



BEST: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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18) STUDENT ATTENDANCE/Pre-K: Can a campus qualify for attendance rewards if their campus did not meet standards for state accountability?

- How will data for the district-based attendance reward be calculated when we get additional Pre-K rooms/students?

19) DAEP Teachers: How do Module III supplements (classroom teacher performance rewards) work for classroom teachers at the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP)?

- How is DAEP's state accountability measured?

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1) ORIGIN: 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 to keep a classroom teacher where they can create the biggest impact — in the classroom.

How was the plan developed and who participated?

With guidance and support from the Board of Trustees and a dedicated committee of 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 discussions identified the need to rethink teacher pay completely in Bryan ISD.

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.

2) SUMMARY: 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* (campus exceeded state standards, campus earned distinctions, classroom teacher attendance, student attendance goals).

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.

What are “performance rewards?”

Performance 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.

3) GOOD STANDING DEFINITION: One of the eligibility requirements for classroom teachers is that they be in “good standing.” What is “good standing?”

Good standing can more easily be defined by what it isn't, rather than what it is. For example, a classroom teacher would not be in good standing if they are under investigation for inappropriate actions. School administrators and the Department of Human Resources will work cooperatively to assess an employee's standing.

4) PAYEES: Who earns incentive pay from the BEST plan?

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 \(T-TESS\)](#).



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

The teacher-led 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.

5) FULL-TIME TEACHERS: What is the definition of "full-time?"

Full-time teachers are classified as "greater than .5 FTE," which stands for "full-time equivalent." Classroom teachers who are designated as full-time teach more than 50 percent of the day in the classroom.

6) ASSOCIATE TEACHERS: Will associate teachers be included in the BEST plan if they are working within STAAR-tested classrooms?

No. Associate teachers are not classified as classroom teachers. They are not evaluated under the state's Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS).

7) BASE PAY RAISES: 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.

Is Module I (classroom teacher base pay) a guaranteed raise each year?

No. All employee pay raises are subject to board approval each budget cycle. Specifically, an increase in classroom teacher base pay (or any other position in the district) must be approved by board action and cannot be guaranteed in advance due to uncertain state funding, property values, enrollment growth and other factors that impact school funding.

8) PAYDAY: 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 2017.

9) STIPENDS: 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.

When are critical assignment supplements 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.

Do classroom teachers with a master's degree or a doctoral degree (or employees who are pursuing those degrees) earn any additional pay, under BEST?

The BEST plan retains the pre-existing stipends for advanced degrees.

10) PROMOTIONS: Will I still receive a payout if I'm promoted within Bryan ISD during the school year?

Yes.



11) LEAVE: If a classroom teacher is out on leave without pay that is officially designated FMLA leave, will they be eligible to receive appropriate BEST payments?

FMLA leave does not impact a classroom teacher's opportunity to earn the BEST incentives that they qualify for.

If I give days to the sick leave pool, are those days counted against me for eligibility in BEST?

No. Donations to the sick leave bank will not be counted as absences for BEST.

12) CHANGING SCHOOLS: What happens if I move from one campus to another between school years? Do I still receive the payout?

Yes. If the district determines a classroom teacher must move locations, that teacher is still potentially eligible to earn BEST incentives from their prior campus. Only in situations where a classroom teacher voluntarily transfers would they forfeit eligibility for BEST incentives from their prior campus.

13) RESIGNATION: 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.

14) RETIREES: 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.

Are "retire/rehire" classroom teachers eligible for BEST?

Classroom teacher "retire/rehire" employees are eligible for Module I (The base pay increase approved for 2016-2017). These teachers must meet the eligibility requirements for Module I (Finishing the contract year, returning to the campus they served the prior year, etc.). These employees are also eligible for Module 2 (supplemental pay) and Module 3 (performance rewards) if they meet the criteria for those modules.

15) SERVING MULTIPLE CAMPUSES: I serve more than one campus. 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.



16) STAAR: 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.

How do Module II supplements (dubbed the “STAAR stipends”) work for classroom teachers at the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP)?

Classroom teachers at DAEP who hold the appropriate certifications and who teach STAAR/EOC courses are eligible for Module II supplements.

17) PERFORMANCE EVALUATION: If an employee receives an unsatisfactory evaluation from a prior year, does that impact their eligibility for BEST Module II incentives for the current year?

Module II does not require other components of teacher eligibility.

18) STUDENT ATTENDANCE/Pre-K: Can a campus qualify for attendance rewards if their campus did not meet standards for state accountability?

No. A campus must “meet standard” to receive any or all of the Module III performance rewards.

How will data for the district-based attendance reward be calculated when we get additional Pre-K rooms/students?

Eligibility for the student attendance reward in Module III is calculated based on a weighted average of student attendance for the prior three years. The attendance percentage takes into account the size of the student body and the number of those students who are attending school. In other words, as the population grows, the students who are present or absent reflect their representative proportion of the overall enrollment. Adding additional classrooms or students does not change the attendance calculation.

19) DAEP Teachers: How do Module III supplements (classroom teacher performance rewards) work for classroom teachers at the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP)? How is DAEP’s state accountability measured?

DAEP will be paired with MC Harris for state accountability. If MC Harris is deemed “met standard,” by the state, DAEP classroom teachers are eligible for the incentives in Module III.

20) CONTACT INFORMATION: Who can I talk to for more information?

Please contact Tracy Coleman-Hilton at tracy.coleman-hilton@byanisd.org.