table. It is my goal to help as many voices as possible get to a position where they can choose to sit at that table if they want to.

I chose to work at Hillcrest Elementary because I felt like I could really make a difference and impact students as well as families. The students that I have the privilege of teaching will be some of the firsts in their families to graduate from high school and go on to higher education. I feel incredibly blessed and honored to be a part of that.

I chose to work at my current school because I want to teach where kids need good teachers the most. I also speak Spanish and want to teach at a school with a high percentage of Hispanic students...

I feel like I make the biggest difference working at a Title 1 school. I can come into a classroom and build the relationships that, in turn, help students grow emotionally and academically. It is challenging, and at times frustrating, but it is also motivating to see the progress kids can make.

Other reasons given for choosing to work at their current schools were linked to relational aspects of teaching, which included positive relationships with fellow teachers, effective school leadership, and the positive climate and culture of the school. Beyond these reasons, respondents also listed the teacher's proximity to the school, history in the community, and taking the first job that was offered.

Influential Factors in Deciding to Continue Teaching at a High Poverty School

When asked what factors are important in deciding to continue teaching in a high poverty school, largely teachers shared factors that are not associated with monetary motives. The most common influential factor mentioned was having a supportive environment created by their leadership and colleagues. Other intrinsic factors included those that align to the major reasons why many of the teachers choose to work at their current school which is their opportunity to make an impact in students' lives as described above.

Supportive administration and coworkers is probably my number one priority in deciding to stay. Being at a school that invests so much time and effort to building up a community so that our parents are also supportive has made a significant impact in my decision to stay as well.

A huge factor for me is the people I'm surrounded by at work. It's important that I have people who are positive and willing to work through hard things. I need people around me who are committed to making a difference for the kids we work with day in and day out whether they're with us for a week or six years of their education. A big reason I stay is because I know a lot of these kids need someone who cares and wants them to find success in life.

** Do I still have the ability to make a difference? *Do I still have the support of students and families? *Does the administration encourage and support teachers? *Am I still needed?*

It is important that I connect with my students, so I can make an impact in their education. As long as I know I am making an impact I will stay. The biggest challenge is behavior and an attitude of defeat before they even try. As long as I am able to get through that, I will be able to help them understand math.

Only 4 of the 45 teachers (8.8%) responded that salary was one reason for staying. However, it was one among many reasons, and not their top for staying. Eight of the teachers (17.8%) explicitly stated that the salary bonus is influential.

Job Satisfaction and Salary

Teachers were also asked to rate their satisfaction with their current salary (not satisfied; somewhat satisfied; very satisfied; extremely satisfied). About 53% of teachers indicated that they were satisfied with their current salary while 47% were somewhat satisfied or not satisfied (13.3%). When asked if they had considered leaving the teaching profession because of salary, about 56% of teachers responded "Yes" and 44% responded "No".

Expectations Around Leaving the Teaching Profession

Survey respondents were asked whether they expect to leave the teaching profession within the next 12 months. In response, 37 teachers indicated "No" (82.2% of total respondents) while eight teachers indicated that they expect to

leave the teaching profession within the next 12 months (17.8%).

The teachers responding “No” were asked to specify the extent to which various reasons influenced their desire to leave the teaching profession within the next 12 months (one teacher did not respond). The most common reason provided for leaving was being exhausted or experiencing burnout. Seven out of eight teachers cited this reason as being extremely influential. The second most common reason was that they are not satisfied with their current school leadership or are frustrated with the lack of parent involvement (4 out of 9 teachers cite each of these factors as very or extremely influential). Further review of the responses shows that half of these teachers expect to retire within the next 12 months with the aforementioned reasons being influential in the decision. Related to salary, two teachers indicated that the need for a higher salary was very influential for wanting to leave the profession.

Expectations Around Leaving Their School

Teachers were asked whether they expect to move to a different school within the next 12 months. Only two teachers indicated that they expect to move to a different school. One of the two teachers specified several reasons as being extremely influential in their decision to move to a different school. Among them were relocating with their family, their preferred grade level/teaching position will be available, and they were offered a higher salary. For the other teacher, wanting to teach at a school in their desired location and not satisfied with current school leadership were somewhat influential reasons for wanting to move to a different school.

Recruitment and Retention

Similar to previous survey results, we did not find evidence that local education agencies (LEAs) are using the Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program on a broad level for recruitment. When asked, “Prior to receiving the salary bonus, did you know about the Effective Teachers in High Poverty Schools Incentive Program”, out of the 45 teachers who answered, 32 teachers or 71 percent indicated “No”. Those who indicated being aware of the program prior to receiving the salary bonus shared that they learned about it in the following ways, ranked from the most to the least common:

- 1) **Peers.** Several teachers learned about the incentive program because other teachers in their school received the salary bonus.
- 2) **School communication.** Some teachers became aware of the program through email communication, personal communication with the principal, or in a faculty meeting.
- 3) **Other media.** Other teachers read about it in a newsletter or an article in the newspaper while others heard about it in the news.

To further examine if the salary bonus serves as a recruitment tool, teachers were asked if they had recently moved schools because they wanted to be eligible for the salary bonus. Out of the 15 teachers who reported having recently moved schools, no teachers indicated that they moved because they wanted to be eligible for the salary bonus. This is similar to the last year’s results.

The subject of retention is a more difficult one to parse. As seen above, participant teachers have a higher retention rate at their schools in the year following the award year. However, descriptive statistics and survey data show that prior to the salary bonus program, recipients were already persisting in teaching at a high poverty school. For example, the school year 2017-18 cohort is made up of a group where almost 44% of the teachers had five to 10 years of teaching experience, followed by about 32% having 11 to 20 years of teaching experience, and 23% with 21 or more years of teaching experience. While a high percentage of these teachers have considered leaving the teaching profession because of salary (56%), their responses to open-ended questions reveals that many of the teachers teach and stay teaching in a high poverty school for reasons not related to salary or performance-pay incentives.

When asked if the salary bonus has influenced their personal career decisions, 27 out of the 45 teachers (60%) responded “Yes.” A review of their responses to this question shows that the salary bonus is viewed as a form of recognition and motivation by many of them.

Representative of such views, are the following responses:

It has made me feel good and made me feel that I am valued as a teacher. I thoroughly appreciate the honor of receiving the salary bonus.

I can see the impact I make in my students' lives, but the work I do is so much harder than when I was at a typical school. Being recognized and rewarded by my legislature and district is satisfying because I know they are aware of how much harder I am working...

Other teachers would restate their reasons for teaching in a high poverty school that is not connected to incentives. One teacher said the following, “It is not enough. I stay in a school like this because I enjoy teaching and I like kids”.

Along with the satisfaction and motivation that comes from being valued and recognized, some teachers (eight of them) did share that the salary bonus encouraged them to stay in their current school to a certain extent:

Working in a high-poverty school can be stressful and taxing on the staff. Of course my priority is helping the students realize that they can be successful, but knowing about the bonus makes me want to put in that extra effort. It also is a minor encouragement in staying at a title 1 school.

It helps to know that my efforts to give my students extra help are being recognized and identified as successful. This encourages me to continue in the profession.

It is one of the reasons I have stayed in my school as opposed to leaving for another school/ district.

While eight teachers did directly express that the salary bonus encouraged them to remain teaching in a high poverty school, a total of nine teachers indicated that they would be either leaving or moving to another school despite receiving the salary bonus.

Some teachers alluded to a possible unintended consequence of the program:

Teachers shouldn't feel they have to compete against each other to earn the incentive. It doesn't promote team work and it definitely doesn't promote working together so that ALL students succeed. In fact, competition to get the bonus has made it so some teams won't even work together.