Fields of Opportunities

STATE OF IOWA

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

DATE: September 25, 2007

TO: Administrators of Public School Districts
AEA Administrators

FROM: Kevin Fangman, Administrator
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SUBJECT: Additional Guidance on SF 277 Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program

The purpose of this memo is to provide answers to questions that have been asked since the Teacher Quality Committee Orientation meetings were held the week of August 13, 2007. If you have additional questions, please send them to Deb Hansen at Deb.Hansen@iowa.gov. The DE will continue to post answers to questions that are asked throughout the year on our website at www.iowa.gov/educate/content/blogcategory/56/902/ under Educator Quality.

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

1. **Are the teacher members of the Teacher Quality Committee (TQC) required to be members of the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA) or the local bargaining unit or do they simply have to be chosen for the committee by the local bargaining unit (if one is present)?**
   Senate File (SF) 277 only states that the certified employee organization needs to appoint the teacher representatives to the TQC. It also states that existing committees can be appointed to perform the functions of the TQC if the certified employee organization and district administration agree.

2. **How do we balance area education agency (AEA) teachers and teachers not members of an association in the decision-making process?**
   It is hoped that student achievement will improve by increasing the engagement of teachers and administrators in participatory decision making. It would certainly be expected that the TQC would solicit input and feedback from others educators who may not be association members.

DISTRIBUTION AND USE OF FUNDS

3. **How are other districts using teacher quality (TQ) funds at the building (attendance center) and district level? I would like ideas/samples that do NOT involve bringing in a one-time speaker.**

The law allows for the following use of funds - salaries beyond the normal negotiated agreement, substitute teachers, professional development (PD) materials and speakers, and PD content. Examples of how districts are using professional development funding include:

- Collaborative meeting time for teachers to engage in collective learning;
- Developing lessons that support and extend their learning from professional development experiences;
- Time to analyze student and teacher data related to the learning occurring as part of the district and building PD; and
- Hire substitutes to create release time for teachers to observe in each other's classrooms (peer coaching). The goal is for PD to be focused and ongoing throughout the school year so teachers develop the necessary skills that will transfer to the classroom.

4. Can we use money to hire substitutes when scoring Six Trait Writing or to pay teachers for Six Trait Writing training?

Senate File 277 does not give the TQC the authority to select the content of the PD. When the individuals who make the decisions about the content of PD plans determine that the Six Traits of Writing is the focus of district or attendance center plans, then SF 277 funds may be used to support the district or attendance center plans, as determined by the TQC.

Scoring papers is not an appropriate use of funds if it is routine scoring/grading. However, analysis and scoring of student work can be part of a professional development experience if it is a part of a PD program that follows the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM).

5. Are we locked into paying out certain percentages of the money?

Once the TQC decides on the distribution of the funds allocated in SF 277 the district has to disperse the funds according to the percentages outlined by the TQC.

During the Teacher Quality Committee Orientations held the week of August 13-17, it was recommended by all three organizations (Iowa Department of Education [DE], ISEA, School Administrators of Iowa [SAI]) that a majority of the money go to district and attendance center plans. This is based on the research that shows the professional development most likely to improve student achievement is a collective-team effort, data driven, frequent and sustained over time and connects pedagogy, content and students. Funds not spent the first year can be carried over to the next year.

6. Can PD money in SF 277 be used to pay for travel time between buildings in a school district?

No. Current district policies should be followed for reimbursing indistrict travel.

7. Does what we do need to be “researched based”?

Yes. Senate File 277 does state that all professional development plans, including district, attendance center, and individual plans, <u>must</u> follow the IPDM as outlined in Iowa Code Chapter 284.6. Per Iowa Code the PD must contain research-based

instructional strategies aligned with the school district's student achievement needs and the long-range improvement goals established by the districts.

8. **If the TQC agrees to recommend equal distribution for funds and administration agrees, will this be legal?**
Yes. The TQC can recommend equal distribution of funds between the three groups. Senate File 277 states, "…the use of funds shall be balanced between school district, attendance center, and individual professional development plans, making every reasonable effort to provide equal access to all teachers." During the Teacher Quality Committee Orientations held the week of August 13-17, it was recommended by all three organizations (DE, ISEA, SAI) that a majority of the money go to district and attendance center plans. This is based on the research that shows the professional development most likely to improve student achievement is a collective-team effort, data driven, frequent and sustained over time and connects pedagogy, content and students. Funds not spent the first year can be carried over to the next year.

9. **Can TQC funds be used to pay teachers for curriculum writing or to hire substitutes to release teachers during the workday to write curriculum?**
Curriculum writing by itself is not considered PD. When the individuals make the decisions about the content of PD plans, they need to be aware that the research shows the need for a guaranteed and viable curriculum. However, PD should be focused on the skills and strategies that educators need to implement the curriculum in the classroom. The IPDM and rules for district and attendance center plans require that professional development include student achievement data and analysis, theory, classroom demonstration and practice, observation and reflection, teacher collaboration and study of implementation and coaching. The analysis of curriculum and the analysis of instructional strategies used in the classroom may be a part of the planning cycle as described in the IPDM. Committee work to adopt, map, or maintain curriculum should not replace the time needed to learn new instructional practices. Other district funds should be used to support these efforts.

10. **If a district decides to pay for a PD day on a per diem basis and the district is short TQ funds to pay for the whole day, is it appropriate for teacher compensation funds to be used to cover the shortfall?**
No. It would not be appropriate to use teacher compensation funds in this manner. The funds would need to be taken from the district's general fund or some other eligible funding source such as Title II or Title V.

11. **Is it appropriate to use TQ professional development funds to reimburse TQC members for travel to and from the TQ orientation meetings?**
Yes. This would be an appropriate use of PD dollars.

AEA

12. How does this impact our AEA evaluation system?
The process of evaluation is not impacted. The teaching standards must be the basis of the evaluation process. The alternate criteria for the Iowa Teaching Standards will be developed this fall and noticed by the State Board.

13. Will newly employed AEA staff members such as school psychologists. occupational therapists (OTs), physical therapists (PTs), social workers, etc., be eligible for mentoring and induction? Can SF 277 funds be used to pay mentors for these groups?
"Beginning teacher" is defined as an individual serving under an initial or intern license issued by the Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE) under Iowa Code Chapter 272. Because school psychologists, OTs, PTs, and social workers are not licensed with an initial license from the BOEE, they are not eligible for mentoring and induction funding.

OTHER FUNDING RELATED

14. Is using the SF 277 money for PD to pay for an additional day of PD this year, considered supplanting the money that was formerly Pot 1 and 2?
No.

15. In the past, some districts have dispersed part of their PD funds on a per diem basis/not tied to any PD activity. Under the new legislation, would this be acceptable?
No. The funds must be used for professional development.

16. Can the PD funds be carried over from one year to another?
Yes.

17. When a district participates in whole grade sharing, which district pays a teacher who is employed by one district and engages in PD in the other district?
The district that holds the contract would pay the teacher for hours beyond the contract for PD.

ROLES/DECISION MAKING

18. Who decides or approves the PD plan?
The district PD plan is part of the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) and the procedures for approving the CSIP must be followed. The school district is responsible for ensuring that the attendance center plans and individual professional development plans are aligned with the district plan.

19. If the TQC doesn't decide on the individual plans, how can we make decisions about the distribution of funds for the three levels of plans?
Individual professional development plans are developed between the evaluator and the educator. These plans can be developed individually or with a team of teachers. The content of these plans is not public and TQC meetings are subject to open meeting laws.

During the Teacher Quality Committee Orientations held the week of August 13-17 it was recommended by all three organizations (DE, ISEA, SAI) that a majority of the money go to district and attendance center plans. This is based on the research that shows the professional development most likely to improve student achievement is a collective-team effort, data driven, frequent and sustained over time and connects pedagogy, content and students.

20. Does the TQC make decisions about the salary component that is awarded to districts as per SF 277?
No. The TQC has no authority over this funding.

21. Can the association members on the TQC block an additional PD day that was already planned from the year before?
The intent of SF 277 was not to disrupt professional development plans that are already in place, but to give teachers and administrators a voice in district professional development activities. The association members do not make unilateral decisions for TQC**.** The committee should work together to reach consensus about how the funds should be distributed across the three plans.

22. Is it okay for the TQC to become the PD committee within the district?
A district may choose to do this. This would increase the time commitment and expand the role of the teachers and administrators who agreed to serve on the TQC.

23. What happens when the TQC is at an impass on how to distribute the funds?
The TQC should strive to reach consensus rather than voting. If your committee is having a hard time reaching consensus, then it may want to obtain some technical assistance on consensus building and decision making. If no decision is made, then the money needs to be carried over to the next year.

MONITORING/COMPLIANCE

24. How will the work of the TQC be monitored?
The district plan is monitored via the CSIP process. Attendance center plans are monitored during the site visit process every five years. The distribution of PD funds is reported on the Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS).

25. Is there a timetable for implementation?
There is no specific timetable outlined in SF 277 for the PD component.

26. Do teachers have to attend PD when it is held beyond the contract day?
No. Teachers cannot be required to attend PD when it is beyond the work day as per the master contract.

MARKET FACTOR

27. Can we use Market Factor funds to address racial or ethnic diversity?
Yes. Market Factor funds can be used to improve the racial or ethnic diversity on a local teaching staff.

28. Does the TQC make decisions about how the Market Factor funds are used or distributed?
No. The TQC has no authority over this funding. The committee only makes recommendations.

29. Can districts pay for advertising for unfilled vacancies with the Market Factor funds?
Funds can be used to support activities for positions in an identified shortage area.

30. What are possible options for use of Market Factor?
Market Factor funds from the 2007-08 school allotment can be used for "salaries, educational opportunities and support, moving expenses, and housing expenses for the recruitment and retention needs of the school district in such areas as hard-to-staff schools and subject-area shortages, improving the racial or ethnic diversity on local teaching staffs, funding to prepare a teacher to attain a license or endorsement in a shortage area, or funding to support educational support personnel in pursuing a license in a shortage area.

PD PLANS

31. If a district serves K-12 students in one building, is one building level plan required or can districts have a K-6 and a 7-12 attendance center plan?
Having one plan for elementary and one plan for secondary would be appropriate.

32. Is there a required form or document for attendance center plans?
No. There will be additional guidance on how to develop attendance center plans. Watch the School Leader Update for more information.

33. Do we have to call our plans attendance center plans? Or can we use term building plan.
The use of either term is okay. "Attendance center plan" comes directly from the legislation.

MISCELLANEOUS

34. What happens to plans put in place prior to the legislation?
The district and individual plans put in place prior to SF 277 should continue as designed. The requirements for these plans have not changed significantly. Attendance center plans are newly legislated and the rules for these plans will be completed this spring. It is anticipated that the requirements for the attendance center plans will be similar to what is required for the district plans, but with a focus on attendance center data and goals. The TQC will have an opportunity to provide recommendations to improve these plans, but they do not have the authority to make decisions about these plans.

35. How is the portfolio impacted? Does the TQC develop evaluation forms?
The TQC is charged with monitoring the procedures for teacher evaluation. Technically the TQC has no authority over a portfolio system, but suggestions for improving the process would be within the role of the TQC.

There is nothing in rules or guidance from the DE that indicates that a portfolio system is a required process for organizing evidence for teacher evaluations.

36. Do we need to publish our minutes in the paper to meet the requirements for open meeting laws? Would posting minutes be adequate?
Posting the minutes would be in compliance with the open meeting law requirement. It is not necessary to publish them in the paper.

37. Is it okay to buy equipment such as projectors, Smart Boards, etc., with PD funds?
No. That was not the intent of this legislation.

38. Once the TQC determines how the PD funds will be distributed, does the school board need to approve?
No. The statute says this committee is to “determine” use and distribution of funds, not “make a recommendation” about use and distribution of funds.

39. Can the building administrator determine the individual teacher professional development plan goals?
All goals are to be based, at a minimum, on the needs of the teacher, the Iowa Teaching Standards, and the student achievement goals of the attendance center and the school district. There is a provision in the Teacher Quality Act that the individual plans are to have goals beyond the attendance center PD plan. The goals are to be set in cooperation with the career teacher and the teacher's evaluator.

The individual plan should align with the attendance center and district plan. It is clear that the plan needs to be developed in cooperation with the teacher and evaluator (with consultation with the supervisor if the evaluator is not the supervisor.) It is appropriate for the individual plans to be a team plan, and it is

possible for all plans to be the same or similar if teachers have cooperatively developed similar goals as part of a collaborative process.

40. What professional development for nurses will meet the requirements for the Teacher Quality Act?

School nurses who are eligible for the TQ program must complete an Individual Teacher Professional Development Plan, including the requirement that professional development be based on the Iowa Teaching Standards. When determining how to apply the Iowa Teaching Standards to the learning of a nurse, school nurses are encouraged to focus on the standards and consider nursing practices that align with the standards rather than focusing on the criteria statements that describe teaching practices. The individual plan also needs to address:

- the needs of the "teacher" – (replace “teacher” with “nurse”)
- the student achievement goals of the district - consider professional development related to the health and well-being of students that school nurses need to know and be able to do that will contribute to student learning. Developing learning opportunities for nurses may be best accomplished through collaboration within AEAs or cross-district collaboration.

The DE is currently developing alternate criteria for the Iowa Teaching Standards for professions other than teachers. These alternative standards will be useful to nurses.