



## Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools | North Carolina

### SUMMARY

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WS/FCS) is implementing an educational model to improve student achievement in its high-need schools through improved teacher recruitment, retention, and rewards. Project STAR3 (School Transformation by Recruiting, Retaining, and Rewarding) addresses the problem of high teacher turnover in hard-to-staff areas. The project also directly addresses the need for individual staff at high-need schools to focus on high-quality, sustained professional development. Finally, Project STAR3 addresses student achievement in a deliberate, data-driven, value-added approach to ensure informed decisions about instruction. If the incentive pay successfully and significantly increases student achievement, then WS/FCS will adopt the strategy in more of its high-need schools.

### PROGRAM GOALS AND EVALUATION

The desired outcomes of the performance-based compensation system (PBCS) are

- Encouragement for all stakeholders to cooperate and raise student achievement in all classrooms, across all grades
- Retention of effective educators
- Recruitment of effective educators to serve in hard-to-staff positions through sign-on bonus incentives

The district TIF goals include improving the quality of lesson plans, school improvement plans, and teacher pedagogy through an observation-feedback-professional development system.

Winston-Salem/Forsyth is participating in the national Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) evaluation.

**State:** North Carolina

**Location:** Winston-Salem

**Award amount:** \$23,208,026

**TIF Cohort:** 3

**STEM Grantee:** No

**Number of districts participating:** 1

**Number of schools participating:** 15

**Number of teachers eligible:** 897

**Number of principals eligible:** 15

**Superintendent:** Beverly Emory

**Key program staff:**

Wayne Foster, Project Director

**Email:** wfoster@wsfcs.k12.nc.us

## REWARD STRUCTURE

The PBCS is based on student growth at three levels: classroom, grade level, and whole school. If students exhibit growth (all students/all subjects) at greater than .5 standard errors above the state average growth for the end-of-grade assessments, then teachers are eligible for a bonus if their personal development plans and classroom observations are rated at or above “proficient.” All staff in a school is eligible for a bonus at one or more levels (e.g., cafeteria staff, office staff at the whole-school level). As the state testing program begins at grade 3, our TIF project instituted the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in grades K-2 in order to include those teachers at the classroom and grade levels. Each year, approximately one-third of all staff earned a bonus, which ranged from \$500 to \$9,000.

## YEARS 1-4 HIGHLIGHTS

- Principals and participating teachers whose students demonstrated growth on the year's state assessments received awards through the PBCS.
- STAR3 schools participated in grant-sponsored professional development that consisted of such activities as coaching, data analysis, and professional learning communities (PLCs).
- All WS/FCS (even non-TIF) are now using the School Improvement Plan (SIP) process (based on STAR3) to set goals, track student data, and improve instructional practices for student outcomes.
- School administrators have been involved with instructional leadership training from National Institute of School Leaders and act as a PLC to support ongoing professional development in this area.

## YEAR 5 OUTLOOK

- All aspects of the project remain on track and highly active. WS/FCS extended the observation process to include “specials” teachers, and this feedback on teaching performance has been very warmly accepted.
- Professional development requests from school staff have more than doubled over the past 18 months; teachers are using coaching and observation feedback to inform their professional development needs.
- All measures associated with school improvement and instructional pedagogy at the 15 TIF schools have shown improvement: scores on school improvement plans, lesson plans, (unannounced) teacher observations, utilization of professional development, participation in PLCs, and quality of Teacher-Leader activities.

## SUSTAINABILITY

- The district is integrating many of the processes the TIF project introduced into the work of the district. This includes the use of the SIP rubric and feedback system, standardization of the lesson planning process, enhancing the focus on pedagogy (to augment the current focus on content), use of a district-wide professional development system, and modification of the Classroom Walkthrough to adopt practices inherent in the TIF observation system.
- WS/FCS is reviewing and analyzing the PBCS to identify which parts yielded significant positive changes in student and teacher performance. The NC Department of Public Instruction is using this information to consider future teacher compensation systems; the district is using it to potentially modify the current bonus paid to teachers for working in hard-to-staff schools to a performance-based system.
- The utilization of a nationally normed and developmentally appropriate assessment in grades K-2 has caught the eye of the NC Department of Public Instruction and the NC State School Board. Data provided by the district's TIF project provided part of the rationale for developing a State Assessment Task Force to study how to potentially modify the summative assessments used in the state.