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## STATE INCENTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

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The purpose of this study was to provide a review of the types of incentive programs which are currently being implemented by school districts across the nation. Data were compiled from accreditation materials received from fifteen representative state education agencies. Major emphasis was given to a presentation of data which involved incentive program criteria, types of rewards and recognition, accrediting agencies and their standards and procedures, as well as appeal procedures for loss of accreditation status. Data are presented in both narrative and table format. Finally, the implications inherent in the establishment of an incentive system are discussed.

The nation's early attempts to match the mathematical and scientific prowess demonstrated by Russia during the Sputnik era fueled educational reform efforts. As educators continued to implement reform measures which called for sweeping changes in curricula and teaching strategies, the public, and educators as well, noted the need for a system which monitored the effectiveness of the changes being wrought by the movement into a technological age. Throughout the nation, state education agencies dealt with the need to establish both indicators of school effectiveness (input and output) and methodologies to measure the successful implementation of these indicators. In addition, education agencies established mechanisms to recognize and reward schools which demonstrated exceptional performance on one or more of the indicators of effectiveness. The purpose of this study is to provide a review of the types of incentive programs already in place within school districts across the nation. Data were from fifteen states (Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi,

Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington) and represent the various incentive characteristics being implemented in each of the participating states. Major emphasis is given to the following characteristics: incentive systems in place, reward and recognition system, accrediting agency, accreditation standards and procedures, grants given, appeal for non-accreditation status, type of incentive program, summary of performance standards, and type of recognition system. The implications inherent in instituting an incentive system will also be discussed.

The purpose of a school incentive reward program is to recognize schools and school districts that demonstrate exceptional performance by providing both monetary and nonmonetary rewards. Arkansas does *not* have an incentive program in place at the present time; however, the process has been installed by the Quality Education Act of 1983. This act was created for the purpose of ensuring that all public school districts meet the state's standards for accreditation. If a school does

not comply with these standards, it shall lose accreditation. This loss of accreditation will result in dissolution and annexation within two years if the standards for accreditation are not met. It should be noted that if such a school feels it has been denied accreditation unjustly, it has the right to appeal to the State Department of Education (SDE). This appeal must be made no later than May 1st, following the April 15th accreditation ruling. The State Department of Education may confirm its decision or it may sustain the appeal of the district. Clearly, an incentive for school officials would be to insure that their districts fully comply with the state's accreditation standards (Arkansas State Board of Education, 1988).

California does *not* have an incentive system in place that exceeds the basic performance standards required of all school districts *nor* has it developed a reward or recognition system. The accreditation process is a joint effort of the Accrediting Commission for Schools (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) and the California State Department of Education. Accreditation procedures require a self-study and on-site visit for validation purposes. This process saves time, money, and energy. In general, performance criteria have been devised to determine the effectiveness of a school's educational program and services. These criteria include the following: (1) philosophy, goals and objectives, (2) organization, (3) student personnel services, (4) curricular program, (5) co-curricular program, (6) staff, (7) physical facilities, and (8) finance.

In accordance with California's accrediting criteria, the school district's philosophy, goals and objectives should be systematically developed and reviewed by the community, administration, staff, students, and the board of education with ongoing evaluation of progress toward the achievement

of the district's goals and objectives. The organizational structure should be clearly defined and should specify the functions of the administration, staff, and students. Relative to student personnel services, the needs, interests, aptitude, and goals of all the students must be identified. A curricular program must be installed which has written course descriptions and objectives that reflect the students' needs, abilities, and interests. This program must be concerned with the nature, scope, and effective teaching of individual courses; and also with their interrelationship within the curriculum. The co-curricular offerings must be in place and should be responsive to the students' needs and interests. In addition, California's criteria cite the importance of good facilities in effectively implementing the school's programs. Furthermore, continuous financial support is deemed necessary in order to provide an educational program that includes appropriate staff, physical facilities, instructional resources, and other support services (California State Department of Education, 1988).

Presently, Florida does *not* have an incentive system in place. The State Department of Education does *not* administer an accreditation process for the public schools; however, the schools do seek accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). This process is administered through the Florida Committee of SACS. Relative to the type of recognition system, receiving accreditation by SACS could be considered the reward for Florida's schools (Florida State Department of Education, 1988).

Georgia does have an incentive program in place which is based on indicators of effectiveness. These indicators are based on minimum accreditation standards. Also, a "means" or "evidence" for verifying each one of the minimum indicators is provided. Local boards are required to de-

velop long-term plans designed to improve education programs and services. Such plans must describe improvement needs, objectives for meeting the needs, resources to be directed toward them, a timetable, and an evaluation design. For verification purposes, the documentation system is reviewed. This documentation consists of the written district instructional goals, test score improvement plans, individual school instructional goals, evidence of curriculum revision and textbook adoption practices, a management plan for monitoring goal attainment, and a comprehensive staff development plan.

The Georgia Board of Education provides matching funds to help local school systems develop innovative approaches to alleviate persistent education problems. Systems which develop successful programs that are validated receive state funds to train other systems to implement the program. Moreover, systems which receive the training receive matching funds to help defray the costs of implementation, such as teacher staff development and purchasing materials. Both the minimum accreditation program and the incentive program are accomplished under Georgia's Quality Basic Education Act (QBE). The provision of matching funds to qualifying school districts could be viewed as a reward system; however, Georgia has *not* developed a specific system for rewards or recognition. Such a system is in the planning stages at the present time (Georgia State Department of Education, 1988).

Indiana's incentive program for educational excellence is based on the Orr/Evans A+ Program for Better Schools. This program is based on A+ for students, A+ for educators, A+ for school finance and A+ for management planning for the future. Four recommendations are given within the student based component: (1) planning for special assistance to retained students,

(2) funding for early childhood education, (3) arts education program, and (4) schooling for the Twenty-First Century Program. Recommendations pertaining to educators are the addition of three school days in 1989-90, substitute pay for mentors/interns, preparation of mentors, Indiana writing project for Teachers, and the Education Executive Leadership Academy. Pertinent to school finance, the recommendation is for a referendum and new facility levy adjustments (Orr, 1987). Finally, the recommendation for management/planning for the future calls for additional funding for improvements to the Department's management information system. The A+ Program proposes a number of criteria which deal with higher achievement: ten additional days of school, student achievement testing in seven grades, required summer school for those students needing help, no more social promotions, pre-school pilot programs, expansion of Project Prime Time and alternative schooling for at-risk students and drop-outs. The A+ program calls for more accountability through the evaluation of principals and teachers, performance-based accreditation, and making up snow days. This program focuses on aspiration, achievement, and accountability. It should be noted that the cornerstone of the A+ program is the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP). Relative to the performance-based rewards program, cash bonuses will be given to schools which show improvement from one year to the next. The schools which improve their performance in ISTEP scores in math and language arts skills and in attendance can share in ten million dollars beginning in the 1988-89 school year. All schools, regardless of size, have the potential to earn a reward. As an incentive for learning and achievement at individual schools, the A+ program creates monetary and nonmonetary awards which

are based on performance. The monetary rewards will go to schools demonstrating improved performance in two of the following areas: student attendance rates, educational proficiencies for English/language arts, educational proficiencies for mathematics, and average scores in each subject area and each grade level in the ISTEP. It should be noted that by law, cash awards may not be used for athletics, salary and/or salary bonuses. Schools demonstrating improvement in less than two areas will be eligible for nonmonetary awards (Indiana State Department of Education, 1988).

Iowa does *not* have an incentive system in place at the present time; however, there is an accrediting process conducted by the State Department of Education which will become effective July 1, 1989. According to the accreditation procedures, an on-site visit will be made to each school and school district each year. Involved in this accreditation process is a verbal exit report with the administration and local education board at the close of the visit (Iowa State Department of Education, 1988).

Kentucky's incentive system is a data driven system analyzing information such as test scores, reduction in dropout rates, and student attendance data that is collected from school districts. Furthermore, this system allows the SDE to focus on the needs of the school districts. Individual outcomes and mechanisms for evaluating those outcomes are established for each school along with an "expected level" of performance. These incentive standards will be developed and managed solely through the governor's office. Therefore, the SDE will limit itself to evaluating schools according to the state's minimum accreditation standards. A group, entitled the "Council on School Performance Standards", will be appointed to oversee and further develop Kentucky's school incentive program. This Council will focus its efforts

in areas such as traits to be developed in a youngster (self-concept, school attendance, etc.), basic skill development, how a student learns best, and value development. The actions of the Council will not affect the SDE's accreditation system. Along with creating an incentive system, a monetary reward system will be created. The incentive system may be based on the percent of students in a given school that meet or exceed the expected outcomes. The primary emphasis of this system is to keep schools constantly trying to improve. House Bill 6, enacted by the state legislature in 1985, created Chapter 157 which established the Educational Innovation Incentive Fund that provides grants for local school districts. The SDE will develop criteria for awarding grants. Another component in Chapter 157 is entitled the Educational Excellence Improvement Fund. The purpose of this fund is to provide monies to local school districts for special projects designed to improve student academic performance, achievement, and capabilities; and for providing incentives to local school districts to involve the private community in educational funding efforts. Yet another component of Kentucky's incentive program is the Assessed Valuation Per Pupil Fund. This fund focuses on increasing funding for education through matching private and state monetary resources. However, this particular fund matching process makes an adjustment in funding according to the districts assessed valuation per student expenditure (Kentucky State Department of Education, 1988).

The Mississippi State Department of Education is presently in the process of exploring incentives along with criteria associated with them in an effort to recognize school districts which are achieving beyond the minimum accreditation standards set forth by the State Board of Education (Mississippi State Department of Educa-



tion, 1989). Currently, Mississippi school districts undergo an on-site accreditation audit every five years. In addition to an audit of process standards, districts are evaluated yearly on established minimal levels of performance on outcome standards such as: the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) and Stanford Achievement Test. Additional outcome measures are being reviewed for possible inclusion in the performance based accreditation system.

Missouri's incentive system is called the Incentives for School Excellence (ISE) Grant Program which encourages exemplary and innovative programs designed to improve instruction. This program will financially assist an individual teacher, a group of teachers, a school, or a school district in improving elementary and secondary education. Special emphasis is given to improving cognitive and affective areas. It should be noted that grants funded under the Incentives for School Excellence Program are intended to support efforts to improve schools and classroom teaching practices and procedures at the preschool level and in grades K-12. Adult and community education are not eligible. Eligibility is based on four categories: individual teacher, groups of teachers, the school, and school district. A teacher may submit only one individual teacher grant application which can total up to \$5,000 of state funds. At least three teachers included must be included in a "group" application and at least two members of the group must be full-time employees of the district in which the grant originates. A group of teachers may apply for up to \$20,000 of state funds. The building principal is responsible for submitting a school level application which must be schoolwide in scope. Furthermore, a school project must be designed to impact the total school faculty and student body. A school may submit only one school

grant application per year which can be up to \$30,000 of state funds.

The superintendent is responsible for submitting a district level application which must be district-wide in scope. The scope of a district project must include all school buildings housing similar target populations. A district may submit only one district application per year which can be for up to \$50,000. Clearly, the reward and/or recognition for either a teacher, a school, or a school district would be to receive a grant (Missouri State Department of Education, 1988).

The state of New Jersey does *not* have an incentive system *nor* a reward and recognition system in place at the present time; however, there is somewhat of an incentive system built into their accreditation process. New Jersey evaluates its 583 school districts through a monitoring process every five (5) years. The monitoring process consists of three (3) levels. Level I monitoring is the basic process used for determining whether a district has met the standards established by the ten essential elements and corresponding indicators. These elements are as follows: 1) annual educational planning, 2) school and community relations, 3) comprehensive curriculum and instruction, 4) pupil attendance, 5) facilities, 6) staff, 7) mandated programs, 8) mandated basic skills tests, 9) equal educational opportunity and affirmative action, and 10) financial. The Level II review process is implemented when a local school district fails to achieve accreditation during Level I monitoring. The process is designed to bring about remediation of cited deficiencies through an analysis of the underlying problems and the development and implementation of an improvement plan. A district which fails to become certified as a result of the Level II process will be required to undergo Level III corrective action. This process consists of an exami-

nation of district deficiencies by the division of County and Regional Services Brokering Staff from divisions and/or units from the State Department of Education. A district which fails to demonstrate reasonable progress toward compliance with the accrediting provisions or fails to correct its deficiencies, is subject to further intervention by the Commissioner of Education, along with possible receivership by the state. An incentive for school officials will be to insure that their district fully complies with the state's accreditation standards and the accreditation process. The receipt of an approved accreditation status from the SDE could be perceived as a form of reward or recognition (New Jersey State Department of Education, 1988).

North Carolina has not developed "incentive standards" which exceed the basic performance standards that all school districts must meet. Also, no reward or recognition system is in place at the present time. The Department of Public Education with assistance, from the Division of Accreditation, is responsible for implementing the various aspects of accreditation. North Carolina has established a number of indicators pertaining to student success: (1) at least eighty (80%) percent of a districts high school students have earned at least five units of credit toward graduation during the school year; (2) at least thirty-five (35%) percent of graduating students have successfully completed the courses required for entry within the University of North Carolina system; (3) and the average number of students passing the reading, mathematics, and writing essay tests developed by the state on the first attempt shall exceed 88 percent. Additional indicators have been set for both elementary and secondary students. The third grade average on the California Achievement Test must exceed the 40th percentile on the most recent national CAT norms. Similar criteria

applies to the North Carolina Science Test which also includes the eighth grade. For secondary students, the average score for the North Carolina Algebra I Test, the North Carolina Biology Test, the North Carolina United States History Test, and the North Carolina Chemistry Test from the three most recent years shall exceed the 40th percentile of the 1986 state norms (North Carolina State Department of Education, 1988).

South Carolina's school incentive program is based on gain scores related to three criteria: student achievement, student attendance, and teacher attendance. However, the primary criteria of the program is the gain is student achievement scores as determined by a matched-longitudinal analysis of test scores in reading and mathematics from the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP). Additionally, the criteria of their incentive program has broad representation of rewarded schools varying in demographics and organizational patterns. Nonmonetary reward objects such as certificates, plaques, trophies, and new flags are included in the reward structure for these are symbolic of a school's accomplishments. Also, South Carolina has set a minimum monetary reward of \$25.00 per student enrolled in the school. Although, it should be noted that no school is eligible to receive a monetary reward unless the achievement gain criterion is met. Then the school's advisory groups should actively participate in the determination of how to spend any monetary rewards (South Carolina State Department of Education, 1988).

According to a review of *Rules, Regulations, and Minimum Standards for the Governance of Public Schools in the State of Tennessee* (1988), there are no incentive standards developed for Tennessee's public school districts. As the title indicates, the document does contain the rules, regula-

tions and minimum standards governing public education in grades K-12 in the State of Tennessee. Also, it details administrative rules and regulations governing private schools. Accordingly, the State Board of Education is authorized by law to prescribe rules and regulations for the approval, classification, and governance of all public schools. The rules, regulations, and minimum standards are intended to furnish a broad framework of policies which provide the best educational opportunities for children. These criteria are not to be construed as establishing maximum limitations restricting the efforts of any school system that chooses to exceed the standards in order to provide greater educational benefits for its students (Tennessee State Department of Education, 1988).

Utah's incentive system is based on productivity funding, which represents a source of monies that enables districts to experiment with new, creative, and novel endeavors. These funds are administered through the SDE and each district competes for the allotted monies. Examples of some of these productivity projects are as follows: writing labs, distance learning projects, changing teacher staffing patterns, laser disk math instruction, computerized library networking system, and establishing a comprehensive computer management system. All of these projects must be related to the Outcome-Based Education Program which assures that successful learning outcomes for each and every student are the prime focus of everything the school does. The Outcome-Based program assesses current student skills, orients the student to specific objects, teaches the objectives and provides practice, assesses student achievement of mastery, and provides further drill/practice as needed until the objective is attained. During the 1986-87 school year, the Utah Legislature appropriated \$315,900.00 for education incentives which produced more

than \$600,000.00 in local district-matching funds. These funds went to pay for computer labs, science equipment, library books, musical instruments, educational field trips and the gifted and talented curriculum. This Incentives for Excellence program focuses on building a strong partnership between public education and private enterprise through the establishment of education foundations that encourage school districts to approach the private sector for donations to support educational excellence (Utah State Department of Education, 1988).

In 1987, the Washington State Legislature authorized and funded the Schools for the Twenty-First Century Pilot Program in an effort to provide a unique opportunity for schools and school districts to restructure their operations with a focus on improvement in student performance. The program includes the development of model programs, an evaluation system, and an accountability system to determine student progress. Another important purpose of the program is to determine whether increasing local decision-making authority will produce more effective learning. The State Board of Education, in cooperation with the governor's task force, selects projects that are within the funds appropriated by the legislature. The selection process includes the following criteria: 1) not more than twenty-one projects during each biennium for the Schools for the Twenty-first Century Pilot Program, 2) at least one entire school district shall be selected, and 3) projects must reflect a balance among elementary, junior high or middle schools, and high schools.

Individual school accreditation in Washington is strictly on a voluntary basis. Those schools that decide to be accredited have three different accrediting methods from which to choose: 1) self-study process, 2) the State Board of Education, and 3)



accreditation by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. The purpose of the self-study is to promote educational improvement through self-analysis and planning; therefore, the study must be comprehensive in scope and the product must be a plan for program improvement. The accreditation standards that have been developed pertain to the following areas: 1) program offerings, 2) staff, 3) services, 4) textbook and supplementing reference materials, 5) equipment and materials, and 6) facilities. Schools attempting to acquire accreditation through the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges must adhere to the following criteria: 1) complete the membership form, 2) complete the annual report, 3) annual report is reviewed, 4) a self-evaluation and visiting team evaluation is conducted, and 5) the evaluation is based on evaluation criteria published by the National Study of School Evaluation (Washington State Department of Education, 1988).

### Conclusion

Although all of the participating states conduct some form of school accreditation, each state has established varying criteria and procedures for monitoring compliance. Washington and Florida differ the most in respect to their accreditation process. For, Washington's accreditation process is voluntary and offers districts three options pertaining to the type of accrediting procedures they will undergo. On the other hand, Florida's process calls for a review by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS); a procedure that is voluntarily undergone in other southern states in addition to the processes set in place by the state education agencies. In general, the accreditation processes of the participating states are overseen solely by the state education agencies or in conjunction with another governing board.

In concert with accreditation procedures, seven of the fifteen states reviewed have established incentive systems (See Table I). Typically, the incentive programs offer monetary awards to schools or school districts which demonstrate improvement in designated indicators of excellence such as student achievement scores, student attendance, and teacher attendance. A number of the remaining state education agencies reviewed are currently working toward the development of incentive programs. Few of the state accreditation documents referenced a separate system of rewards or recognition. Generally, rewarding or recognizing a school or school district is built into the state incentive system.

Overall, education officials must continue to monitor the progress of our nation's schools. Recently, educators have noted the mediocre performance of our schools in raising student achievement and lowering student dropout rates. As state agencies endeavor to identify and monitor the implementation of criteria which are deemed necessary components of an effective school district administrators are pressed to ensure that progress is indeed made. However, few state education agencies have established appropriate benchmarks to effectively enable district officials to demonstrate progress within their individual settings. Obviously, minimum standards of performance must be established and adhered to by all districts in order to ensure at least a minimal level of educational opportunity for students. Additional analysis must be given to the establishment of performance criteria which take into account the effects of specific demographic and geographic variables on the effectiveness of district programs. The use of incentives, such as monetary rewards, must be closely monitored to ensure the fair distribution of funds across all representative groups. The purpose of an incentive system

Table 1

Incentive Characteristics

State	Incentive System In Place ?	Reward & Recognition System	Accrediting Agency	Accreditation Standards Procedures	Grants Given	Appeal for Nonaccreditation Status	Type of Incentive Program	Summary of Performance Standards	Type of Recognition System
Arkansas	No	Yes	Process installed by Quality Education Act of 1989	N/A	N/A	SDE	N/A	N/A	Incentive for school officials to insure that districts comply with state standards
California	No	No	Western Association of Schools & Colleges	Self-Study & On-Site Visit	N/A	No	N/A	Based on indicators of effectiveness and excellence	N/A
Florida	No	Yes	Seeking accreditation from SACs	Florida Committee of the SACs	N/A	No	N/A	N/A	Accreditation by SACs
Georgia	Yes	No	N/A	Indicators of Excellence & Quality Basic Education Act	Matching funds grant	No	Accreditation standards evaluated by indicator(s)	Based on 18th edition of Bulletin 171, Mississippi State Board of Ed.	Presently in the planning stage
Indiana	Yes	Yes	N/A	A+ Program based on results	N/A	No	Improved performance on test scores, share in \$10 million	Outcome based system on goals & achievement	Eligible for monetary & non-monetary rewards for improvement in designated areas of achievement
Iowa	No	No	N/A	SDE on-site visit, verbal exit report w/admin. & board	N/A	No	N/A	Passing accreditation process administered by SDE	N/A
Kentucky	Yes	Yes	N/A	SDE assisted by Council on School Performance Standards	SDE will develop criteria for awarding grants	No	Data driven system, Education Innovative Incentive Funds	Based on results from study made by the Council on School Performance Standards	House Bill 6, Chapter 197, Education Excellence Improvement Fund, Assessed Valuation per Pupil Fund
Mississippi	No	No	SDE	On-site audit every five years	N/A	Yes	N/A	Based on Bulletin 171 of Mississippi State Board of Education	N/A
Missouri	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Matching funds & match-free grants	No	Incentives for School Excellence Grant (ISE)	N/A	Receiving a grant
New Jersey	No	No	N/A	SDE monitoring process: Levels I, II & III	N/A	Exam by Div. of County & Regional Services	Built into accreditation process	Based on manual for evaluating local school districts	Receiving Accreditation
N. Carolina	No	No	Dept. of Public Education, Div. of Accreditation & State Accred. Committee	Basic Performance Standards & on-site visit	N/A	The State Accreditation Committee	N/A	Based on indicators of Student Success	N/A
S. Carolina	Yes	Yes	N/A	Basic Educational Data System (BEDS) in accordance w/ The Defined Minimum Program for S.C. School Districts	N/A	N/A	Criteria based on student achievement & attendance & teacher attendance	Based on the School Gain Index (SGI) and outcome measures for "Quality Education" (see John Zehner-Bauman 171)	"Reward Flags" certificates & \$2 per student beyond State Minimum Foundation Program
Tennessee	No	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	Local districts matching funds & incentive grants based on components of Bulletin 171	N/A	N/A
Utah	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Appropriation for incentives and district matching funds	No	N/A	Outcome-Based Education (OBE)	Obtaining a grant
Washington	Yes	No	Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges	Voluntary basis, SBE or self study	N/A	No	21st Century Pilot Program	N/A	N/A

must be to encourage all schools to constantly strive to improve. Therefore, the system must develop a number of avenues for districts to pursue as they strive for excellence in their educational settings. Indeed, the ultimate goal of every educational system should be to provide an optimal level of educational opportunity for all students.

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