

MEMORANDUM

September 7, 2012

TO: Board Members

FROM: Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

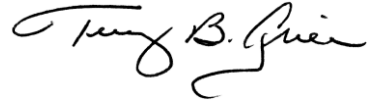
SUBJECT: **2010–2011 ASPIRE Award Survey**

CONTACT: Carla Stevens (713) 556-6700

The purpose of the ASPIRE Award Survey was to gain insight regarding the level of knowledge and perceptions of Houston Independent School District (HISD) teachers and staff after six years of implementation of growth-based performance pay in HISD, as well as their perceptions regarding the overall concept of teacher performance pay. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to provide recommendations to improve the ASPIRE Award program.

- Of the 18,747 Houston Independent School District (HISD) campus-based employees surveyed, there were 3,411 participants who responded to the survey (18.4 percent) administered in March 2012. Any conclusions drawn from this survey should be made with caution given the low response rate.
- When comparing survey results from last year, there was an increase in the percent of respondents who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance pay from 57.3 percent in March 2011 to 58.6 percent in March 2012.
- Based on survey data collected in 2009 and 2012, the largest percentage of respondents indicated that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the ASPIRE Award encouraged them to *use value-added data to make instructional decisions* in 2009 (59.9 percent) and that the ASPIRE Award encouraged them to *use standardized data to make instructional decisions* in 2012 (49.7 percent).
- When comparing the percentage of respondents that indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* toward the concept of the Teacher-Performance Pay Model and to the ASPIRE Award Program for that year, it was first reported at 44.4 percent (December 2007 survey administration), reached a peak of 53.5 percent in 2009, and was most recently reported at 48.7 percent (March 2012 survey administration). These results were after the payout of both models.
- Although the percentage of respondents that received training increased from 58.1 percent based on the December 2007 survey administration to 85.1 percent based on the May 2008 survey results, there has been a decline in the percentage of respondents reporting they received training by 34.6 percentage points from May 2008 to March 2012, and a corresponding increase in the percentage of respondents that indicated they did not receive training by 36.8 percentage points.

- Although a majority of respondents indicated that communication was *moderately effective* or *very effective* for the following statements: *providing clear explanations about the award model* (59.2 percent) and *providing clear explanations about value-added calculations* (54.7 percent), this is noticeably lower (65.5 percent to 76.8 percent) than for other areas surveyed.
- Based on March 2012 results, a higher percentage of respondents *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that their maximum award amount was commensurate with their professional contribution, 46.6 percent, compared to 27.5 percent who were *neutral* and 25.8 percent who *agreed* or *strongly agreed*.



TBG

Attachment

cc: Superintendent's Direct Reports
Chief Schools Officers
School Improvement Officers
School Office Accountability Managers
Bill Horwath



RESEARCH

Educational Program Report

2010-2011 ASPIRE
AWARD SURVEY

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND ACCOUNTABILITY
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



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DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Laurie S. Zimmerman, Ph.D. and Jennifer O'Brien
RESEARCH SPECIALISTS

Don Hilber
RESEARCH MANAGER

Houston Independent School District

Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center
4400 West 18th Street
Houston, Texas 77092-8501

www.houstonisd.org

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ASPIRE AWARD SURVEY RESULTS

FINDINGS RELATED TO TEACHER PERCEPTIONS, KNOWLEDGE, AND INPUT, 2010–2011

Executive Summary

Program Description

On January 12, 2006, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) Board of Education approved the Teacher Performance-Pay Program (TPPM) awarding teachers financial incentives based on three strands of performance pay. These strands involved campus-level performance on the state accountability rating and individual teacher performance on the basis of student progress on state and district assessment programs. The awards were paid out in January, 2007. The experience gained in the first year and consultations with national experts and teachers provided the impetus for recommending the improvement and enhancement of the model which then became the award program for the district's school improvement framework, "Accelerating Student Progress: Increasing Results and Expectations" (ASPIRE). The ASPIRE Award program has completed its fifth year of payout, occurring in January 2012 (the sixth payout for performance pay in the district).

This report provides the results of an annual survey administered on March 2012 and designed to collect perceptions and input from HISD teachers and staff after six years of implementation of growth-based performance pay (see the *2005–2006 Teacher Performance-Pay and 2006–2007 ASPIRE Award Survey*; *2007–2008 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring 2009*; and *2008–2009 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring, 2010* for previous results). This report addresses the district's strategic plan of providing an effective teacher in every classroom. Survey data focused on eight areas of interest that include:

- Background characteristics of survey respondents;
- Perceptions of respondents regarding the concept of teacher performance pay;
- Perceptions of respondents regarding their level of agreement to specific instructional practices or behaviors encouraged by the ASPIRE Award program;
- Perceptions of respondents and level of understanding of respondents regarding the Teacher Performance-Pay Model (TPPM) and the ASPIRE Award program;
- Number of respondents that attended Value-Added/EVAAS training sessions during the 2010–2011 school year, and level of understanding;
- Level of effectiveness for communicating information about the ASPIRE Award;
- Perceptions of respondents regarding their level of compensation and the ASPIRE Award model; and,
- Recommendations for changing the 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award suggested by respondents.

Highlights

- Of the 18,747 Houston Independent School District (HISD) campus-based employees surveyed, there were 3,411 participants who responded to the survey (18.4 percent) administered in March 2012. Among the staff that returned the survey and indicated an award category, 54.3 percent

were core teachers (Categories A–E), 12.5 percent were elective/ancillary teachers, 9.5 percent were instructional support staff, 7.0 percent were teaching assistants, 10.9 percent were operational support staff, and 5.7 percent were either principals or assistant principals/deans of instruction. Any conclusions drawn from this survey should be made with caution given the low response rate.

- When comparing survey results over the last six years, there was a decrease in the percent of respondents who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance pay from 69.2 percent in December 2007 to 58.6 percent in March 2012. However, the percentage of respondents who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance pay has steadily increased from a low of 55.2 percent after the 2010 payout to 58.6 percent after the 2012 payout.
- When comparing survey results from last year, there was an increase in the percent of respondents who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance pay from 57.3 percent in March 2011 to 58.6 percent in March 2012.
- Based on survey data collected in 2009 and 2012, the largest percentage of respondents in 2009 indicated that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the ASPIRE Award encouraged them to *use value-added data to make instructional decisions* (59.9 percent) and in 2012 that the ASPIRE Award encouraged them to *use standardized data to make instructional decisions in 2012* (49.7 percent).
- When comparing the percentage of respondents that indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* toward the 2005–2006 Teacher-Performance Pay Model and to the specific ASPIRE Award Program for that year, it was first reported at 44.4 percent (December 2007 survey administration), reached a peak of 53.5 percent in 2009, and was most recently reported at 48.7 percent (March 2012 survey administration).
- When comparing survey results from March 2011 to March 2012, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award Program was *very low* or *low* (1.4 percentage points), as well as a decrease in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award Program was *high/very high* (-1.4 percentage points).
- Although the percentage of respondents that received training increased from 58.1 percent based on the results of the December 2007 survey administration to 85.1 percent based on the May 2008 survey results, there has been a steady decline in the percentage of respondents that received training by 34.6 percentage points from May 2008 to March 2012, and a corresponding increase in the percentage of respondents that indicated they did not receive training by 36.8 percentage points.
- Based on March 2012 results, a higher percentage of respondents *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that their maximum award amount was commensurate with their professional contribution, 46.6 percent, compared to 27.5 percent who were *neutral* and 25.8 percent who *agreed* or *strongly agreed*.
- Based on survey results from March 2011 and March 2012, 35.7 percent and 38.9 percent of respondents *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that their maximum award amount encouraged them to remain in a campus-based position compared to 33.5 percent and 30.8 percent of respondents who *agreed* or *strongly agreed* and 30.8 percent and 30.3 percent who were *neutral* respectively.

- For 2012, 45.3 percent of assistant principals/deans of instruction, 42.0 percent of principals, and 40.0 percent of operational support staff *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award adequately recognized their efforts to increase student progress, reflecting the highest levels of agreement compared to the remaining eligibility categories and for those respondents indicating they were not eligible to receive an award who generally indicated the highest levels of *disagree* or *strongly disagree*.
- Although a majority of respondents indicated that communication was *moderately effective* or *very effective* for the following statements: *providing clear explanations about the award model* (59.2 percent) and *providing clear explanations about value-added calculations* (54.7 percent), this is noticeably lower (65.5 percent to 76.8 percent) than for other areas surveyed.
- When comparing results from May 2009 to March 2012, all areas of communication showed increases. Knowing *when specific information about my ASPIRE Award was available* reflected the area of communication for which respondents indicated the highest increases for effectiveness (8.4 percentage points).
- Based on the results of the March 2012 survey, 49.6 percent of respondents reported the *ASPIRE e-mail* as being *very effective*, reflecting the highest percentage for effectiveness when compared to the other four venues used to communicate information about the ASPIRE Award program. This was closely followed by the *ASPIRE website* (43.7 percent).
- Out of a total of 3,441 respondents on the March 2012 survey, 1,693 or 49.2 percent of the respondents provided at least one response for improving the 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award model. The four highest emergent categories based on the percentage of the responses centered on the following; commentary describing how the money should be allocated, including salary increases or across the board raises, how much money should be allocated, including general responses such as increase the award amount (18.6 percent); other performance measures (13.1 percent); on making the model equitable, transparent, and inclusive so that all employees were treated equally, compensated equally, or had the opportunity to receive the same amount of award as the top dollar earners (9.7 percent); and respondents indicating that the award amount was not commensurate with their professional contribution (6.6 percent).

Administrative Response

The Department of Human Capital Accountability has reviewed the 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award Survey Report. The report provides insight regarding the level of knowledge and perceptions of Houston Independent School District (HISD) teachers and staff after six years of growth-based performance pay, as well as feedback for recommending changes to the current model. The report will be shared with the ASPIRE Award Program Advisory Committee for the 2012–2013 school year.

Introduction

The purpose of the ASPIRE Award Model is to reward teachers for their efforts in improving the academic growth of their students. ASPIRE Award employs a value-added methodology that provides teachers with the information that they need to facilitate and measure student progress at the student, classroom, and campus levels. The ASPIRE Award is dedicated to achieving the following goals:

- Encourage cooperation in Professional Learning Communities;
- Be aligned with the district's other school-improvement initiatives;
- Use value-added data based on a national expert's methodology to reward teachers reliably and consistently for student progress; and
- Include core teachers at all grade levels, early childhood through grade 12.

The ASPIRE Award is based on the following principles:

- Performance pay drives academic performance;
- Good teaching occurs in all schools;
- Teamwork is valuable;
- Performance pay does not replace a competitive base salary, and
- Performance pay systems are dynamic and evolve over time.

Given these goals and principles, the ASPIRE Award involves three different strands of academic performance: Strand I–Value-added Campus Improvement (Campus-Level Growth); Strand II–Value-added Core Teacher Improvement (Individual Teacher, Department, and/or Campus Growth); and Strand III–Campus Improvement and Achievement based on Texas Education Agency (TEA) accountability, Campus writing achievement for all academic levels, and Comparable Improvement on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) (Campus-Level Growth and Performance) for middle and elementary schools and Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Dual Credit participation and AP and IB performance for high schools. Under the model, every HISD teacher has the opportunity to participate in at least two strands of the ASPIRE Awards (Strands I and III).

Methods

Data Collection and Analysis

- The ASPIRE award survey items were developed from previous surveys, reviewed, and approved by members of the ASPIRE Award Executive. The 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award Survey was administered on-line from Tuesday, February 21, 2012 to Monday, March 26, 2012. The survey responses were completely anonymous through survey monkey with no IP addresses collected. The survey instructions with the embedded link to access the survey were sent directly to campus-based employees by Battelle for Kids. The data obtained from the completed surveys were downloaded from Survey Monkey and analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft ACCESS. Items that were skipped or for which respondents answered "N/A" were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

Data Limitations

- Changes in the structure of the survey and coding practices limited comparisons to the results of previously developed survey instruments. For the March 2012 survey administration, data quality checks were conducted and corrected regarding skip patterns and questions pertaining to years of experience. Any conclusions from these results should be made with caution due to the low

response rate. The responses may not be generalizable to the population of campus-based staff who were initially surveyed.

Results

What were the background characteristics of survey respondents?

- Of the 18,747 Houston Independent School District (HISD) campus-based employees surveyed, there were 3,411 participants who responded to the survey (18.4 percent) administered in March 2012. Any conclusions drawn from this survey should be made with caution given the low response rate (Table 1, p.25).
- Of the 3,441 respondents, 2,911 indicated their ASPIRE Award categorization for the 2010–2011 school year. When comparing percentages of respondents by Eligibility Category from the previous year, there were increases in Categories F, H, I, and J (Table 2, p.25).
- The majority of respondents reported holding either a Bachelor's Degree (31.3 percent) or a Master's Degree (35.3 percent). The average experience in HISD was 13.2 years with the average experience at the current campus being 8.1 years, and the average experience in the current assignment being 7.3 years (Table 3, p.25).
- Approximately 93 percent of the respondents were employed in HISD for the 2010–2011 school year, and approximately 88 percent were eligible to receive an award. Eighty percent of the respondents indicated that they received an ASPIRE Award, and 64.3 percent received an ASPIRE Award under Strand II, an award based on teacher progress for the 2010–2011 school year (Table 4, p.25).
- Of the 1,513 December 2007 survey respondents, 65.6 percent indicated that they received an award. The percentage continued to increase through the March 2011 survey, where 90.3 percent of respondents received an award. Of the 3,441 March 2012 survey respondents, 80.1 percent received an award (Figure 1).

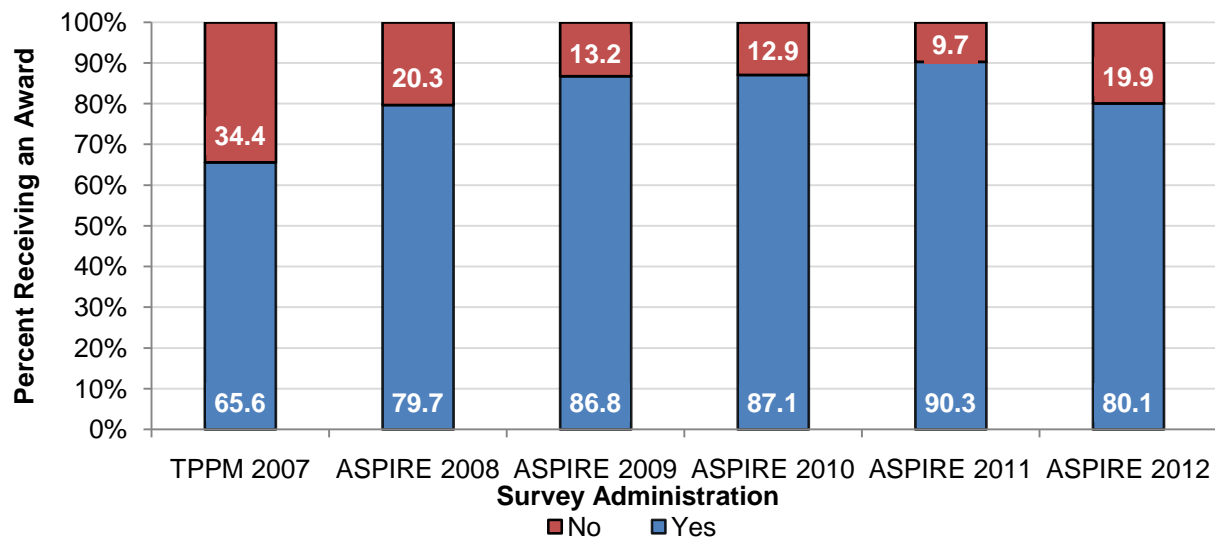


Figure 1. Percent of respondents receiving an award based on results of six survey administrations

- Over the past six years, the percentage of survey respondents who reported receiving an award increased by 14.5 percentage points, but declined by 10.2 percentage points from 2011 (Figure 1).
- On the March 2012 survey, respondents were asked to indicate if they taught in a critical shortage area. Since respondents may have taught in more than one critical shortage area, percentages are based on the total number of responses. Of the 3,242 responses, 12.0 percent indicated Special Education, 10.7 percent indicated Bilingual Education, 8.6 percent indicated English as a Second Language (ESL), 5.2 percent indicated mathematics, 4.4 percent indicated science, 0.8 percent indicated Spanish, and 58.3 percent did not teach in a critical shortage area (N/A)(Table 5, p.26).

What were the perceptions of respondents regarding the concept of teacher performance pay overall?

- When comparing survey results over the last six years, there was a decrease in the percent of respondents who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance pay from 69.2 percent in December 2007 to 58.6 percent in March 2012 (Figure 2).
- When comparing survey results over the last six years, there was an increase in the percent of respondents who were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* to the concept of teacher performance pay from 18.8 percent in December 2007 to 23.6 percent in March 2012.
- The percentage of campus-based staff *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance-pay increased from 57.3 percent after the 2011 payout to 58.6 percent after the 2012 payout, while the percentage *opposed* decreased.

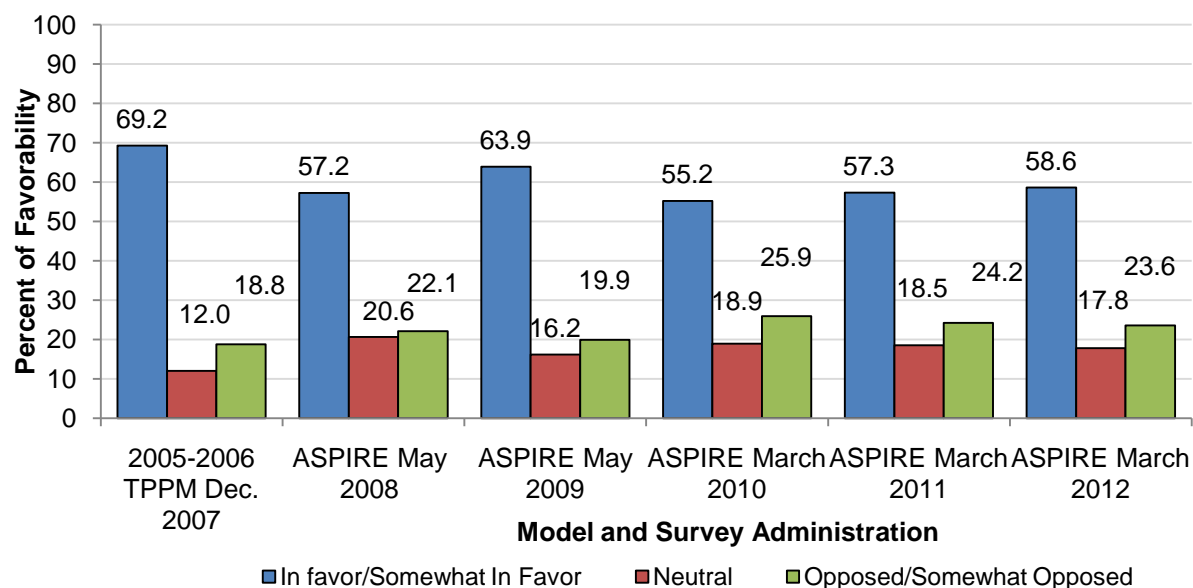


Figure 2. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of performance pay over six years

- When respondents on the December 2007 survey administration were asked how favorable they were toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth, 62.2 percent indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor*, compared to 47.6 percent of respondents in March 2012. However, the largest percentage still remains *in favor* of using student growth in performance pay (Figure 3).
- The percentage of survey respondents indicating that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth increased over the 6-year period from 24.5 percent in 2007 to 34.3 percent in 2012. However, there was a decline of 1.5 percentage points for survey respondents indicating they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* when comparing current results (March 2012) to those reflecting peak results (March 2010).

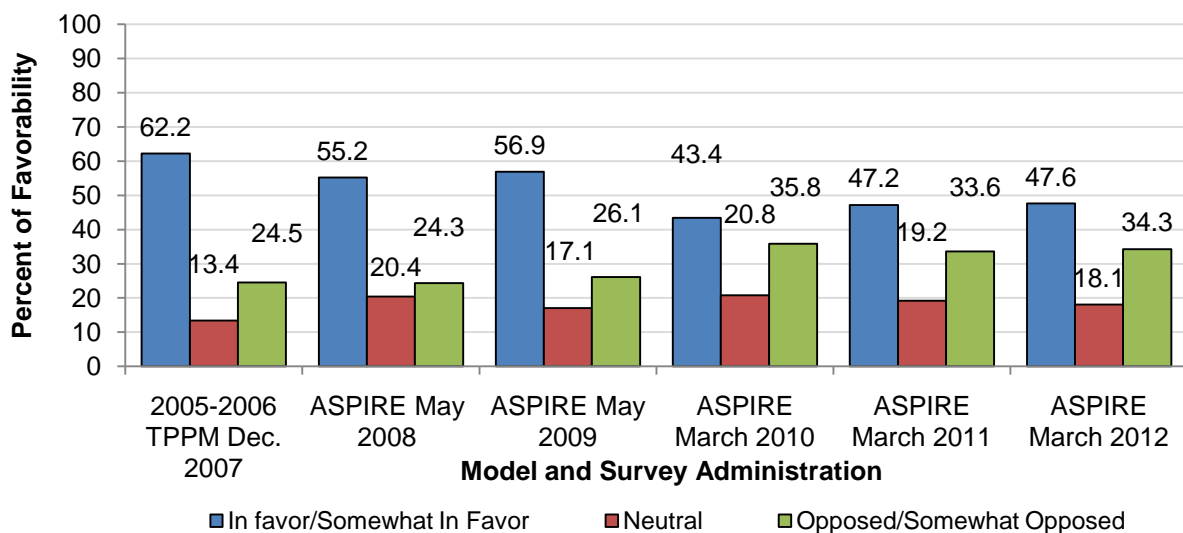


Figure 3. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth over six years

- Over the past six years, survey respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions about the concept of performance pay based on passing rates. When comparing overall survey results from 2007 to 2012, there was a decrease in the percent of respondents indicating that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* to teacher performance pay based on passing rates by 2.6 percentage points, although the largest percentage of respondents still remains opposed to using passing rates for performance pay (Figure 4, p.8).
- When comparing overall survey results from 2007 to 2012, the percent of respondents that indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates varied from year to year, but only increased by less than 1.0 percentage point (29.9 percent in 2007 to 30.8 percent in 2012).

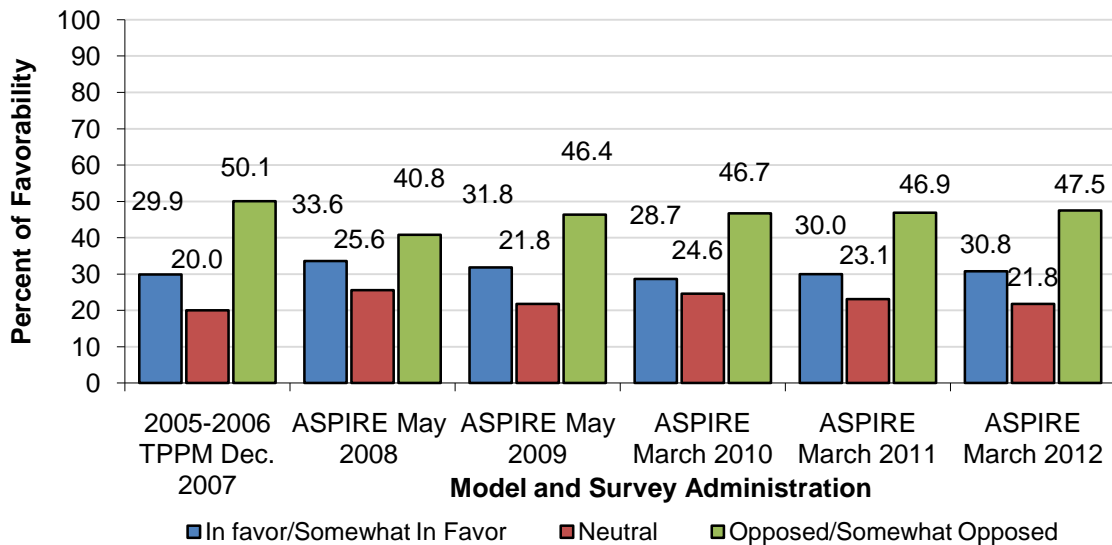


Figure 4. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates over six years

- Over the past four years, survey respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions about the concept of receiving differentiated pay as seen in Figure 5. The percentage of campus-based staff *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of differentiated pay decreased from 55.5 percent after the 2009 payout to 53.0 percent after the 2012 payout. However, when comparing results of the 2011 and 2012 survey administrations, the percentage of respondents *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of differentiated pay increased by 2.1 percentage points.
- Over the past four years, the percent of respondents indicating that they were *opposed* or *somewhat opposed* to differentiated pay increased from 22.1 percent in 2009 to 26.1 percent in 2012.

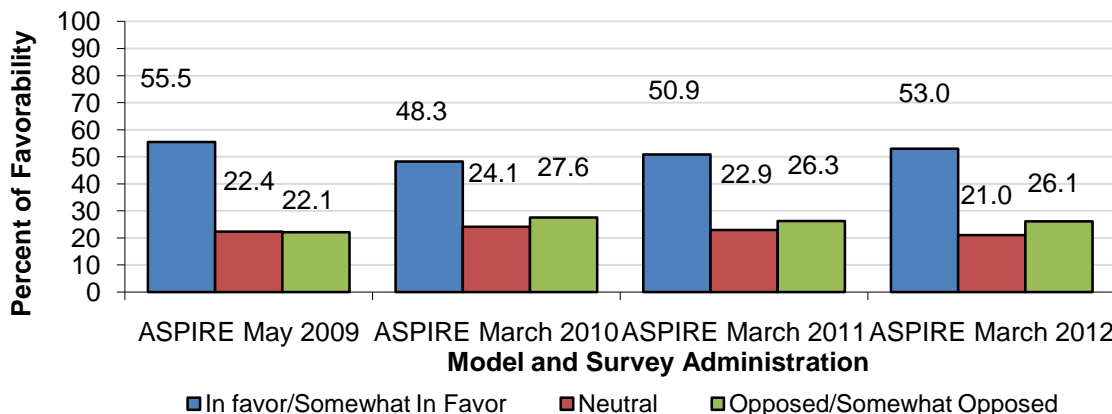


Figure 5. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of differentiated pay for the past four years

- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions toward the concept of performance pay overall, comparisons were made between core foundation teachers and non-core instructional staff (December 2007 and March 2012) as summarized in Figure 6. Based on results of the December 2007 survey administration, the percentage of core foundation teachers who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of teacher performance pay exceeded that of non-core instructional staff by 8.4 percentage points; whereas, March 2012 survey results indicated that the percentage of core foundation teachers who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of teacher performance pay exceeded that of non-core instructional staff by 1.7 percentage points. Favorable responses have decreased for both groups over the last six years.

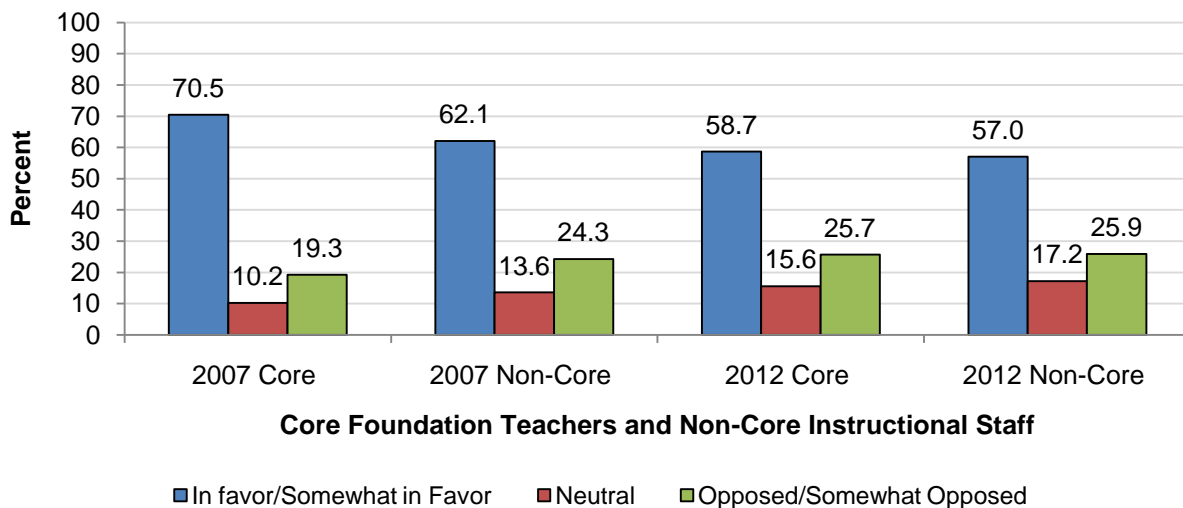


Figure 6. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay overall by core foundation and non-core instructional staff, December 2007 and March 2012

Note: To make 2012 comparable to the 2007 survey administration data, non-instructional employees (ASPIRE Award Categories H and I) (N=394) and Principals (ASPIRE Award Category J) (N=85) were not included in this analysis.

- Appendix A (p.30) compares differences in perceptions toward the concept of teacher performance pay overall by eligibility category (March 2012). Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 85.1 percent of assistant principals/deans of instruction indicated they were *somewhat in favor* or *in favor* toward the concept of teacher performance pay, reflecting the highest level of agreement of all the eligibility categories. This was followed by principals at 75.3 percent, core foundation teachers, grades 9–12 at 65.4 percent, and operational support staff at 64.5 percent.
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 31.4 percent of elective/ancillary teachers indicated that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay, reflecting the highest level of disagreement to the statement.
- For those respondents that self-reported they were Not Eligible to receive an ASPIRE award, 48.2 percent were *somewhat in favor* or *in favor* and 32.7 percent were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay.

- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth, comparisons were made between core foundation teachers and non-core instructional staff through time (December 2007 and March 2012). Figure 7 summarizes the results. The percentage of core foundation teachers who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth exceeded that of non-core instructional staff by 11.6 percentage points based on December 2007 results and only 4.4 percentage points based on March 2012 results.
- The percentage of non-core instructional staff that indicated they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth exceeded that of core foundation teachers by 9.8 percentage points in December 2007 compared to less than one percentage point based on March 2012 results.

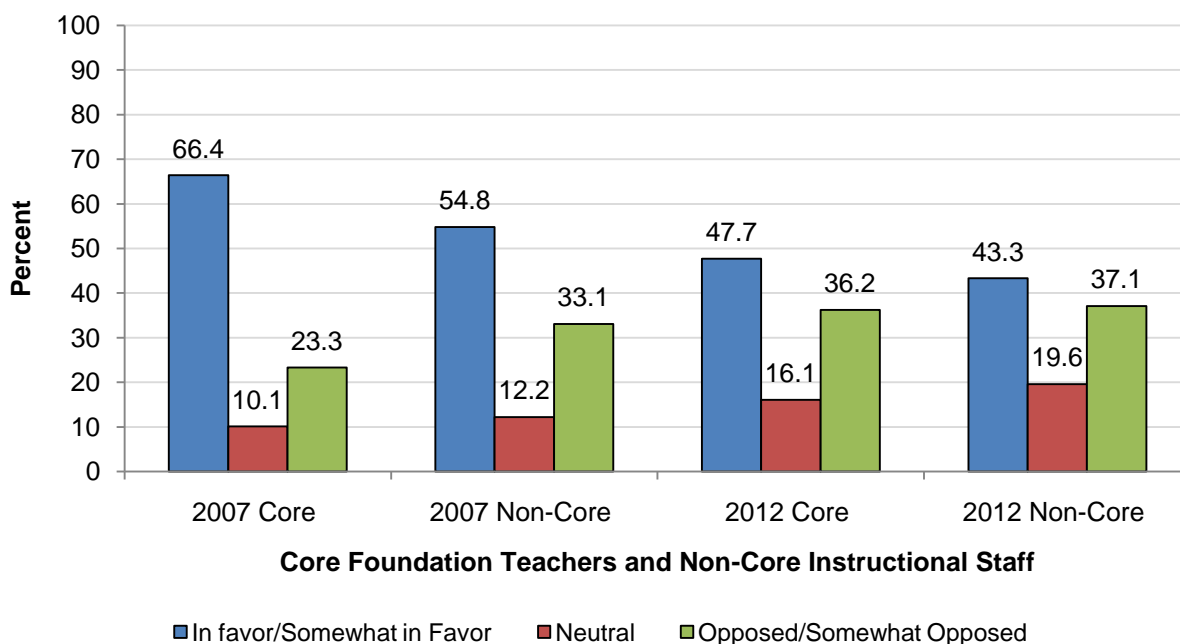


Figure 7. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth by core foundation and non-core instructional staff, December 2007 and March 2012

Note: To make 2012 comparable to the 2007 survey administration data, non-instructional employees (ASPIRE Award Categories H and I) (N=391) and Principals (ASPIRE Award Category J) (N=84) were not included in this analysis.

- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions between core foundation teachers and non-core instructional staff over time regarding favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates, comparisons were made using results from the December 2007 survey administration and the March 2012 survey administration. Figure 8 summarizes the results. The percentage of core foundation teachers who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of teacher performance pay based on passing rates only exceeded that of non-core instructional staff by 5.3 percentage points in December 2007 and by 5.8 percentage points in March 2012.

- Approximately 52 percent of core foundation teachers and non-core instructional staff indicated that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates for the December 2007 survey administration compared to 49.0 percent of core foundation teachers and 51.9 percent of non-core instructional staff based on survey results from the March 2012 administration.

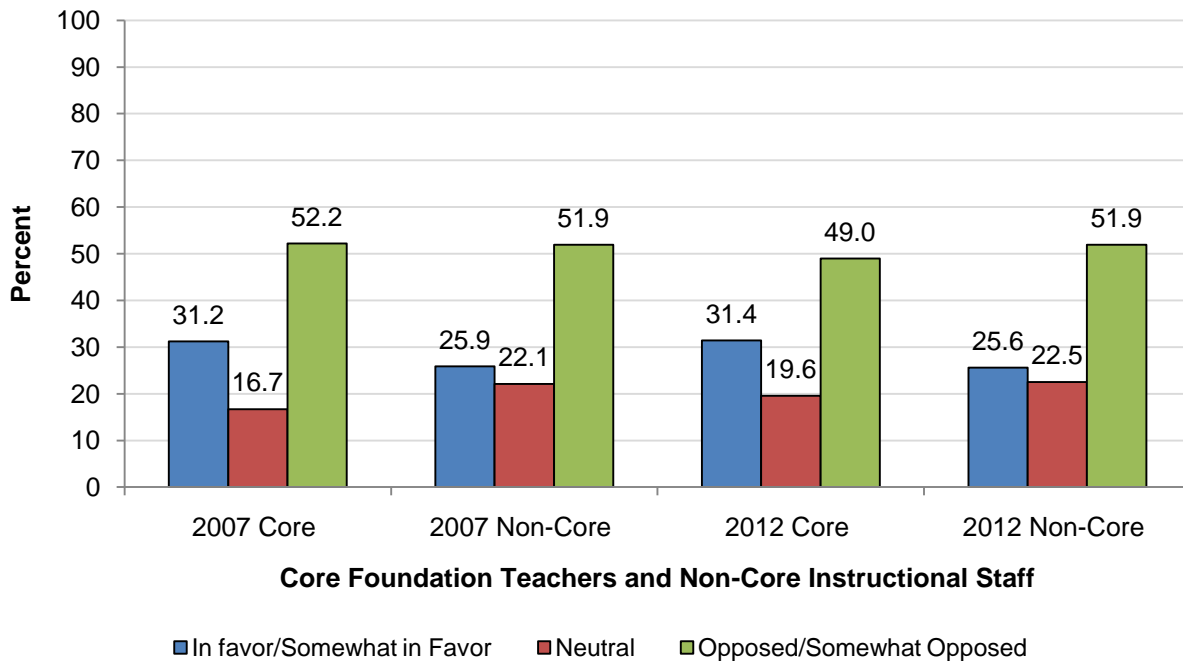


Figure 8. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates by core foundation and non-core instructional staff, December 2007 and March 2012

Note: To make 2012 comparable to the 2007 survey administration data, non-instructional employees (ASPIRE Award Categories H and I) (N=390) and Principals (ASPIRE Award Category J) (N=84) were not included in this analysis.

- Appendix B (p.31) summarizes the results by eligibility category regarding perceptions towards the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth, Appendix C (p.32) summarizes the results by eligibility category regarding perceptions towards the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates only, and Appendix D (p.33) summarizes the results by eligibility category regarding perceptions towards the concept of differentiated pay based on the March 2012 survey administration.
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 76.1 percent of assistant principals/deans of instruction and 75.0 percent of principals indicated they were *somewhat in favor* or *in favor* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth, reflecting the highest levels of agreement of all the eligibility categories (Appendix B).
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 42.9 percent of core foundation teachers, grades 3–8

(departmentalized) and 42.1 percent of elective/ancillary teachers indicated that they were *opposed* or *somewhat opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth (Appendix B).

- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 38.1 percent of principals and 24.5 percent of instructional support staff indicated they were *somewhat in favor* or *in favor* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual passing rates, reflecting the highest and lowest levels of agreement of all the eligibility categories based on March 2012 results (Appendix C).
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 53.2 percent of instructional support staff and 28.1 percent of operational support staff indicated that they were *opposed* or *somewhat opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates, reflecting the highest and lowest levels of disagreement of all of the eligibility categories (Appendix C).
- On the March 2012 ASPIRE Survey, 53.9 percent of respondents that self-reported they were Not Eligible to receive an ASPIRE Award indicated that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of performance pay based on passing rates (Appendix C).
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 78.6 percent of principals indicated they were *somewhat in favor* or *in favor* toward the concept of differentiated pay, reflecting the highest level of agreement of all the eligibility categories. This was followed by assistant principals/deans of instruction at 73.4 percent, operational staff at 59.0 percent, and core foundation teachers in Category C at 58.2 percent. Close to half of all core teachers (Categories A–F) support differentiated pay (49.3 percent to 58.2 percent) (Appendix D).
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 37.3 percent of elective/ancillary teachers indicated that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of differentiated pay, reflecting the highest level of disagreement to the statement (Appendix D).

What were the perceptions of respondents regarding their level of agreement to specific instructional practices or behaviors encouraged by the ASPIRE Award program?

- Over the past three years, respondents were asked whether the ASPIRE Award encouraged specific behaviors. Table 6 (p.26) compares the responses of respondents over the past three years for nine items and baseline data for one item. Comparisons are made to the baseline year. Based on survey data collected in 2009 and 2012, the largest percentage of respondents in 2009 indicated that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the ASPIRE Award encouraged them to *use value-added data to make instructional decisions* (59.9 percent), and in 2012 that the ASPIRE Award encouraged them to *use standardized data to make instructional decisions* (49.7 percent).
- Based on survey data collected in 2009 and 2012, the largest percentage of respondents in 2009 indicated that they *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that the ASPIRE Award encouraged them to *come to work on a daily basis* (27.3 percent), and in 2012 that the ASPIRE Award encouraged them to *increase the amount of time spent collaborating with colleagues* (34.2 percent) (Table 6).

- When comparing 2009 to 2012 survey results, there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents that indicated that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* for the nine items for which data were available for both years, with differences ranging from –4.6 percentage points (*The ASPIRE Award encourages me to come to work on a daily basis*) to –13.0 percentage points (*The ASPIRE Award encourages me to use value-added data to make instructional decisions*)(Table 6).

What were the perceptions and level of understanding of respondents regarding the Teacher Performance-Pay Model (TPPM) and ASPIRE Award Program?

- Figure 9 summarizes the perceptions of respondents towards the respective performance-pay models through time. When comparing the percentage of respondents that indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* toward the 2005–2006 Teacher-Performance Pay Model and to the specific ASPIRE Award Program for that year, it was first reported at 44.4 percent (December 2007 survey administration), reached a peak of 53.5 percent in 2009, and was most recently reported at 48.7 percent (March 2012 survey administration). These results were after the payout of both models.
- When comparing survey results after each payout, the percentage of respondents that indicated they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the 2005–2006 Teacher Performance-Pay Model and to the ASPIRE Award Program decreased by 12.7 percentage points over a six-year period, with the low being in 2009 at 24.0 percent.
- When comparing the percentage of respondents indicating that they were *neutral* toward the model implemented that year, the ASPIRE March 2012 percent was 8.2 percentage points higher in 2007 than in 2012.

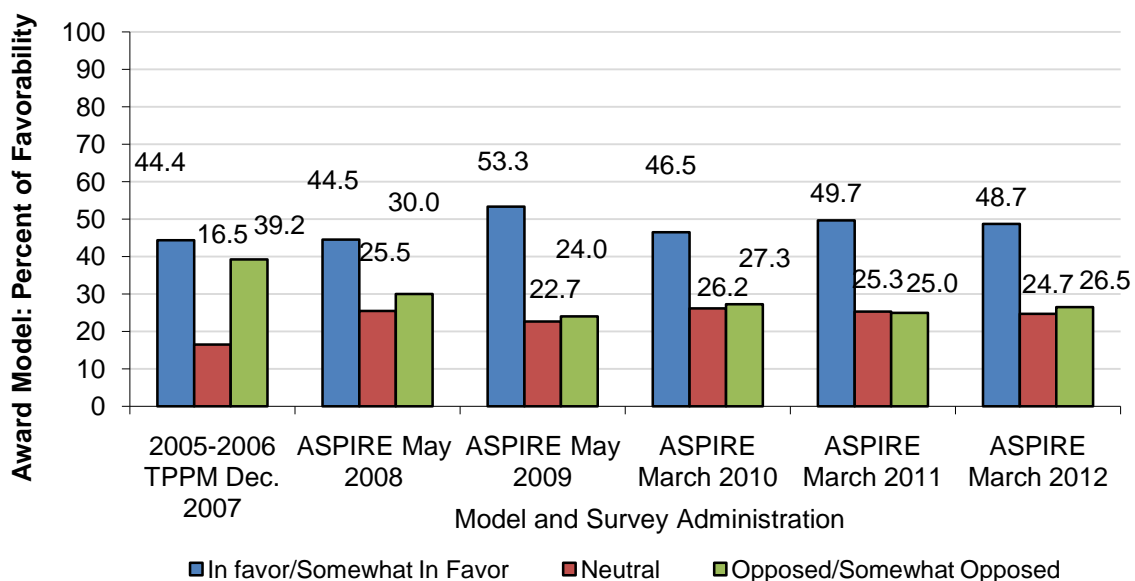


Figure 9. Percent of survey respondents' favorability toward the performance-pay model paid out that year

- Figure 10 summarizes the results regarding the level of understanding respondents indicated toward the ASPIRE award models for each of the last five years. When comparing ASPIRE May 2008 to March 2012 results, there was a difference in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award Program was *high* or *very high* by 10.9 percentage points.
- When comparing survey results from May 2008 to March 2012, there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award Program was *very low* or *low* (4.0 percentage points), as well as a decrease in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award Program was *sufficient* (7.0 percentage points).
- When comparing survey results from March 2011 to March 2012, there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award Program was *very high* or *high* (-1.4 percentage points), as well as an increase in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award Program was *low/very low* (1.4 percentage points).

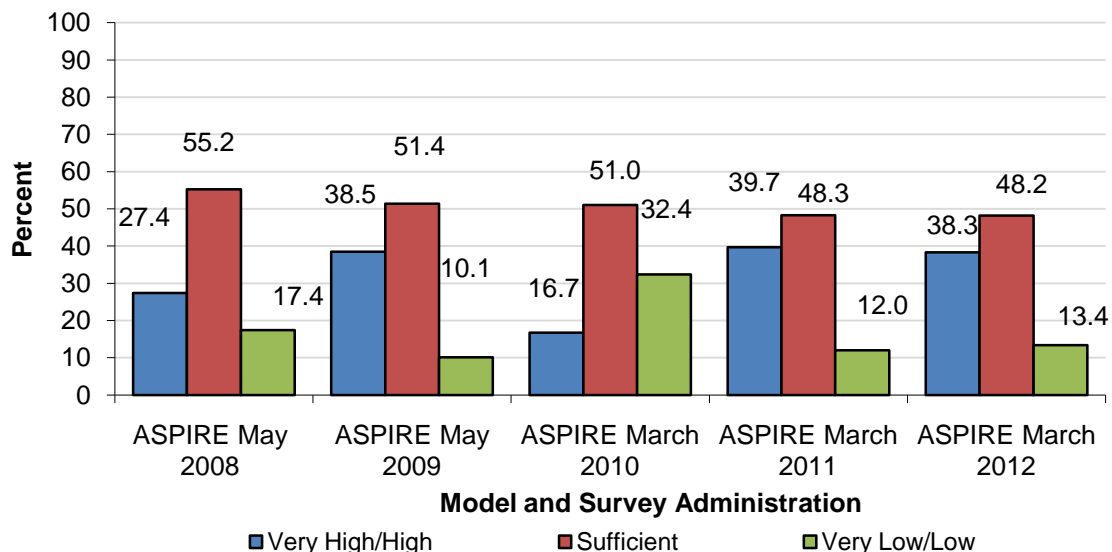


Figure 10. Percent of survey respondents' level of understanding of the the performance-pay model paid out that year

- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions regarding the level of understanding toward ASPIRE, comparisons by eligibility category for ASPIRE March 2012 respondents are summarized in Appendix E (p.34). Based on respondent data from the eleven eligibility categories, principals and assistant principals indicated a greater level of understanding than core foundation teachers, elective/ancillary teachers, instructional support staff, teaching assistants, operational support staff, and those indicating that they were Not Eligible to receive an ASPIRE award.
- On the March 2012 survey, 20.0 percent of respondents indicating that they were Not Eligible and 16.3 percent of the respondents that indicated that they were Category B: Core Foundation Teachers Grades 3–8, Departmentalized perceived their level of understanding of the ASPIRE

Award Program as *very low* or *low*, reflecting the greatest lack of understanding for ASPIRE survey respondents (Appendix E).

- On the March 2012 survey, at least 34.6 percent of core foundation teachers, elective/ancillary teachers, and instructional support staff reported a *very high* or *high* level of understanding regarding the ASPIRE Award Program (Appendix E).
- At least 50.9 percent of elective/ancillary teachers, instructional support staff, teaching assistants, and operational support staff indicated a *sufficient* level of understanding regarding the ASPIRE Award Program (Appendix E).

How many respondents attended Value-Added /EVAAS training sessions during the 2010–2011 school year, and what was the level of understanding?

- Figure 11 provides a comparison of the percent of respondents receiving training from 2005–2006 to 2011–2012. Although the percentage of respondents that received training increased from 58.1 percent based on the results of the December 2007 survey administration to 85.1 percent based on the May 2008 survey results, there has been a decline in the percentage of respondents that received training by 34.6 percentage points from May 2008 to March 2012.
- When comparing survey results from May 2008 to March 2012, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents that indicated they did not receive training by 36.8 percentage points.

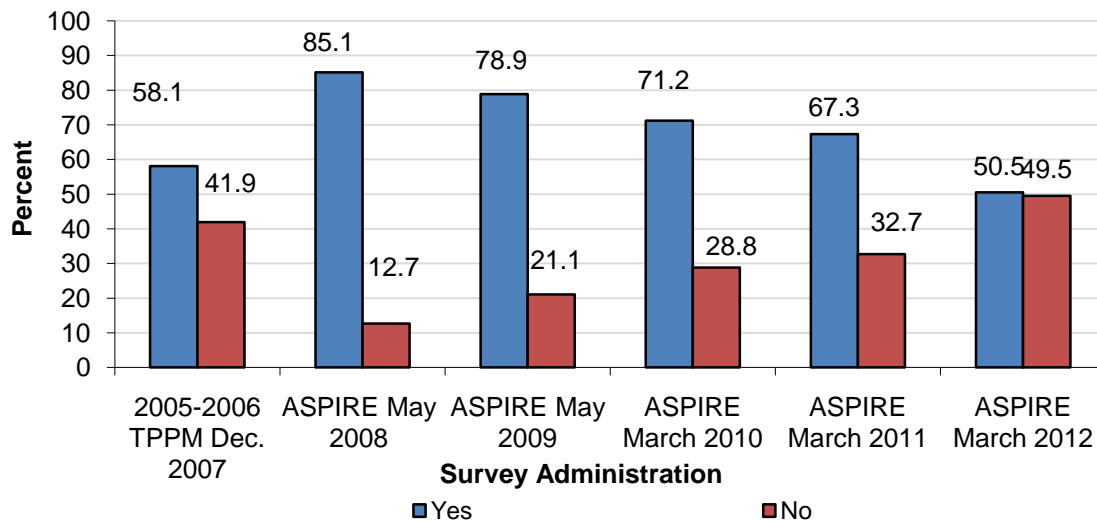


Figure 11. Percent of survey respondents receiving training by survey administration

- Figure 12 compares the percent of respondents who indicated that they had a clear understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress based upon five years of survey data. When comparing the perceptions of respondents from May 2008 to May 2009, there was an 8.7 percentage point increase regarding respondents that rated their level of understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress as *very high* or *high*.

- When comparing the perceptions of respondents from May 2009 to March 2012, there was a 6.2 percentage point decrease regarding respondents that rated their level of understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress as *very high* or *high*.
- Over the past five years, 1.6 percent fewer respondents have rated their level of understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress as *very low* or *low*, although there was an increase of 1.0 percentage point from 2011.

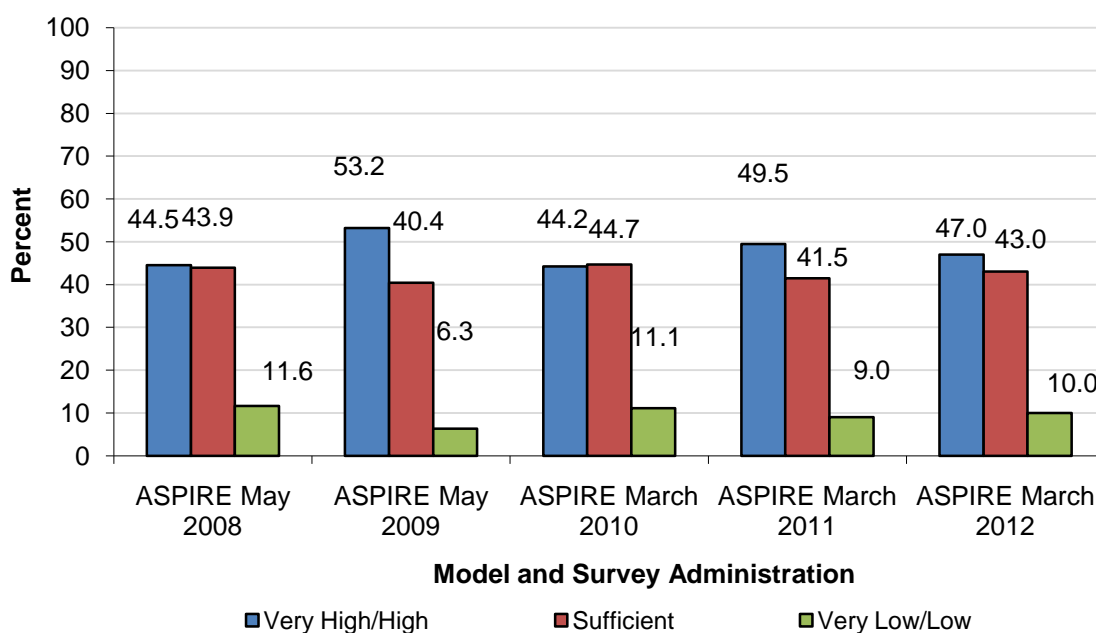


Figure 12. Percent of respondents indicating their level of understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress over five years

- On the May 2008 ASPIRE Award survey, there were six items that were designed to determine the level of understanding for different training components related to the ASPIRE Award. Table 7 (p.27) depicts the comparison of the baseline data collected in May 2008 with data collected in March 2012.
- The percentage of respondents indicating a *high/very high* level of understanding increased for all six components. However, 2012 had roughly half the number reported as 2008 (Table 7).
- Based on survey data collected in 2008 and 2012, the training component for which the largest percentage of respondents indicated in 2008 a *very high* or *high* level of understanding centered on *how value-added information can help educators* (36.6 percent), and in 2012 was *My understanding of ASPIRE* (38.3 percent) (Table 7).
- Based on survey data collected in 2008 and 2012, the training component for which the largest percentage of respondents indicated in both years a *very low* or *low* level of understanding focused on *how the ASPIRE Awards were calculated/determined* (33.9 percent and 34.9 percent, respectively) (Table 7).

- One question asked respondents whether they perceived a connection between classroom instruction and performance-pay results. Figure 13 compares the percent of respondents from the past four years' surveys. Based on the May 2009 and March 2012 survey results, there was a difference in the percentage of survey respondents who *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that there was a connection between classroom instruction and ASPIRE Award results (44.7 percent and 39.8 percent, respectively). Nevertheless, this showed a steady increase from March 2010.
- For the 2009 survey, 29.0 percent of the respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement that there was a connection between classroom instruction and ASPIRE Award results; however, this increased to 34.5 percent on the March 2012 survey.

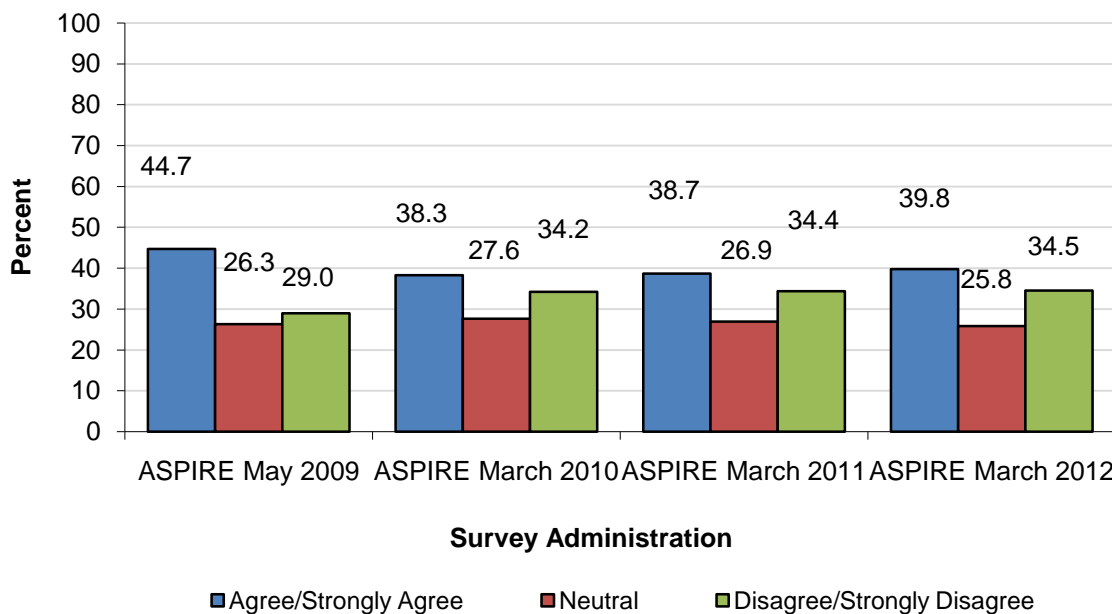


Figure 13. Percent of respondents indicating their level of understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress over five years

- A cross tabulation was conducted to determine whether there were differences in the level of understanding of value-added analysis regarding respondents who reported receiving value-added analysis training and those that reported receiving no training for 2010–2011. Figure 14 summarizes the results.
- For 2012, a higher percentage of respondents who attended value-added analysis training reported a *high* or *very high* understanding of value-added analysis compared to those who did not attend value-added training (42.9 percent and 25.4 percent, respectively).
- For 2012, 88.0 percent of respondents who attended value-added analysis training reported a *sufficient* or higher understanding of value-added analysis compared to those who did not attend value-added training at 70.7 percent.

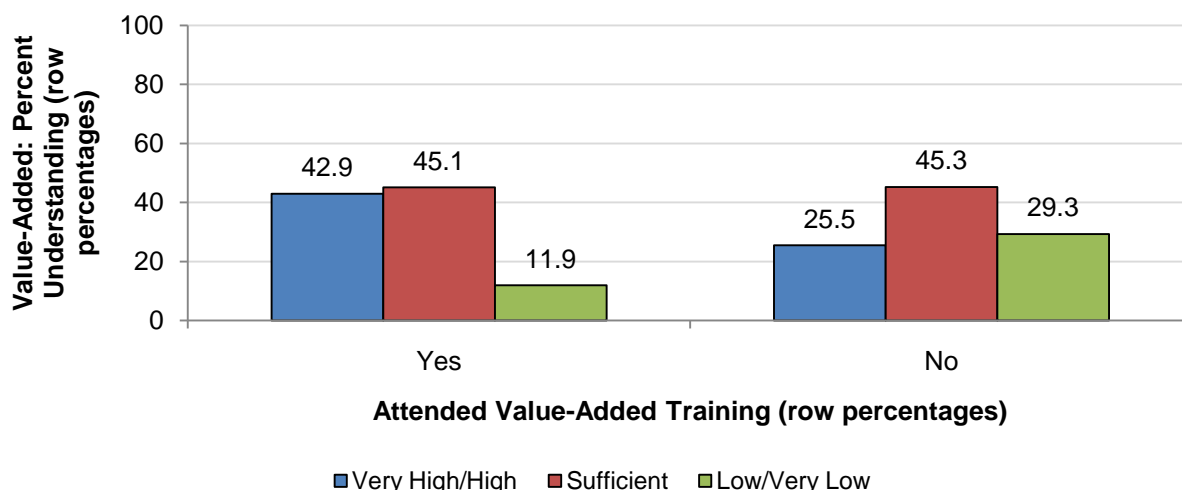


Figure 14. Cross tabulation summarizing the percent of respondents indicating their level of understanding of value-added analysis and attending value-added training

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

What were the perceptions of respondents regarding their level of compensation and the ASPIRE Award Model?

- There were seven items that were designed to examine the perceptions of respondents regarding the amount of money awarded and the ASPIRE model. Baseline data for five of the items were collected during the May 2009 survey administration, and the results for the past two years are summarized in Table 8 (p.27).
- On the 2011 and 2012 survey administration, the statement for which the largest percentage of respondents indicated *strongly agree* or *agree* centered on *continuing the ASPIRE Award and modifying the model on an annual basis* (45.9 percent and 46.9 percent, respectively) (Table 8).
- Based on survey results over the past two years, a higher percentage of respondents *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that their maximum award amount was commensurate with their professional contribution (43.5 percent and 46.6 percent) compared to 27.7 percent and 27.5 percent who were *neutral* and 28.8 percent and 25.8 percent who *agreed* or *strongly agreed* (Table 8).
- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions about the connection between classroom instruction and performance pay results, comparisons were made by eligibility category and respondents who indicated they were not eligible as summarized in Appendix F (p.35).
- For 2012, the percentage of operational support staff, principals, and assistant principals/deans of instruction who *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that there was a connection between classroom instruction and the ASPIRE Award results exceeded core foundation teachers (Categories A to E), elective/ancillary teachers, instructional support staff, and those respondents that indicated they were not eligible to receive an award (Appendix F).

- The highest percentage of respondents that *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that there was a connection between classroom instruction and the ASPIRE Award results was from departmentalized core foundation teachers (grades 3–8)(47.1 percent)(Appendix F).
- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions regarding the maximum award amount reflecting adequate recognition for efforts to increase student progress, comparisons were made by eligibility category and respondents who indicated they were not eligible as summarized in Appendix G (p.36).
- For 2012, 45.3 percent of assistant principals/deans of instruction, 42.0 percent of principals, and 40.0 percent of operational support staff *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award adequately recognized their efforts to increase student progress, reflecting the highest levels of agreement compared to the remaining eligibility categories and for those respondents indicating they were not eligible to receive an award (Appendix G).
- For 2012, 54.5 percent of elective/ancillary teachers, 54.2 percent of instructional support staff, 50.6 percent of respondents indicating they were not eligible to receive an award indicated that they *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award adequately recognized their efforts to increase student progress (Appendix G).
- To determine whether differences existed with regard to the statement, the maximum award amount for my ASPIRE Award category is commensurate with my professional contribution, comparisons were made by eligibility category and for those respondents that indicated they were not eligible to receive an award. Appendix H (p.37) summarizes the results.
- For 2012, 34.1 percent of operational support staff *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award was commensurate with their professional contribution, reflecting the highest levels of agreement compared to the remaining eligibility categories and for those respondents indicating they were not eligible to receive an award (Appendix H).
- On the 2012 survey administration, 62.3 percent of instructional support staff, 55.4 percent of elective/ancillary teachers, and 55.2 percent of respondents indicating that they were not eligible to receive an award indicated that they strongly disagreed or disagreed that their maximum ASPIRE Award was commensurate with their professional contribution (Appendix H).

What was the level of effectiveness for communicating information about the ASPIRE Award?

- For the May 2009 and subsequent survey administrations, there were seven items for which respondents rated the level of effectiveness regarding communication about the ASPIRE Award. Two items were added to the 2012 survey regarding effective communication. The responses are summarized in Table 9 (p.28) using May 2009 as the baseline year.
- When comparing results from May 2009 to March 2012, all areas specified showed increases. *Knowing when specific information about my ASPIRE Award was available* reflected the area of communication for which respondents indicated the highest increases for effectiveness (8.4 percentage points) (Table 9).
- Based on the results of the May 2009 surveys, 70.1 percent of respondents indicated that communication was *moderately effective* or *very effective* for *knowing where to find information about my specific ASPIRE Award*. Based on the results of the March 2012 surveys, 76.8 percent of respondents indicated *knowing when specific information about my ASPIRE Award was*

available, reflecting the two categories with the highest percentages for effectiveness for 2009 and 2012, respectively (Table 9).

- Based on the May 2009 and March 2012 surveys, the areas for which the highest percentage of respondents perceived communications to be *not effective* or *somewhat effective* focused on *knowing how to interpret and understand my specific ASPIRE Award Notice* in 2009 and *understanding the difference between submitting a question by e-mail versus submitting a formal inquiry about your final award* in 2009 and 2012 (Table 9).
- Although a majority of respondents indicated that communication was *moderately effective* or *very effective* for the following statements: *providing clear explanations about the award model* and *providing clear explanations about value-added calculations*, at least 41 percent of respondents indicated that communication was *not effective* or *somewhat effective* for these two areas (Table 9).
- On the March 2012 survey, five questions were designed to rate the effectiveness of specific types of communication. The results are summarized in Table 10 (p.28).
- Based on the results of the March 2012 survey, 49.6 percent of respondents reported the *ASPIRE e-mail* as being *very effective*, reflecting the highest percentage for effectiveness when compared to the other four venues used to communicate information about the ASPIRE Award program. This was closely followed by the *ASPIRE website* (43.7 percent) (Table 10).
- When comparing the five different venues for communicating information about the ASPIRE Award program, 11.3 percent of respondents (employees) perceived *Connect-Ed/School Messenger* as being *not effective*, and 16.2 percent of respondents indicated *don't know* regarding their perceptions of *Connect-Ed/School Messenger* (Table 10).

What were the recommendations for changing the 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award suggested by respondents?

- Out of a total of 3,411 respondents on the March 2012 survey, 1,693 or 49.6 percent of the respondents provided at least one response for recommending changes to the 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award, whereas 51.4 percent of respondents did not provide any recommendations for changing the model. Table 11 (p.29) summarizes the frequency and percent of responses.
- A total of 4.6 percent and 4.1 percent of the responses reflected that no changes were needed to the model or the response was simply, No Comment. The top six emergent categories reflected approximately 60.6 percent of the responses. The predominant suggestion centered on the allocation of money. Approximately 18.6 percent of responses centered on the allocation of money. Some respondents indicated that TAKS teachers, teachers providing instruction to low-income students and/or at-risk students, and teachers providing instruction at low-performing schools should receive more money. Alternatively, respondents indicated that elective/ancillary teachers, special education teachers, Career and Technology teachers, librarians, nurses, early childhood teachers to grade 2 teachers (ASPIRE Award Category D) should receive more money. Some respondents indicated that administrators should not receive any performance-pay money, their performance pay should be capped, or indicated that payouts for administrators were disproportionate in comparison to payouts for teachers. One respondent stated, "Administrators should not receive higher pay than highly effective teachers, who do the work," "I would take out the administrators from receiving the bonus, getting a bonus over \$10K over their current salary

is not appropriate given the percentage of direct interaction that they have with the students; they mostly interact with adults (teachers and other administrators); they should be evaluated on the percentage of teachers that get a 4 or higher on the new teacher evaluation system, and not on the students progress;" "Middle and upper level administrators of the district should not receive awards." (Table 11).

- Thirteen percent of the responses centered on suggestions for performance measures or criteria for the model. Elective/ancillary teachers, special education teachers, early childhood through grade 2 teachers, instructional support staff (i.e. counselors, librarians, nurses) teaching assistants, teacher aids, and career and technology teachers indicated that they wanted performance measures developed that reflected their direct impact on the students or measures that showed how their job performance impacted campus performance. Other performance measures that were suggested included parent input, principal input, student input, observations of sustainable teaching strategies and best practices, longitudinal performance measures of at least three years, basing performance on achievement not growth, and using beginning of the year assessments and end of the year assessments that were aligned with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Other suggestions included having less emphasis on standardized testing, and to eliminate the quartiles; just award positive EVAAS scores (Table 11).
- Approximately 10 percent centered on making the model equitable, transparent, and inclusive so that all employees were treated equally, compensated equally, or had the opportunity to receive the same amount of award as the top dollar earners (9.7 percent). Elective/ancillary teachers, special education teachers, early childhood through grade 2, instructional support (i.e. counselors, librarians, and literacy coach), teaching assistants, and operational support staff (i.e. registrars, computer network specialists, and attendance specialists) were not eligible to receive the same level of compensation as core teachers. They felt "de-valued" by the way the model was designed. Some respondents indicated that the differences in eligibility and compensation were divisive for campuses. Moreover, respondents indicated that student success was a team effort, but the contribution of the team was not being equally valued for all members (Table 11).
- Approximately seven percent of the responses centered on statements that indicated their award was not commensurate with their professional contribution. Comments provided by respondents indicated the following: "I would like for Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers to be able to receive some of the loftier awards. We are responsible for laying the foundation on which the others build. We go above and beyond expectations to prepare our students for their academic future, and yet we cannot receive nearly as much incentive as the higher grades;" "I think that Special Education teachers should be rewarded extra for the extra effort and work that we do to make our students both academically and socially ready to fit into the regular community with the best behavior and knowledge that it takes to make them productive citizens in the community and throughout their lives;" "Elective teachers need to be compensated for growth in their programs based on student progress as well. Generally, elective teachers should have the opportunity to show how their students have grown and be evaluated on student achievement within the arts and not be completely connected to the progress and growth of the school." (Table 11).
- Six percent of respondents addressed issues pertaining to communication. Respondents indicated that they would like to improve communications about the award, provide clearer explanations about the model and value added calculations, provide feedback for teachers based on their data, and provide more timely communications about changes in the award model. With regard to timely communication, one respondent stated, "Providing clear explanations about the changes in the award strands before the year it goes into effect." (Table 11).

- Approximately 6 percent of respondents identified factors impacting growth or the calculation of growth or respondents indicated that the ASPIRE Award program should be discontinued. For example, respondents indicated that factors such as classroom composition, students transitioning from Spanish to English, high performing students, special education students, intervention teachers, and using assessments such as Stanford that were not aligned to the curriculum, impacted the calculation of growth. Commentary provided by respondents indicated the following: "Consider taking into account the impact intervention teachers have on the student academic growth," and "teachers that provide tutorials to students that are not their own students." Regarding high performing students, one respondent stated, "I am very concerned about the definition of student growth. I teach upper level students who perform at an exceptionally high level. There is not a lot of room to grow when students are already at the top. It is actually very difficult to maintain this top level of achievement. Making a perfect score one year and then missing one question the next would be recorded as a "negative", which would impact rewards adversely; however the student is still performing at a high achievement level;" and "Not only recognition of the ceiling effect, but an award category to accurately compensate teachers at high performing schools." Another commentary was provided to address another type of special population, "As a teacher of deaf children who have severe language delays that significantly impact their educational performance, and typically are not successful with the State-wide testing, it is hard for me to get behind the Aspire Award System. There is no adequate way to measure student achievement and growth using the prescribed testing set by the state of Texas. For me as an educator to be judged using an inadequate testing procedure to show growth of students is unfair. For the other teachers in the school to suffer because of our students who are not successful is unfair. I would like a fair test to show growth for deaf children (Table 11).

Discussion

The purpose of the 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award Survey was to gain insight regarding the level of knowledge and perceptions of Houston Independent School District (HISD) teachers and staff after six years of implementation of growth-based performance pay in HISD, as well as their perceptions regarding the overall concept of performance pay. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to provide recommendations for making changes to the current model and for helping the district develop new teacher career pathways and a differentiated compensation system that rewards, recognizes, and retains effective teachers. This annual survey serves as a mechanism to gather valuable feedback from program participants.

External factors, such as policy decisions, roll-out of a new model, or roll-out of any new model component may have influenced perceptions of growth-based performance pay since its inception. Although all survey administrations followed the January payout, it is important to understand that eleven months had elapsed from the time of payout until the first survey administration (December 2007). Changes were instituted in the pay for performance model, communication about the model was enhanced, and training on the new model had commenced. Therefore, perceptions about the 2005–2006 Teacher Performance-Pay Model (TPPM) may have been influenced by anticipating these positive changes.

On February 12, 2010 the Board of Education approved using value-added data as the 34th criteria to evaluate teacher effectiveness. Questions and uncertainties arose regarding the impact of this policy for teachers. When the 2008–2009 ASPIRE Award Survey was launched on February 23, 2010 amid this policy change, sufficient time had not elapsed to fully address questions or correct misconceptions. It is highly likely that the climate of concern that was evident among teachers during that time impacted their

responses to the survey items. This is apparent in the decreases across the board in almost all items from 2009 to 2010.

During the spring of 2011, budgetary shortfalls at the state level may have impacted perceptions and response rates during survey administration. Campuses were required to develop different budgetary plans, depending on the estimated shortfall in state funding, that would result in the reduction in campus staff. Although final announcements were not made until April, an environment of speculation and uncertainty developed throughout all levels of the district.

There were several factors that may have impacted the response rates for the 2012 survey. These included: multiple surveys targeting campus-based staff, including the ASPIRE Award and Career Pathways and Compensation Survey, administration of the new state assessment, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), and rolling out the new teacher appraisal system. Teachers and other campus-based personnel were more focused and concerned about the new state assessment and the new teacher appraisal system.

There have been four key areas that have shown mixed results over the past four to six years. First, when comparing the survey response rate for December 2007 to the response rate for March 2012, there was an overall increase from 11.4 percent to 18.4 percent, but a decrease of 32.4 percentage points from May 2009, 19.3 percentage points from March 2010, and 11.9 percentage points from March 2011. By capturing a higher percentage of respondents, perceptions and feedback can be generalized to a greater degree.

Another key area, support for the program, showed mixed results over the six-year period. Although the percentage of campus-based staff in favor or somewhat in favor of the concept of teacher performance pay decreased from 69.2 percent after the 2007 payout to 55.2 percent after the 2010 payout, this increased to 58.6 after the 2012 payout. When respondents were asked about their perceptions of the award model for that year, 44.4 percent of respondents were in favor or somewhat in favor of the 2005–2006 Teacher Performance-Pay Model (December 2007) compared to 53.3 percent who were in favor or somewhat in favor of the ASPIRE Award Program (May 2009). Alternatively, the majority of respondents have not been in favor or somewhat in favor of the ASPIRE Award program over the past three years.

A related measure, support for the concept of differentiated pay, showed mixed results. Baseline data were collected during the May 2009 survey administration. Approximately 56.0 percent of respondents indicated they were in favor or somewhat in favor of differentiated pay in 2009, and this decreased to 48.3 percent in March 2010, but increased to 50.9 percent in March 2011, followed by an increase to 53.0 percent in March 2012.

The final key area that showed mixed results over the six-year period centered on increasing knowledge about the ASPIRE Award program. During the 2006–2007 and 2007–2008 school years, there was a concerted effort by the district to promote training. Training courses were offered on-line so that staff could complete the modules at their own pace. In addition, face-to-face training sessions were also available. The emphasis on training and courses available subsequently declined from 2008–2009 to present. Although there was an initial increase in the percentage of respondents that indicated they received training (December 2007 to May 2008), there has been a decline in the percentage of respondents that indicated they received training over the past five years from 85.1 percent in May 2008 to 50.5 percent in March 2012. When comparing 2008 to 2012 survey results, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents that indicated they had a high or very high level of understanding regarding the ASPIRE award model from 27.4 percent in 2008 to 38.3 percent in 2012. There was also an increase in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the five other components of the ASPIRE Award program were high or very high when comparing 2008 to 2012. School

leaders reported the highest levels, and they receive face-to-face training twice annually, before the linkage and verification process in the spring, and the principal confirmation period in the following fall.

Collecting feedback about effective communications was undertaken over the past four years to identify areas for improvement as well as areas that were effective. Based on survey results from 2009 to 2012, improvement was made in all seven areas for which data were available for four years. However, the newly added items, providing clear explanations about the award model, and providing clear explanations about value-added calculations, indicate a challenging area for effective communication. Baseline data indicate that 41 percent of respondents felt that communication was not effective or somewhat effective for providing clear explanations about the award model, and 45 percent of respondents indicated that communications were not effective or somewhat effective for providing clear explanations about value-added calculations. As value-added data will now factor into all core teachers' appraisals, clear communication as well as effective training concerning it is a priority.

When looking at the respondents by eligibility category, differences exist regarding how the ASPIRE Award program is perceived and the level of knowledge concerning the program. Administrators, such as principals and assistant principals/deans of instruction, indicate favorable perceptions concerning performance pay, the amount of award for which they are eligible, and their level of knowledge. Core teachers have more positive perceptions than elective/ancillary teachers. The differences in perceptions between core foundation teachers and non-core instructional staff have declined through time with the exception of a teacher performance pay model based on passing rates only.

For a performance pay system to be sustainable, the incentive has to be meaningful to all participants. Only 30 percent of principals and assistant principals/deans of instruction agreed or strongly agreed that their maximum ASPIRE Award amount was commensurate with their professional contribution. Of the eleven eligibility categories, instructional support staff and elective/ancillary teachers had the lowest level of agreement with regard to their maximum award amount, ranging from 19.1 percent to 29.2 percent. For those respondents that indicated they were not eligible to receive an award, only 15.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their maximum ASPIRE Award amount was commensurate with their professional contribution. On the 2012 survey, allocation of funding was the largest emergent category, which included responses about increasing the award amount. Moreover, respondents indicated that core special education teachers—no value-added report, elective/ancillary teachers, instructional support staff, teaching assistants, and operational support staff did not receive an award commensurate with their professional contribution.

The survey administered after each payout has served as a vehicle for respondents to recommend changes to the current model. Feedback is particularly valued to improve the ASPIRE Award program. As one respondent stated, "I feel the ASPIRE system is a great acknowledgement of the efforts of a campus on educating students to achieve higher levels of performance. The financial compensation is a great "thank you"; that it is earned not owed."

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- Houston Independent School District. (2009). 2005–2006 Teacher Performance-Pay and 2006–2007 ASPIRE Award Survey. Houston, TX: HISD.
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- Houston Independent School District. (2010). 2008–2009 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring, 2010. Houston, TX: HISD.

Table 1. Six Year Summary of Survey Response Rates by Pay for Performance Model

Model and Year	Date of Survey Administration	Population	Sample	# of Respondents	Response Rate
2005–2006 TPPM	December 2007	16,296	-	1,851	11.4
2006–2007 ASPIRE Award	May 2008	16,504	-	6,383	38.7
2007–2008 ASPIRE Award	May 2009	16,907	8,073	4,102	50.8
2008–2009 ASPIRE Award	March 2010	19,312	-	7,284	37.7
2009–2010 ASPIRE Award	March 2011	20,048		6,083	30.3
2010–2011 ASPIRE Award	March 2012	18,747		3,441	18.4

Table 2. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents by Categorization, 2009–2010 and 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award, March 2011 and March 2012 Survey Administrations

Category	2009–2010		2010–2011	
	N	%	N	%
A. Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–6, Self-Contained	455	8.7	235	8.1
B. Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–8, Departmentalized	805	15.4	437	15.0
C. Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 9–12	495	9.5	276	9.5
D. Core Foundation Teachers, Early Childhood Through Grade 2	928	17.8	464	15.9
E. Core Special Education Teachers-No Value-Added Report	327	6.3	170	5.8
F. Elective/Ancillary Teachers	648	12.4	363	12.5
G. Instructional Support Staff	526	10.1	278	9.5
H. Teaching Assistants	320	6.1	203	7.0
I. Operational Support Staff	438	8.4	318	10.9
J. Principal	141	2.7	93	3.2
K. Assistant Principals/Deans of Instruction	138	2.6	74	2.5
Total	5,221	100.0	2,911	100.0

Table 3. Background Characteristics of 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award Survey Respondents

	N	%
Highest Degree Held		
High School	182	5.3
Some College	342	10.0
Bachelor's Degree	1,073	31.3
Some Graduate School	529	15.4
Master's Degree	1,209	35.3
Doctoral Degree	93	2.7
Average experience in HISD	13.2 years	
Average experience at current campus	8.1 years	
Average experience in current assignment	7.3 years	

Table 4. Number and Percent of Respondents Employed in HISD, Eligibility Status, Award Status, and Strand II Award Status

Item	Yes	No	N
Were you employed in the Houston Independent School District during the 2010–2011 school year?	92.5	7.5	3,441
Were you eligible to receive an ASPIRE Award for the 2010–2011 school year?	87.7	12.3	3,151
Did you receive an ASPIRE Award for the 2010–2011 school year (paid out in January 2012)?	80.1	19.9	3,127
If you were in Category A–E, did you receive an ASPIRE Award under Strand II?	64.3	35.7	1,346

Table 5. Teaching in a Critical Shortage Area: Response Count and Response Percentage, 2010–2011

Critical Shortage Area	N	%
Special Education	390	12.0
Bilingual Education	347	10.7
English as a Second Language (ESL)	280	8.6
Mathematics (Grades 6–12)	169	5.2
Science (Grades 6–12)	142	4.4
Spanish (Grades 6–12)	25	0.8
N/A	1,889	58.3
Total	3,242	100.0

Table 6. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Their Level of Agreement for which the ASPIRE Award Encouraged Specific Behaviors, May 2009 and March 2012

	N		Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree/Agree	
			%	%	%	%	%	%
The ASPIRE Award encourages me to:	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012
Continue teaching in the classroom	2,750	1,796	26.3	33.2	25.7	25.3	47.9	41.6
Remain working in HISD	-	1,829	-	31.7	-	24.2	-	44.0
Come to work on a daily basis	3,222	1,824	27.3	32.8	25.7	24.8	47.0	42.4
Increase the amount of time I spend collaborating with my colleagues	3,135	1,813	25.9	34.2	24.3	25.5	49.8	40.3
Use standardized data to make instructional decisions	2,969	1,779	20.6	27.8	20.3	22.5	59.1	49.7
Use value-added data to make instructional decisions	2,971	1,763	19.2	28.8	20.9	24.3	59.9	46.9
Use TAKS-STAAR data as a diagnostic tool for my classroom	2,736	1,701	20.3	28.1	22.5	23.5	57.2	48.5
Use Stanford data as a diagnostic tool for my classroom	2,744	1,725	22.0	28.3	23.7	25.6	54.3	46.1
Use value-added data as a diagnostic tool for my classroom	2,796	1,738	19.8	29.8	24.0	25.1	56.2	45.0
Increase the amount of time spent in professional development	3,055	1,810	26.1	32.7	26.5	25.8	47.4	41.6

Table 7. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Their Level of Understanding for the ASPIRE Award Program and Its Components for the 2006–2007 and 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award, May 2008 and March 2012 Survey Administrations

	N		Very Low/Low		Sufficient		Very High/High	
			%		%		%	
	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012
My understanding of ASPIRE is:	5,882	2,846	17.4	13.4	55.2	48.2	27.4	38.3
My understanding of value-added analysis is:	5,844	2,823	21.3	21.5	50.0	44.9	28.7	33.5
My understanding of how value-added information can help me as an educator is:	5,832	2,705	18.3	18.6	45.1	44.0	36.6	37.5
My understanding of how to read/interpret value-added reports is:	5,817	2,758	23.7	21.5	47.0	45.0	29.3	33.5
My understanding of the different strands of the ASPIRE Award Program was:	5,835	2,799	23.2	21.5	48.7	46.4	28.1	32.0
My understanding of how the ASPIRE Awards were calculated/determined is:	5,852	2,801	33.9	34.9	43.9	40.1	22.2	25.0

Table 8. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Their Perceptions About Award Amounts and the ASPIRE Award Model, March 2011 and March 2012

	N		Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Neutral		Agree/Strongly Agree	
			%		%		%	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
The maximum award amount for my ASPIRE Award category adequately recognizes my efforts to increase student progress.	4,555	2,686	42.2	44.2	27.2	26.4	30.5	29.5
The maximum award amount for my ASPIRE Award category encourages me to remain in a campus-based position.	4,566	2,718	35.7	38.9	30.8	30.3	33.5	30.8
The maximum award amount for my ASPIRE Award category is commensurate with my professional contribution.	4,592	2,714	43.5	46.6	27.7	27.5	28.8	25.8
The ASPIRE Award should be continued in its current form.	4,669	2,742	41.7	42.3	31.0	30.9	30.4	26.7
The ASPIRE Award should be continued with modifications incorporated on an annual basis.	4,604	2,738	21.6	20.5	32.5	32.5	45.9	46.9
The ASPIRE Award is a fair way of acknowledging a teacher's impact on student growth.	4,674	2,773	41.7	42.8	27.9	27.3	30.4	30.0
The formal inquiry process allowed me the opportunity to question the accuracy of my award.	4,101	2,412	20.0	23.2	37.9	38.4	42.1	38.4

Table 9. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Their Perceptions About Communicating Effectively, May 2009 and March 2012

	N		Not Effective/ Somewhat Effective		Moderately Effective/ Very Effective	
	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012
Knowing where to find information about the ASPIRE Award in general.	3,383	2,858	32.6	27.9	67.4	72.1
Knowing when specific information about my ASPIRE Award was available.	3,371	2,849	31.5	23.2	68.4	76.8
Knowing where to find information about my specific ASPIRE Award.	3,367	2,847	30.0	23.9	70.1	76.0
Knowing how to interpret and understand my specific ASPIRE Award Notice.	3,368	2,844	38.6	34.3	61.4	65.7
Understanding the difference between submitting a question by e-mail versus submitting a formal inquiry about your final award.	3,362	2,824	38.6	34.4	61.4	65.5
Understanding where to find information about the inquiry process on the portal.	3,364	2,838	36.4	32.2	63.7	67.8
Understanding that formal inquiries were required to be submitted by a specific deadline.	3,352	2,826	34.7	30.0	65.4	70.1
Providing clear explanations about the award model.	-	2,828	-	40.7	-	59.2
Providing clear explanations about value-added calculations.	-	2,807	-	45.4	-	54.7

Table 10. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Their Perceptions About the Level of Effectiveness for Different Types of Communication, March 2012

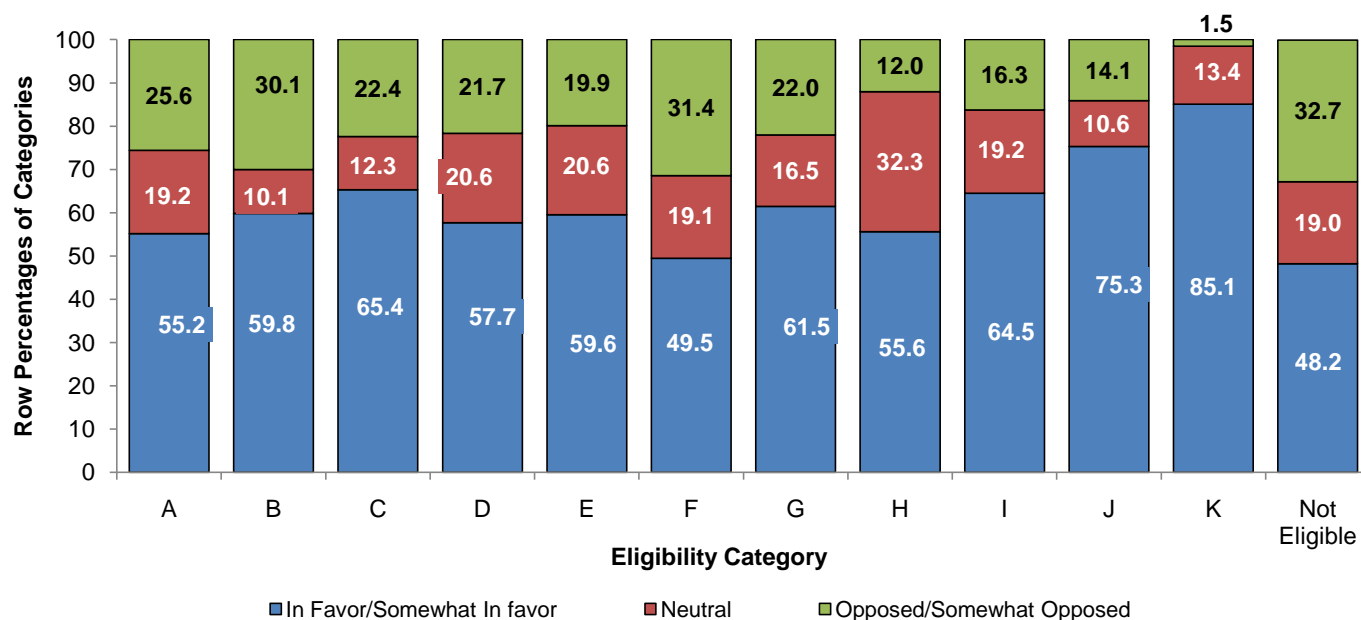
	N	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective	Don't Know
Connect-Ed/School Messenger	2,835	11.3	19.5	26.0	27.1	16.2
ASPIRE Newsletter	2,842	8.6	20.1	29.3	34.1	7.9
Memos (electronic format)	2,825	7.4	18.1	28.9	36.6	9.1
ASPIRE e-mail	2,850	4.6	16.1	25.6	49.6	4.1
ASPIRE website	2,826	5.3	17.7	28.0	43.7	5.2

Table 11. Number and Percent of Responses for Recommended Changes to the 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award, March 2012

	N	%
Allocate more money for awards/allocate money for specified group(s)/reallocate money so that particular groups benefit and designated groups receive no award or their award is capped/when money is allocated	423	18.2
Performances measures or criteria	305	13.1
Make the model transparent, equitable, and inclusive	225	9.7
Award is not commensurate with professional contribution	154	6.6
Improve communications about the award/provide clearer explanations about the model and value added calculations/ provide feedback for teachers based on their data/more timely communications about changes in the award model	149	6.4
Factors impacting growth or the calculation of growth	144	6.2
Discontinue	129	5.6
Attendance Rule (more days/eliminate attendance rules)	118	5.1
No changes	107	4.6
Unintended consequences (divisive, cheating, free riding)	102	4.4
N/A	96	4.1
Calculate/Formula (change how award is calculated/revise the formula)	78	3.4
Eligibility Rules (make plant operators, janitors, food service eligible/change rules) and Categorization	77	3.3
Miscellaneous	50	2.2
Not Sure	43	1.9
Pay Raise	40	1.7
Attendance Bonus (reinstitute the attendance bonus)	28	1.2
Individual Performance/Grade/Team/Dept. Award	39	1.7
When the award is paid out	8	0.3
Inquiry Process (more time, committee-based decisions)	5	0.2
Total Number of Responses	2,320	100.0

APPENDIX A

CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATING THE MAXIMUM FAVORABILITY TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE PAY BY ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY, MARCH 2012



Key:

Category A: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–6, Self Contained

Category B: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–8, Departmentalized

Category C: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 9–12

Category D: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades Early Childhood through Grade 2

Category E: Core Special Education Teachers–No Value-Added Report

Category F: Elective/Ancillary Teachers

Category G: Instructional Support Staff

Category H: Teaching Assistants

Category I: Operational Support Staff

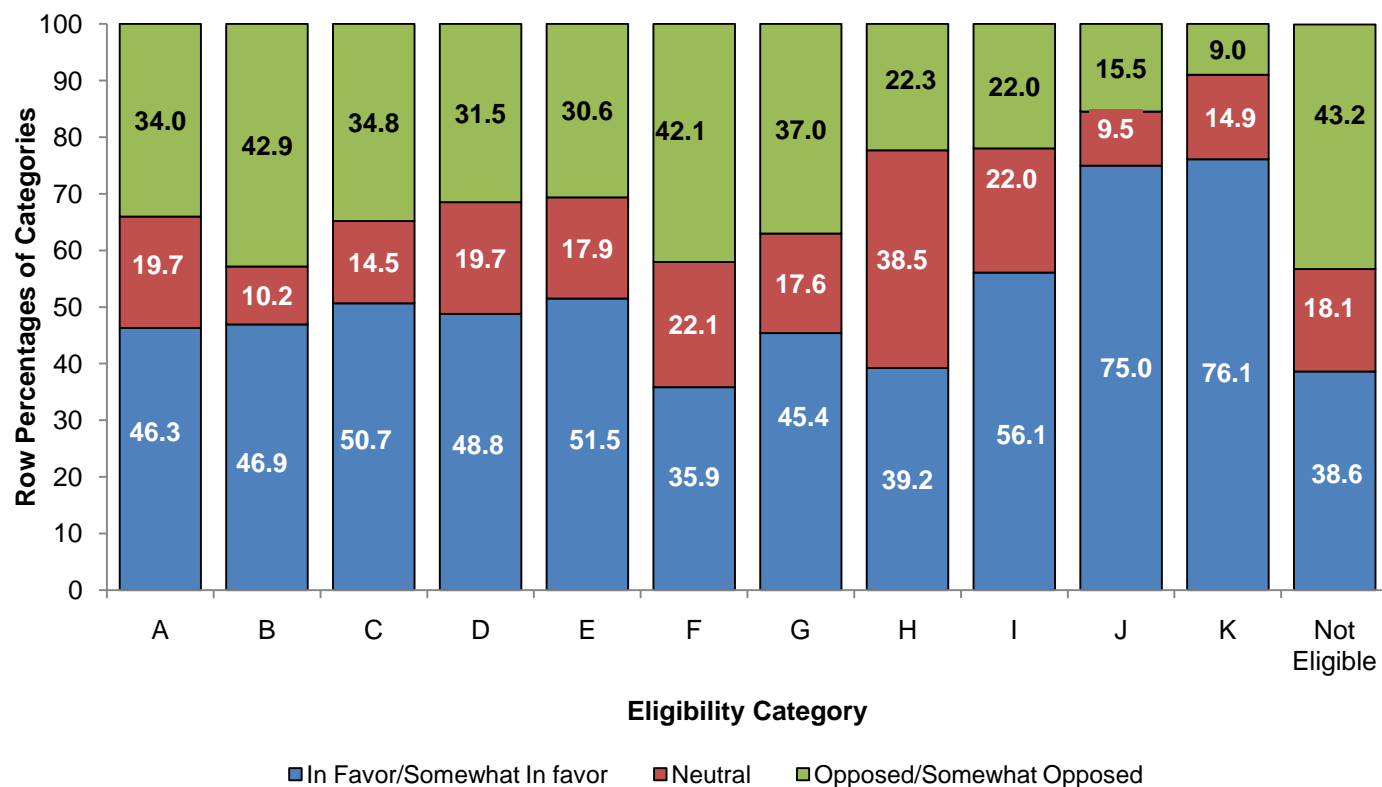
Category J: Principal

Category K: Assistant Principal/Deans of Instruction

Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

APPENDIX B
CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING FAVORABILITY
TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE PAY BASED ON INDIVIDUAL STUDENT GROWTH BY ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY, MARCH
2012



Key:

Category A: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–6, Self Contained
 Category B: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–8, Departmentalized
 Category C: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 9–12
 Category D: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades Early Childhood through Grade 2
 Category E: Core Special Education Teachers–No Value-Added Report
 Category F: Elective/Ancillary Teachers

Category G: Instructional Support Staff
 Category H: Teaching Assistants
 Category I: Operational Support Staff
 Category J: Principal
 Category K: Assistant Principal/Deans of Instruction
 Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

APPENDIX C

CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING FAVORABILITY
TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE PAY BASED ON PASSING RATES ONLY BY
ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY, MARCH 2012



Key:

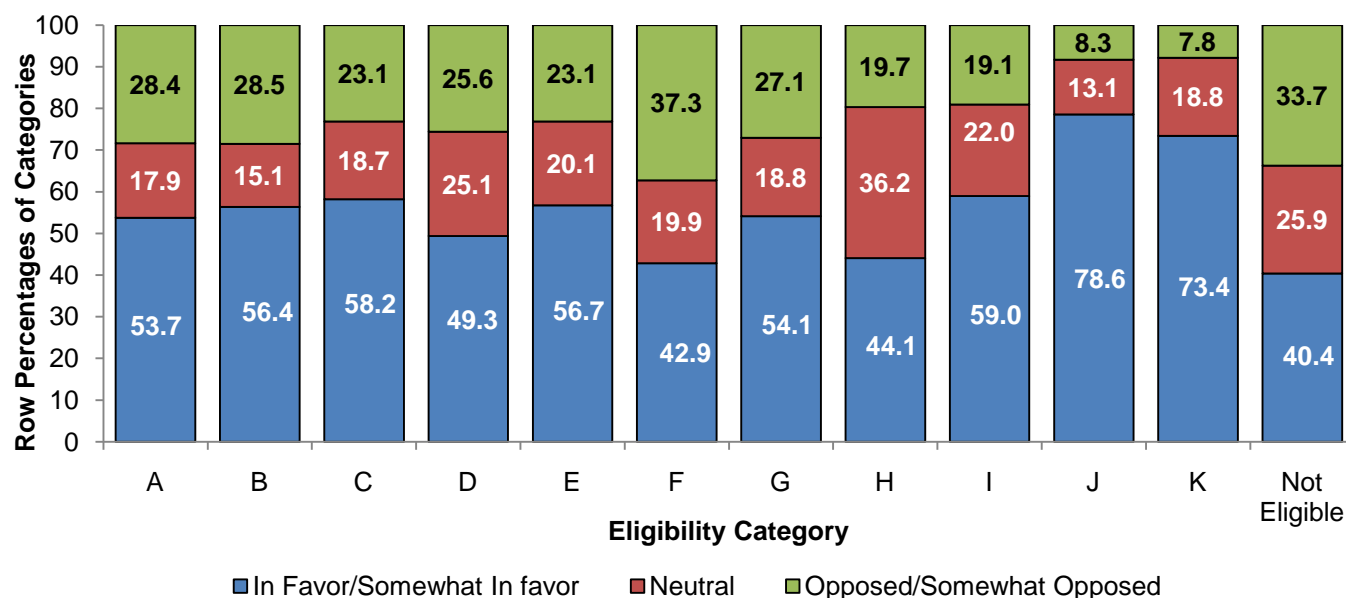
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 Category B: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–8, Departmentalized
 Category C: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 9–12
 Category D: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades Early Childhood through Grade 2
 Category E: Core Special Education Teachers—No Value-Added Report
 Category F: Elective/Ancillary Teachers

Category G: Instructional Support Staff
 Category H: Teaching Assistants
 Category I: Operational Support Staff
 Category J: Principal
 Category K: Assistant Principal/Deans of Instruction
 Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

APPENDIX D

CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING FAVORABILITY TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF DIFFERENTIATED PAY BY ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY, MARCH 2012



Key:

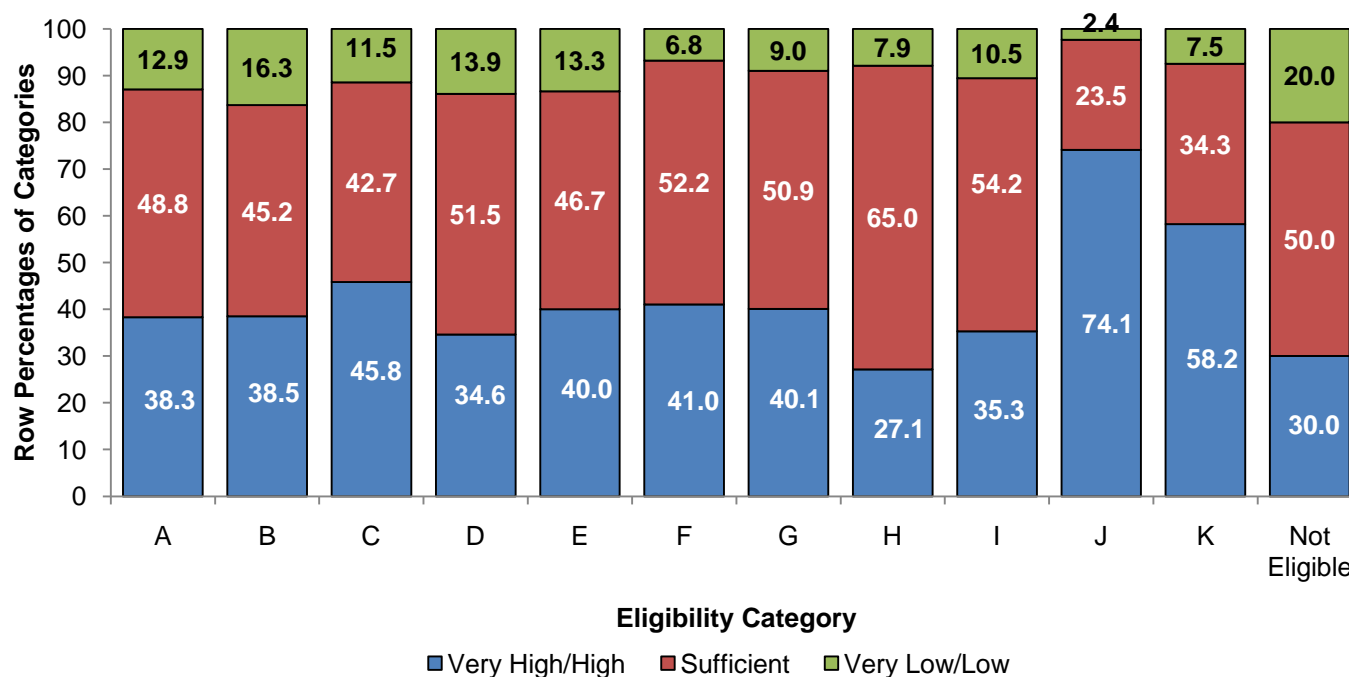
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 Category B: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–8, Departmentalized
 Category C: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 9–12
 Category D: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades Early Childhood through Grade 2
 Category E: Core Special Education Teachers—No Value-Added Report
 Category F: Elective/Ancillary Teachers

Category G: Instructional Support Staff
 Category H: Teaching Assistants
 Category I: Operational Support Staff
 Category J: Principal
 Category K: Assistant Principal/Deans of Instruction
 Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

APPENDIX E

CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS' LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE 2010–2011 ASPIRE AWARD PROGRAM, MARCH 2012



Key:

Category A: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–6, Self Contained

Category B: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–8, Departmentalized

Category C: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 9–12

Category D: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades Early Childhood through Grade 2

Category E: Core Special Education Teachers—No Value-Added Report

Category F: Elective/Ancillary Teachers

Category G: Instructional Support Staff

Category H: Teaching Assistants

Category I: Operational Support Staff

Category J: Principal

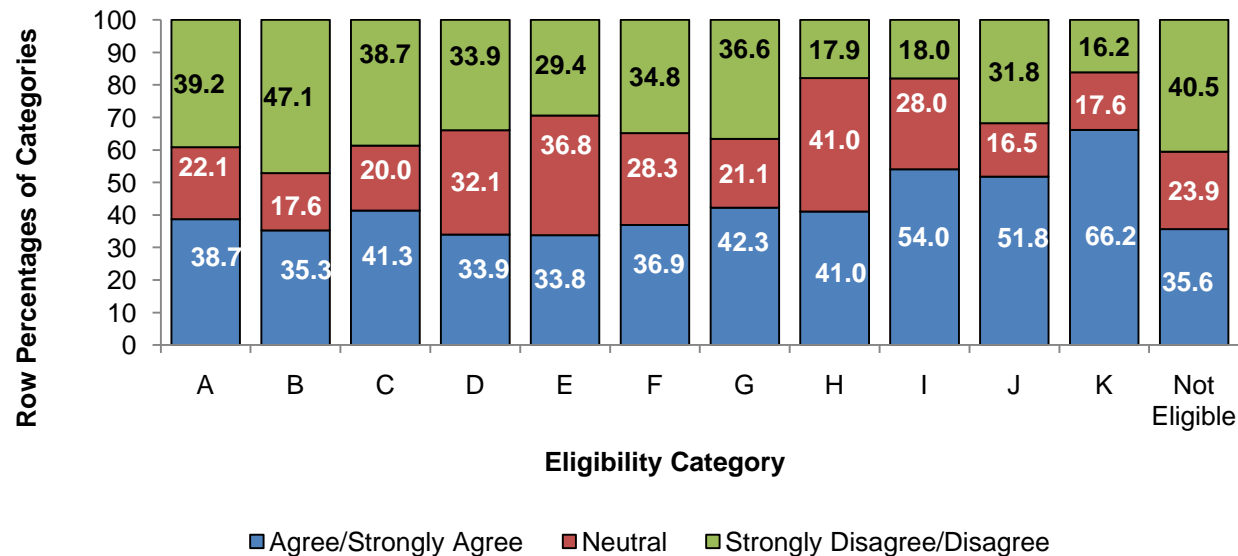
Category K: Assistant Principal/Deans of Instruction

Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

APPENDIX F

CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS' INDICATING A CONNECTION BETWEEN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND PERFORMANCE PAY RESULTS BY ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY FOR THE 2010–2011 ASPIRE AWARD PROGRAM, MARCH 2012



Key:

Category A: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–6, Self Contained

Category B: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–8, Departmentalized

Category C: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 9–12

Category D: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades Early Childhood through Grade 2

Category E: Core Special Education Teachers—No Value-Added Report

Category F: Elective/Ancillary Teachers

Category G: Instructional Support Staff

Category H: Teaching Assistants

Category I: Operational Support Staff

Category J: Principal

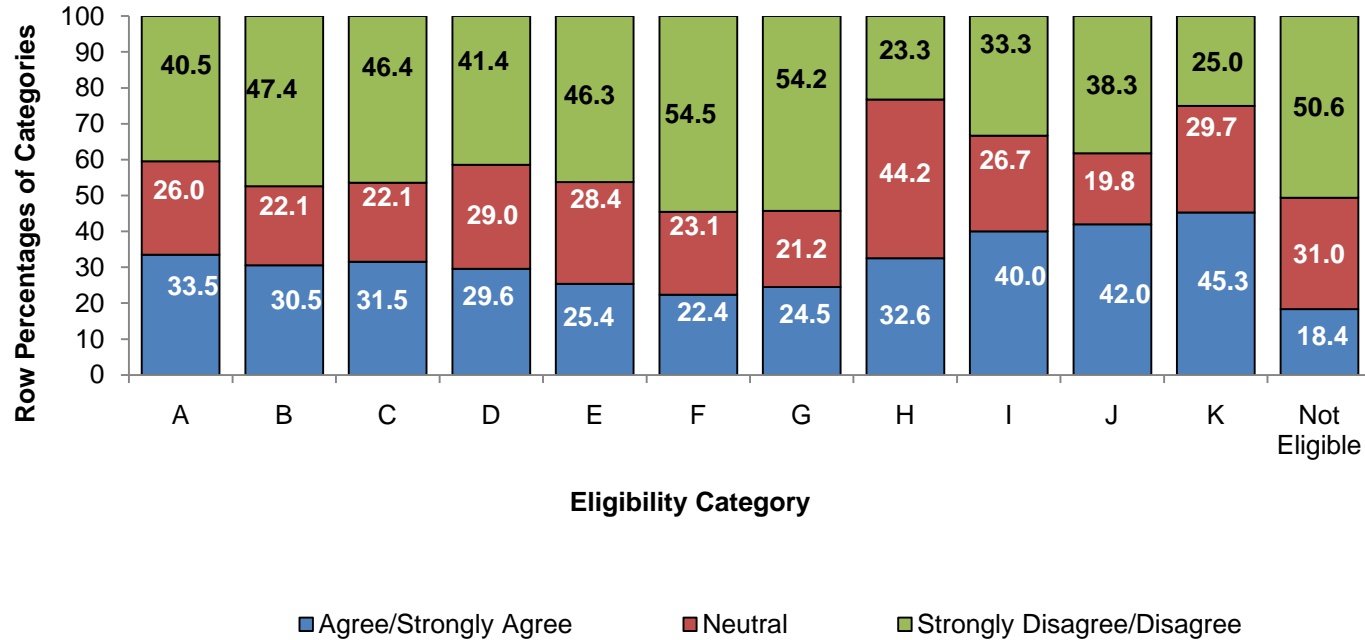
Category K: Assistant Principal/Deans of Instruction

Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

APPENDIX G

CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATING THE MAXIMUM ASPIRE AWARD AMOUNT ADEQUATELY RECOGNIZED THEIR EFFORTS TO INCREASE STUDENT PROGRESS, MARCH 2012



Key:

Category A: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–6, Self Contained

Category B: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–8, Departmentalized

Category C: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 9–12

Category D: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades Early Childhood through Grade 2

Category E: Core Special Education Teachers—No Value-Added Report

Category F: Elective/Ancillary Teachers

Category G: Instructional Support Staff

Category H: Teaching Assistants

Category I: Operational Support Staff

Category J: Principal

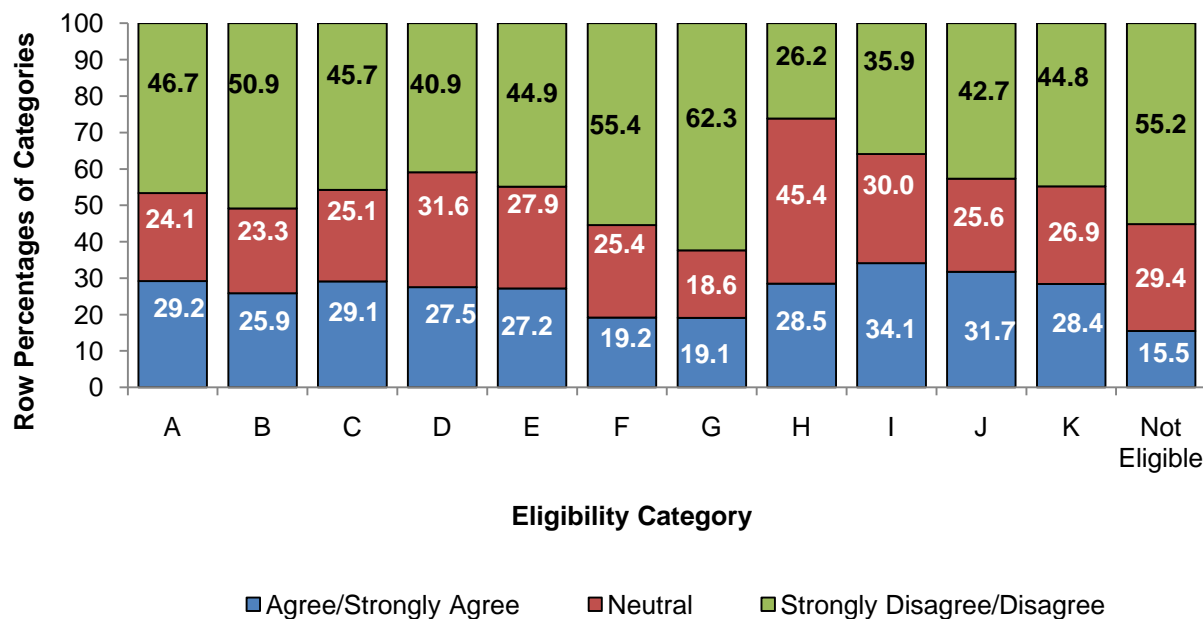
Category K: Assistant Principal/Deans of Instruction

Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

APPENDIX H

CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATING THE MAXIMUM ASPIRE AWARD AMOUNT WAS COMMENSURATE WITH THEIR PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTION, MARCH 2012



Key:

Category A: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–6, Self Contained

Category B: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–8, Departmentalized

Category C: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 9–12

Category D: Core Foundation Teachers, Grades Early Childhood through Grade 2

Category E: Core Special Education Teachers—No Value-Added Report

Category F: Elective/Ancillary Teachers

Category G: Instructional Support Staff

Category H: Teaching Assistants

Category I: Operational Support Staff

Category J: Principal

Category K: Assistant Principal/Deans of Instruction

Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.