

APPENDIX A
DISTRICT LETTER



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance

Month XX, 2010

Firstname Lastname
Superintendent [or other title]
District
Street Address
City, ST ZZZIP

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. Lastname:

Congratulations on being awarded a grant from the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF)! As you know, as part of your grant, your district has agreed to participate in an important national evaluation of performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems. This evaluation will provide important evidence about changes to traditional compensation systems for teachers and principals and whether they impact and improve student performance in high-need schools and bring about desirable changes, such as higher teacher and principal retention rates and the presence of more highly effective teachers.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 includes approximately \$100 billion dollars in funding to the U.S. Department of Education to support programs to improve public education, particularly in high-need schools. TIF is an important component of this effort and will distribute over \$400 million in new federal grants designed to support innovative approaches to reforming teacher pay. TIF supports performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems to help attract top education talent in high-need schools. In addition to providing funds for programs, ARRA mandates that TIF programs be evaluated to determine their effectiveness using the most rigorous methods possible. We know that teachers and principals are critical inputs into student learning but we know little about whether educator incentive programs improve student achievement. This evaluation will help inform educators and policymakers on these issues.

A team of experts, many of whom have worked extensively with previous TIF grantees and with districts on other teacher compensation reforms, will work with your district to provide technical assistance to help you develop and implement your TIF program. Also, for participating in this evaluation, your district has received a grant that includes at least an additional \$1 million dollars. Additional details about the project are provided in the enclosed information sheet.

We have contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, along with their partners Chesapeake Research Associates and the Peabody School of Education at Vanderbilt University, to conduct the study. A member of the research team will call you in the next few days to tell you more about the study and answer your questions. We anticipate this initial call will take less than one hour. During this call, a visit will be scheduled (approximately 2 hours) to discuss this study in more detail with you and other key personnel in your district. After the visit, a member of the team will follow-up to discuss any remaining issues and to discuss the next steps.

In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at (202) 208-7169 or at elizabeth.warner@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Warner, Ph.D.
Federal Project Officer

Notice of Confidentiality

Responses to the data collection activities will be used only for research purposes. The reports prepared for the study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific district, school, or individual. We will not provide information that identifies you or your district to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

The contractor follows the confidentiality and data protection requirements of IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183). The contractor will protect the confidentiality of all information collected for the study and will use it for research purposes only. No information that identifies any study participant will be released. Information on respondents will be linked to their institution but not to any individually identifiable information. No individually identifiable information will be maintained by the study team. All institution-level identifiable information will be kept in secured locations and identifiers will be destroyed as soon as they are no longer required.

Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is xxxx-xxxx. The approximate time required to discuss your participation in the evaluation is estimated to average 1.67 hours per response for superintendents/grant managers, 2 hours/other district staff, and 1.5 hours per response for principals of study schools. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimates or suggestions for improving this form, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4651. If you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual submission of this form, write directly to: [insert program sponsor/office], U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., [insert building/room number], Washington, D.C. 20202-xxxx.