SUMMARY

The New Direction program included a planning period to ensure an effective, sustainable, and transparent system. The comprehensive, integrated system focuses on performance-based compensation (PBC), educator evaluation, professional development, career ladders for teachers, and data systems. The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) selected 10 schools in 7 school districts located in diverse geographical areas. New Direction provides financial incentives based on educator evaluation and professional development. Evaluators observe classroom and provide pre- and post-observation feedback to teachers. The school districts also provide ongoing embedded professional development (PD), professional learning communities (PLCs), and mentoring and coaching activities.

PROGRAM GOALS AND EVALUATION

Program goals are to improve student achievement in high-need schools and to recruit and retain effective teachers and principals in those schools. Other objectives are as follows:

• Develop and implement a sustainable statewide performance-based differentiated compensation system for teachers and principals based on multiple measures of effective practice

• Increase high-need student achievement each grant year

• Increase the number of effective teachers and principals in high-need schools in each year of the grant

• Increase the number of effective teachers in hard-to-staff subjects in high-need schools in each year of the grant

• Ensure project feedback and continuous improvement through an evaluation of program context, input, processes, and product.

State: Mississippi
Location: Jackson
Award amount (estimate): $10,764,975
TIF Cohort: 3
STEM Grantee: No
Number of districts participating: 7
Number of schools participating: 10
Number of teachers eligible: 349
Number of principals eligible: 16
Superintendent: N/A
Key program staff:
Cerissa Neal, Project Director
Email: CNeal@mde.k12.ms.us
REWARD STRUCTURE

The TIF PBCS provides an opportunity for licensed staff at the school to receive financial incentives for multiple categories of performance. All licensed staff are eligible for school-level achievement and growth incentives. All licensed staff in a particular grade are eligible for grade-level incentives. All licensed staff in a particular assessed subject area are eligible for subject-area incentives. Each licensed staff member who teaches in an assessed subject area is eligible for an individual incentive based on student performance.

YEARS 1–4 HIGHLIGHTS

• TIF supported the use of PD360, an online PD source, and staff received comprehensive training on the system.
• TIF supported the establishment and monitoring of PLCs to build teamwork and collaboration.
• MDE analyzed growth data from 10 pilot sites and disbursed incentive payouts to teachers in the seven schools that made schoolwide growth.
• MDE implemented a roster verification system to ensure accuracy of individual incentive payouts and an online teacher evaluation system that combines and maintains data from M-STAR and other components.
• MDE conducted training on and implemented the Battelle for Kids Formative Instructional Practices Model, Effective Principal Institute and Collaborative Learning Labs, and professional growth goals.
• The grantee contracted with IMPACT to provide assistance with management to include support for PLCs, principal training, compensation calculations, and coach and train as needed.

YEAR 5 OUTLOOK

The activities implemented during Year 5 will align directly to Objective 2: Increase high-need achievement by at least 10 percent in each year of the grant as measured by the Quality of District Index and Growth Model calculated by the MS Statewide Accountability System. The activities include more intense and focused PD for master teachers, and mentor teachers. This job-embedded PD will allow the educators to receive onsite training and coaching from veteran educators with proven records of success.

Sustainability

MDE requested a one-year no-cost extension for 2015–16, to include training on how to identify additional resources of funds to assist schools with sustainability after the grant period. Also, the MDE will host an online webinar on grant-writing, funding sources, and sustainability for administrators, business managers, and district leaders to seek funding for career ladder positions and other projects. Throughout the grant period, districts were responsible for a percentage of the outlay, which increased over time to assist with sustainability. The districts’ percentages are 10 percent in Year 3, 20 percent Year 4, and 30 percent Year 5. The MDE will also train school leaders on developing mentor teachers to fulfill some of the duties of master teachers. The MDE will work with the leadership teams of TIF schools to create and develop non-financial incentive-based programs to motive, recruit, and retain teachers. The MDE has contracted with an outside evaluator, Evidence-Based Education Research & Evaluation to conduct research on the effects of the grant in each pilot school. The research will involve ongoing analysis of student growth and achievement, educator effectiveness, and the fidelity of implementation at the state and district level.

PERFORMANCE-BASED COMPENSATION

MDE analyzes state assessment data to determine each level of PBC. Currently, only school-level incentives can be determined. Three of the 10 schools are eligible for school-level incentives based on growth in QDI scores for the 2013–14 school year. Individual teacher incentives will be determined and dispersed in February-March 2015.

All 10 participating schools have career ladder positions

• 1 master teacher position/per school with a combined salary total of $724,136.78
• 1 PD coordinator position/per school with an a combined stipend of $37,998.45
• 2 mentor teacher positions/per school with an combined stipend of $63,239.76