2012–2013 ASPIRE Award Program Payouts
Frequently Asked Questions

January 22, 2014

1. Tell us about the ASPIRE Award Program.
The Houston Independent School District (HISD) is a national leader in using performance pay as an educational-improvement strategy. In 2007, HISD launched the ASPIRE Award Program to recognize campus-based employees’ excellence in raising student academic progress and achievement. As one of the largest strategic compensation programs in the nation, the ASPIRE Award Program is based on value-added analysis and achievement data. It is one of the many ways HISD recognizes the work of our employees. We work to engage every HISD employee in achieving the district’s goals and building a culture of continuous learning and improvement that produces optimum results for students.

2. How are the ASPIRE awards calculated?
The ASPIRE Award Program is designed to reward educator impact on student academic progress from year to year using both value-added analysis and achievement data. Awards are calculated based on two HISD Board-approved models: one for teachers/campus-based staff and one for school leaders. The model for teachers/campus-based staff includes individual teacher performance, teacher group performance, and campus-wide group performance. The model for school leaders includes two group performance categories, one for campus value-added and one for campus academic growth or achievement.

3. How much did HISD give out to educators this year?
In January 2014, HISD distributed $18.2 million in ASPIRE awards across 5,180 campus-based staff members whose work led to increased student academic progress and achievement levels during the 2012–2013 school year.

4. Who received an ASPIRE award?
The following HISD employee groups received ASPIRE awards: 3,469 core foundation teachers, 571 non-core foundation teachers, 374 instructional support staff, 330 teaching assistants, 262 operation support staff, 94 assistant principals and deans of instruction, and 80 principals.

5. How many teachers were eligible to receive an award? And what percentage of eligible teachers actually received an award?
Core foundation teachers: 5,742 eligible; 60% received an award
Non-core foundation teachers: 1,389 eligible; 41% received an award
Instructional support staff: 900 eligible; 42% received an award
Teaching assistants: 737 eligible; 45% received an award
Operational support staff: 1,204 eligible; 22% received an award
Assistant principals and deans of instruction: 246 eligible; 38% received an award
Principals: 186 eligible; 43% received an award
6. How does this year’s amount compare to years past? And how does the number of educators awarded compare to years past?
Beginning with the 2006–2007 school year, HISD is pleased to have distributed the following ASPIRE awards to campus-based staff who have produced the most academic growth with students:

- **2011–2012:** $17.7 million to 7,217 employees
- **2010–2011:** $35.3 million to 12,458 employees
- **2009–2010:** $42.4 million to 16,544 employees
- **2008–2009:** $40.5 million to 15,710 employees
- **2007–2008:** $31.6 million to 15,844 employees
- **2006–2007:** $24.7 million to 13,157 employees

Through the ASPIRE Award Program, we intend to reward our top performing staff members. Every year, we refine the model to ensure it is rigorous and challenging. Because we have raised our standards, less employees have received an award in recent years.

7. What was the range of payouts for educators?

- **Core foundation teachers** received $500–$13,000, with an average award of $4,465.
- **Non-core foundation teachers** received $245–$3,000, with an average award or $1,724.
- **Instructional support staff** received $147–$1,350, with an average award of $721.
- **Teaching assistants** received $200–$1,150, with an average award of $607.
- **Operational support staff** received $250–$500 with an average award of $498.
- **Assistant principals and deans of instruction** received $1,250–$7,500, with an average award of $4,867.
- **Principals** received $1,250–$15,000, with an average award of $8,609.

8. How does HISD pay for the awards?

HISD was fortunate to receive support for our 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award Program from the U.S. Department of Education Teacher Incentive Fund 2012 (TIF Cycle 4) grant, U.S. Department of Education Teacher Incentive Fund 2010 (TIF Cycle 3) grant, Texas District Awards for Teacher Excellence (D.A.T.E.) grant, and local general funds.

9. What is value-added analysis?

Value-added analysis measures teachers’ and schools’ impact on student academic progress from year to year. It uses a student’s own academic performance as the basis for determining his or her academic growth—including STAAR, TAKS, Stanford, and Aprenda from the past three years. Value-added results are not related to a student’s socio-economic status or other personal characteristics that typically affect achievement-based measures. When used with other measures, value-added provides a more complete picture of student and educator performance.

HISD has been using value-added data since 2007 as part of our educational-improvement efforts. We selected a value-added system called SAS® EVAAS® to calculate and deliver the reports annually to our district. To help educators understand and use their value-added data to inform instructional practices, we provide professional development, a variety of resources, and ongoing support structures.

10. What does value-added have to do with ASPIRE awards?

Since 2007, campus- and teacher-level value-added data have been used to calculate ASPIRE awards. Value-added is one component of the ASPIRE Award Program, along with achievement data.

11. If my child’s teacher received less this year than last year, does that mean he/she is not an effective teacher?

Having great teachers in the classroom is one of the single-most important things we can do at HISD for meeting the needs of our students and preparing them to graduate on time and be successful in college, careers, and life. There are teachers who did not receive an ASPIRE award this year. This does not necessarily mean that their students or their campus didn’t grow academically or that they are poor teachers. It simply could mean that the teacher did not meet eligibility requirements, but still helped his/her students grow.

12. Where can I learn more?

For more information about the ASPIRE Award Program, visit the ASPIRE portal at [www.houstonisd.org/ASPIRE](http://www.houstonisd.org/ASPIRE) or e-mail ASPIREaward@houstonisd.org.