INCENTIVE GRANTS—CONTRACT PROVISION

The District shall provide in employment contracts that qualifying employees may receive an incentive payment under the Educator Excellence Award Program/District Awards for Teacher Excellence (DATE) if the District participates in the program. The District shall indicate that any incentive payment distributed is considered a payment for performance and not an entitlement as part of an employee's salary. *Education Code 21.415*

DISTRICT AWARDS FOR TEACHER EXCELLENCE (DATE)

The DATE is an annual grant program under which the District may receive a grant for the purpose of providing awards to classroom teachers, principals, and other District employees. Funds from the program shall be distributed to each selected school district that submitted an approved local awards plan developed in accordance with Education Code 21.704 and 19 Administrative Code 102.1073(e)(2).

APPLICATION

The District must act pursuant to local Board policy for submitting a local awards plan and grant application to TEA. The local awards plan must meet the criteria set forth at 19 Administrative Code 102.1073(e).

The Board's decision to approve and submit its local awards plan and grant application may not be appealed to the Commissioner.

EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN EMPLOYEES

The District may choose to exclude a teacher or a principal on a selected campus from receiving an award, except involuntarily transferred teachers or principals, or teachers or principals no longer on the selected campus who retired at the end of the school year. The local awards plan must reflect the District policies with regard to such a teacher or principal at the program start date. A decision to exclude certain teachers or principals from receiving an award may not be appealed to the Commissioner.

NOTICE TO TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

A local awards plan must provide for notifying teachers and principals eligible to receive awards under the plan of the specific criteria and any formulas on which the awards will be based before the beginning of the period on which the awards will be based.

AWARD AMOUNTS

The District must use at least 60 percent of grant funds to directly award classroom teachers and principals who effectively improve student achievement as determined by meaningful, objective measures (Part I funds). The remaining funds may be used only for the purposes listed at Education Code 21.705.

Annual award amounts should be valued at $3,000 or more, unless otherwise determined by the District planning committee. All eligible educators must have the opportunity to earn minimum awards valued at $1,000 per educator identified under Part I. Local deci-

sions regarding award amounts are final and may not be appealed to the Commissioner.

Education Code Ch. 21, Subch. O; 19 TAC 102.1073

MENTOR TEACHERS

The District may assign a mentor teacher to each classroom teacher who has less than two years of teaching experience in the subject or grade level to which the teacher is assigned. A teacher assigned as a mentor must:

1. To the extent practicable, teach in the same school;
2. To the extent practicable, teach the same subject or grade level, as applicable; and
3. Meet the qualifications prescribed by Commissioner's rules.

The Commissioner's rules must require that a mentor teacher:

1. Complete a research-based mentor and induction training program approved by the Commissioner;
2. Complete a training program provided by the District; and
3. Have at least three complete years of teaching experience with a superior record of assisting students, as a whole, in achieving improvement in student performance.

The District may apply to the Commissioner for funds for a mentor teacher program. The District may use the funds only for providing:

1. Mentor teacher stipends;
2. Scheduled time for mentor teachers to provide mentoring to assigned classroom teachers; and
3. Mentoring support through providers of mentor training.

Education Code 21.458; 19 TAC 153.1011

MASTER TEACHER GRANT PROGRAMS

The Commissioner shall establish master reading, mathematics, technology, and science teacher grant programs to encourage teachers to become certified as master teachers and to work with other teachers and students to improve student performance. *Education Code 21.410–.413*

APPLICATION

The District may apply to the Commissioner for grants for each identified high-need campus to be used to pay year-end stipends to certified master teachers.

USE OF FUNDS

Grant funds may be used only for the purpose of paying a year-end stipend to a master teacher whose primary duties are to teach

reading, mathematics, technology, or science and to serve as a reading, mathematics, technology, or science teacher mentor for the amount of time and in the manner established by the District.

PAYMENTS

The Commissioner shall reduce payments to the District proportionately to the extent a teacher does not meet the requirements for a master teacher for the entire school year.

If a teacher qualifies as a master teacher for a partial month, the District's written policy will determine how the District counts the partial month, for example, as no month served or as an entire month served. Only whole months shall be entered on the application by the District on the teacher's behalf.

Education Code sections 21.410–.413 do not create a property right to a grant or stipend. A master teacher stipend is not considered in determining whether the District is paying the teacher the minimum monthly salary under Education Code 21.402.

DESIGNATION OF TEACHER

A district that employs more certified master teachers than the number of grants available shall designate which certified master teacher(s) to assign the duties required to receive the state stipends. The designation is based on a written policy adopted by the Board. The District's decision is final and may not be appealed.

The District may not apportion among teachers a stipend paid with a grant the District receives under this program. The District may use local money to pay additional stipends in amounts determined by the District.

Education Code 21.410–.413; 19 TAC Ch. 102, Subch. BB

RETIREMENT INCENTIVES

The District may not offer or provide a financial or other incentive to an employee to encourage the employee to retire from the Teacher Retirement System of Texas. *Education Code 22.007*

ATTENDANCE SUPPLEMENT

The District shall not deny an educator a salary bonus or similar compensation given in whole or in part on the basis of educator attendance because of the educator's absence from school for observance of a religious holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Tax Code 11.20. *Education Code 21.406*