Principals and Campus-Based Support Team Members:

Prior to beginning the Principal Set-Up Period on May 5, it is important to note that the following categories of your staff members should be considered as special cases for the verification and linkage process:

Reading, Language, and ELA Teachers in Grades 7 and 8

For the 2009–2010 verification and linkage period and ASPIRE Award Program, the following rules will apply for linkage for teachers of Reading and English Language Arts (Language Arts) in grades 7 and 8:

1. If the students at your campus are enrolled in Language Arts only, then teachers should link those students for both Reading AND Language Arts. Their value-added score will be based on Reading TAKS for Reading and Stanford Language for Language Arts, and their ASPIRE award will be calculated using both subjects.

Scenario 1: A teacher teaches both Language Arts and Reading TEKS through one ELA course. There is not a separate Reading course.

2. If the students at your campus are enrolled in Language Arts and are receiving additional reading instruction (in the form of a class), then the teacher providing the Reading instruction will claim the students for Reading. The teacher providing Language Arts instruction will only claim them for Language Arts instruction. The Reading teacher’s value-added score will be based on Reading TAKS and his/her award will be calculated using Reading only. The Language Arts teacher’s value-added score will be based on Stanford Language and his/her award will be calculated using Language Arts only.

Scenario 2A: A teacher teaches both Language Arts and Reading TEKS through two different courses.
Scenario 2B: Two different teachers teach students in two separate courses. There is one teacher for Language (English) and a second teacher for Reading.

**Elementary School Librarians**

For the purposes of the ASPIRE award, “librarians” are considered as Category G: Instructional Support Staff. We recognize that some elementary school librarians are on an ancillary rotation, and as such should be considered as Category F: Elective/Ancillary Teacher. All librarians are automatically defaulted to Category G. However, if an elementary school librarian was overridden to Category F in the 2008–2009 school year and has the same job title and is at the same school as s/he was in the 2009–2010 school year, then an override has been processed to place the librarian in Category F for the 2009–2010 school year. If this is correct, no further action is necessary on the part of the principal. If an override has not been processed for an elementary school librarian, and s/he should be considered as an ancillary teacher, an override request must be submitted.

To consider a librarian as an ancillary teacher, the principal should be prepared to show documentation (i.e., an ancillary schedule, lesson plans, etc.) in the event the district is audited, even if the override was processed from last year’s data.

**Tutors**

After-school tutors, TAKS tutors, hourly tutors, or other types of instructors who are not responsible for the school day instruction of a core foundation subject should not be linked to the students they tutor. Student linkages should be completed only for those teachers who are assigned to teaching students the courses designated as “core foundation ASPIRE courses.”

While we recognize the value tutors can and do have on campus, the purpose of the linkage process is to link the appropriate students to the appropriate core foundation teachers responsible for the instruction of courses that have been identified as core foundation according to the ASPIRE core course list (available on the ASPIRE portal). The current ASPIRE Award Program does not consider tutors as core foundation teachers. These employees should be verified based on the position in which they spend the majority of the day.

**Hourly Teachers**

Hourly teachers and long-term substitutes should not be linked to students. While we recognize the value hourly/part-time teachers have on campus, the purpose of the linkage and verification process is to link the appropriate students to the appropriate core foundation teachers. Please note that hourly teachers and long-term substitutes will not be eligible for the ASPIRE Award as they do not meet general eligibility requirements. As such, they cannot be considered as “Core Foundation Teachers.”
Percentage of Time
It is extremely important to note that the percentage of time that a teacher is assigned to a student does not indicate the percentage of the award the teacher will receive. Whether a teacher links the students at 100% time or at 20% time, the potential award amount is equivalent. Instead, the percentage of time a teacher is assigned to a student is used to weigh the effect that student has on the teacher’s value-added score. Therefore, a student’s score that is linked at 20% time will not count as much toward a value-added score as a student’s score that is linked at 100% time.

Elementary School Lab Teachers
Elementary school lab teachers of core foundation courses can and should be linked to students if all of the following conditions apply:
1. The lab teacher is responsible for at least 20% of the curriculum instruction (e.g., one class period a week);
2. The lab teacher provides content grades (e.g. a percentage score to be used in the overall letter grade; not a conduct grade such as a E/S/P/U) for the course to the homeroom teacher and/or on the report card; and
3. The lab teacher plans and conducts lessons with students.

If all of these conditions apply, then the lab teacher should link all students for which s/he is responsible, at the appropriate percentage. A lab teacher with student linkages will be considered as a core foundation teacher (Category B). A lab teacher with no student linkages will be considered as Category F: Elective/Ancillary teacher.

Please consider your lab teacher(s) carefully. Do they contribute to the instruction and grading of students in a core course, or is their instruction and grading more appropriately categorized as ancillary? If the lab teacher links students for 20% time, then the other teacher linking the students should link those students at 80% time. A student can never be claimed at more than 100% time for a subject from all teachers claiming that student.

Please note: tutors are not to be considered lab teachers!

Special Education Core Foundation Teachers
It is critical that Special Education core foundation teachers in grades 3–8 link the students for whom they are responsible for teaching “ASPIRE core foundation courses” (available on the ASPIRE portal). Special Education core foundation courses have been expanded to include a wide variety of core courses.

A Special Education core foundation teacher will be placed in either Category E if s/he teaches core foundation subjects to Special Education students in grades 3–8 where a value-added report cannot be generated, or teaches fewer than seven TAKS or TAKS-accommodated Special Education students in grades 9–12. All other Special Education teachers will be considered under their respective core foundation teacher category. Student linkage to the appropriate core courses is imperative in determining appropriate categorization.

Please see the section entitled “co-teachers” for special education core foundation teachers who participate in shared teaching.
Co-Teachers
Co-teachers (certified Special Education teachers teaching in an inclusion setting) and Special Education inclusion teachers, or teachers who function as co-teachers, but don’t have the job title of “co-teacher,” include teachers who work with regular education teachers to teach the same students for the same content area.

In these cases, the teachers who “share students” for the same content area should both link all students for whom they are responsible at the appropriate percentages. For examples, please see the section entitled “Team/Collaborating Teachers.”

Team/Collaborating Teachers
Team teachers, collaborating teachers, or other shared teaching arrangements include teachers who work together to teach the same students for the same content area. In these cases, the teachers who “share students” for the same content area should both link all students for whom they are responsible at the appropriate percentages.

For example, if two teachers are teaching the same students in math, and each is responsible for half of the teaching, then both teachers should link the same students at 50% time each. This equates to 100% time for each student, with half the instruction being “credited” to Teacher A and half the instruction being “credited” to Teacher B.

It is important to note that if two teachers verify for exactly the same students at exactly the same percentage time, then they will receive exactly the same teacher report. However, if two teachers verify similar students at a similar percentage of time, then they will not receive the same report!

For this reason, for best results, teachers who share students should collaborate to complete their student linkage and verification.

Questions

About Verification and Linkage
General support for all staff members is available online through the ASPIRE Support System under the “My ASPIRE” tab. If you still have questions, contact the ASPIRE Support Team at 1-866-543-7555.

About the 2009–2010 ASPIRE Award Program
Staff are encouraged to review the award program materials on the ASPIRE portal under the Recognize tab. Additionally, an optional online course (AS0003: “An Overview of the 2009–2010 ASPIRE Award Program”) is available through ASPIRE•Learn. To enroll in this course, visit the ASPIRE portal and click on the ASPIRE•Learn box. Then, select this course to log in and enroll. If you still have questions, e-mail ASPIREAward@houstonisd.org.

Thank you for your efforts in accomplishing this important process!