



## **BEST: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **1) Why develop a strategic compensation plan?**

The need to rethink classroom teacher pay has existed in Texas for decades. Prior “step increases” and longevity pay charts were standard operating procedure for years, and all teachers could hope for was a step increase in pay and potentially a modest across-the-board raise. No merit system existed whereby the highest performing classroom teachers who advanced student success could be rewarded. No meaningful incentives existed to encourage teachers to limit discretionary leave during the school year in order to keep a classroom teacher where they can do the most good—in the classroom.

With guidance and support from the Board of Trustees and a dedicated committee of some 30 teachers, conversations about how to incentivize student success and recruit/retain high quality classroom teachers took place over the course of several years. Those conversations identified the need to completely rethink teacher pay in Bryan ISD.

### **2) What is “BEST?”**

Bryan’s Excellence for Students and Teachers (BEST) is an all-new strategic compensation plan aimed at increasing academic success and retaining the District’s talented classroom teachers. The plan focuses intently on a board goal targeted to improve student academic performance and another goal aimed at recruiting and retaining high quality classroom teachers.

The plan includes three modules, consisting of:

- (1) Increasing base pay, as budgets allow.
- (2) Targeted supplemental pay (for STAAR tested grades/subjects, high-need/hard-to-fill teaching positions).
- (3) Performance rewards bonuses (campus exceeded state standards, campus earned distinctions, classroom teacher attendance, student attendance goals).

### **3) How does the BEST plan help improve student success?**

The BEST plan incentivizes classroom teachers to move students ahead academically and limit discretionary leave. The system is designed so that *all classroom teachers* on a campus are rewarded when the campus does well academically. The plan gives classroom teachers of STAAR-tested subjects a supplement for taking on their

assignment and provides bonuses for all classroom teachers based on the entire school's achievements. Everyone wins when students succeed.

**4) How was the plan developed and who participated?**

The BEST plan is the culmination of several years of involvement by a 30-member, teacher-led committee. The committee, comprised of classroom teachers of primary and secondary grade levels and subjects, invited participation from the Board of Trustees, the community and the Bryan ISD Administration. Battelle for Kids, a nationally-known non-profit organization that specializes in employee compensation plans, coordinated the effort and assisted in developing the tiered structure of the plan.

**5) Who earns incentive pay from the BEST plan?**

In order to target academic and attendance improvements, the BEST plan incentives are paid to *classroom teachers*.

Classroom teachers are most easily identified as:

- anyone whose primary duty assignment is classroom teaching (including having students assigned to them in the master schedule), and
- teachers who are annually appraised using the state's Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS).

**6) Why aren't principals, counselors and other positions included in the plan?**

The teacher-lead BEST design committee determined that the most effective way to improve academic performance was to apply incentives where they could have the greatest impact: classroom teachers.

**7) Will I still receive a payout if I'm promoted within Bryan ISD during the school year?**

Yes.

**8) What happens if I move from one campus to another between school years? Do I still receive the payout?**

Classroom teachers are eligible to receive BEST payouts if they are required by the District to transfer to another Bryan ISD campus. Employees who transfer to another District campus as a result of their own requests are not eligible to receive a BEST payouts from the time spent at their prior campus.

**9) If I resign my position during/after the school year, am I eligible to receive a payout?**

No. Employees who resign during or after a school year (or are terminated) are not eligible to receive BEST payouts. With the exception of retirement at the end of the prior school year, classroom teachers must return to employment in Bryan ISD to receive incentive pay.

**10) I serve multiple campuses. How is my payout handled?**

Eligible classroom teachers who serve on multiple campuses will receive payouts in a percentage payment based on the time they serve each respective campus. For example, a classroom teacher evenly split between two campuses is eligible to receive a 50 percent payout, per campus, based on each campus' individual performance. There may be instances where one campus fell short of campus-level expectations, but the teacher's other campus met/exceeded standards, and in such instances the employee would be entitled to a proportional payout.

**11) If I teach multiple STAAR subjects, am I eligible to receive multiple STAAR-based BEST supplements?**

No. The teacher-lead committee did not create additional supplemental pay for teaching more than one STAAR subject.

**12) Who is eligible to earn base pay increases?**

As annual budgets allow, and with approval from the Board of Trustees, increases in base pay are available to all teachers.

**13) What are "performance-based rewards?"**

Performance-based rewards are extra pay for classroom teachers based on the performance of their respective campus/campuses.

— Campuses are eligible if they: exceed state standards for accountability and increase student attendance over a three-year average by .5 percent, or maintain a running three-year average of 98 percent attendance.

— Classroom teachers are eligible if they:

- Serve in their primary role at an eligible campus (see above).
- Have a satisfactory evaluation and a valid teaching certificate.
- Do not miss more than the equivalent of four full days of work utilizing local leave, old state leave, state personal leave and/or doc days. Leave such as military, temporary disability, Family Medical Leave Act, jury duty and school duty will not count against the four-day limit.
- Are employed by Bryan ISD by Sept. 1 and complete their contractual year.

**14) When are performance-based reward payouts received?**

Performance-based reward payouts are partially based on data received from the TEA each Fall. Payouts are made based on performance in the *prior* year and will be disbursed in the Fall. For example, for the 2016-2017 school year, payouts would be made in December of 2017.

**15) What are "critical assignment supplements?"**

Critical assignment supplements are stipends awarded to classroom teachers filling select positions, including teaching: one or more STAAR/EOC tested subjects,

bilingual/English language learner courses, math and certain other subjects.

**16) When are critical assignment supplement payouts received?**

Critical assignment supplements are paid in two increments, December and May. For example, for the 2016-2017 school year, critical assignment supplements are paid in December 2016 and May 2017.

**17) Are retirees eligible to receive a payout?**

Classroom teacher retirees who complete their contract year and whose attendance and campus performance meets the criteria for BEST are eligible to receive payouts.

**18) Who can I talk to for more information?**

Please call the Bryan ISD Department of Human Resources for more information: 979-209-1095.