

Florence County School District, South Carolina Teacher Advancement Program

The South Carolina Teacher Advancement Program (SCTAP+) involves three districts and six schools (five elementary and one high school) with more than 200 professional staff and more than 3,000 enrolled students. Current state initiatives aimed at addressing teacher and principal shortages in high-need schools have included stop-gap measures that do not build local capacity. SCTAP+, in conjunction with the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), will begin to address local capacity building and work to improve student achievement and retention/recruitment. The program will aim also to test the effects of differential compensation on retaining and recruiting effective teachers.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

Seventy-eight percent of the target area students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and 47 percent of the area students are minority. Teacher turnover is 15 percent, which is 5 points above the state average. The project includes one high school where only 58.7 percent of students graduate; the high school has never made adequate yearly progress (AYP). The elementary schools in the project have moderate achievement levels but are marked by high achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students.

Background

District salaries are low nationally and, more important, in comparison to surrounding states that draw state teachers and potential hires away. Current state initiatives have not stemmed the tide nor do they build local resources. It is in this environment that SCTAP+ will begin to address recruitment and retention of effective teachers and principals.

Incentives

The short-run program will provide professional development, via master/mentor teachers, to begin building local capacity. The long-run strategy is to improve recruitment and retention with large annual bonuses and career advancement for effective educators. Incentives will range from \$2,000 for teachers to \$5,000 for principals, with additional monies allocated for teaching hard-to-staff subjects or in high-need schools. The bonus structure for teachers ranges from \$500 to \$10,000, and for principals it ranges from \$500 to \$23,000.

Evaluation

TAP professional development is driven partially by evaluation of teachers to establish where they are not their most effective at raising student achievement. State teachers have indicated that this evaluation-professional development feedback loop satisfies the demand that accountability be paired with equity.

Anderson Research Group will conduct an independent evaluation of SCTAP+ that focuses primarily on

LOCATION(S)	Florence, South Carolina
GRANT AMOUNT	Year 1: \$1,950,250 5-year total: \$7,023,345
DURATION	5 years
PARTNERS	None

quantitative data. The evaluation will assess program success on six objectives: (1) Has educator (teacher and principal) efficacy increased? (2) Has student achievement increased one standard deviation above non-TAP schools? (3) Is the applicant pool highly qualified and are all positions being filled by highly qualified teachers? (4) Have additional schools adopted any type of performance-based compensation? (5) Was a self-perpetuating performance-based compensation system developed? (6) a. What level(s) of compensation are most cost-effective in terms of student gains, and (6) b. what impact have bonuses had on principal recruitment and retention?

Resources

SCTAP+ will apply the Teacher Incentive Funds (TIF) to improve student achievement and to get additional schools to implement similar incentive programs. The TIF grant monies will be met by more than \$3 million in matching funds. Some local, state, and Federal funds will be reallocated at the school and district level to hire master/mentor teachers and to provide bonuses.

Data Systems

The TAP schools in South Carolina contract with SAS data services, and Dr. Bill Sanders, to calculate value-added scores. The TAP director, the Informational Services director, and local Information Technology director work together to create student-to-teacher linkages. Teacher evaluation data will be handled by Innovative Architects, which will work with SAS to synthesize observational data with the value-added data.