

2009–2010 ASPIRE Awards

Program and Eligibility Requirements



Following are the revised program and eligibility requirements for the 2009–2010 ASPIRE Awards.

General Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to participate in the 2009–2010 ASPIRE Awards, HISD employees must meet all of the following general eligibility requirements.

1. Employees must be supervised and evaluated by the principal of the campus where they are serving students. (This does not apply to Category J: Principals)
2. Employees must be employed in a campus-assigned position as of the fall snapshot date.
3. Employees must be continuously employed in an eligible position through the last day of school.
4. Employees must complete the instructional-linkage and assignment-verification process, or have this completed by their principal, through the ASPIRE portal by the submission deadline as published annually. It is recommended that employees review instructional-linkage and assignment-verification information on the ASPIRE portal for accuracy.
5. Employees may “opt out” of the ASPIRE Award Program during the linkage and verification process. If an employee does not make a selection, the employee will be included for consideration for an ASPIRE Award.
6. Employees eligible under other incentive plans are not eligible for ASPIRE Awards (e.g., Food Services employees).
7. Hourly employees in any capacity, including substitute/associate teachers, are not eligible to participate in the ASPIRE Awards. Employees holding an hourly or substitute position must be converted to a non-hourly position by the fall snapshot date in order to be eligible.
8. Employees who take leave of absence during the eligibility period (e.g., temporary disability, but not family medical leave) are not eligible to participate in the ASPIRE Awards.
9. Employees must be in attendance 90 percent of the 175 instructional days identified as the “instructional school year.” This means that employees cannot be absent for more than 10 percent of their scheduled hours to work during the instructional year; and first-year employees must have been hired by September 17, 2009. The following types of leave will be held harmless (not count as days absent): funeral leave, military leave, family medical leave (must be authorized through Human Resources), assault leave, jury duty, religious holidays, compensatory time, and off-campus duty.

Position Eligibility Requirements and Categorization

Different positions within HISD qualify for various aspects of the ASPIRE Award Program. Following are definitions for position categories and eligibility requirements that will be used to categorize employees for award purposes.

Instructional Position Categories

Employees who qualify as instructional must be certified teaching staff and will fall into either core foundation or elective/ancillary instructional positions as defined below.

Core Foundation Teaching Positions

For employees to qualify as core foundation instructional staff, employees must be assigned to a campus, plan lessons, provide direct instruction to students, and be responsible for providing content grades, not conduct or participation grades.

ASPIRE Core Foundation Courses

The ASPIRE Core Foundation Courses include those courses identified by the Texas Education Agency under the Core Foundation areas of English Language Arts/Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies at the elementary and middle school levels and those Core Foundation courses required for graduation credit in the 4 x 4 Recommended or Distinguished High School Diploma programs and/or those courses that contribute directly to data collected and interpreted as part of the growth measure. Fifty percent of the teaching assignment must be in ASPIRE Core Foundation courses to be considered as a core foundation teacher for the purposes of award.

2009–2010 ASPIRE Awards

Program and Eligibility Requirements



A. Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–6, Self-Contained

To be considered in this category, employees must qualify as core foundation teachers and teach the majority of the same students in grades 3–6 in at least four out of the five core foundation subject areas. For third grade only, employees must teach reading, math, and language arts to the majority of the same students to be considered “self-contained.” A teacher-level value-added report should be produced for these employees. For small class sizes, a special analysis may be performed (see Award Model Diagram for further details and definitions).

B. Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 3–8, Departmentalized

To be considered in this category, employees must qualify as core foundation teachers and teach one to three core foundation subjects to different classes of students in grades 3–8. A teacher-level value-added report should be produced for these employees. For small class sizes, a special analysis may be performed (see Award Model Diagram for further details and definitions).

C. Core Foundation Teachers, Grades 9–12

To be considered in this category, employees must qualify as core foundation teachers and teach grades 9–12 core foundation courses the majority of the school day. For a complete list of these courses, please review the 2009 Master Course List with ASPIRE core foundation subjects.

D. Core Foundation Teachers, Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2

To be considered in this category, employees must qualify as core foundation instructional staff and teach core foundation subjects to students in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 2 the majority of the school day.

E. Special Education Core Foundation Teachers—No Value-Added Report

To be considered in this category, employees must qualify as core foundation instructional staff and teach core foundation subjects to Special Education students in grades 3–8 where a value-added report cannot be generated, or teach 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 (above).

Elective/Ancillary Instructional Positions

F. Elective/Ancillary Teachers

To be considered elective/ancillary teachers, employees must teach elective or ancillary courses for fifty percent or more of their teaching assignment and do not meet the definition of core foundation teachers (above) in grades PK–12. Courses defined by TEA as “core enrichment” (art, music, dance, theater, PE) are considered an elective course for ASPIRE.

Other Position Categories

In addition to recognizing instructional staff, the ASPIRE Awards also acknowledge the contributions of employees who contribute to student growth in other ways throughout the school year. Following are the categorizations to recognize these employees.

G. Instructional Support Staff

Instructional support-staff members are degreed, certified, or licensed professionals assigned to a campus and provide direct support to the instruction of students. If the instructional support-staff member is assigned to multiple campuses, the percentage of assignment to a single campus cannot be less than 40 percent.

For example: counselor, librarian, nurse, speech therapist, speech therapist assistant, evaluation specialist, instructional coordinator, content-area specialist, school-improvement facilitator, API, social worker, literacy coach, Magnet coordinator, or Title I coordinator.

H. Teaching Assistants

Teaching assistants are staff members who have a job classification of teaching assistant and provide direct classroom instructional support to instructional staff.

2009–2010 ASPIRE Awards

Program and Eligibility Requirements



I. Operational Support Staff

Operational support-staff members are campus-based employees who do not meet the requirements for instructional staff, instructional support staff, or teaching assistants.

For example: school secretary, data entry clerk, teacher aide, clerk, attendance specialist, business manager, SIMS clerk, computer network specialist, registrars, and CET.

Campus Leadership Categories

The ASPIRE Award Program recognizes campus leadership for their contributions to student progress and achievement based on campus and departmental performance. Certification for these positions is required to be considered for these categories. The following describe the award category eligibility for leadership positions.

J. Principals

To be considered in this category, employees must meet all eligibility requirements and be the “principal of record” according to HR and PeopleSoft.

K. Assistant Principals/Deans of Instruction/Deans of Students

To be considered in this category, employees must meet all eligibility requirements, and be coded as an assistant principal, dean of instruction, or dean of students according to HR and PeopleSoft.

Additional Position Eligibility Requirements

1. For an employee who voluntarily transfers from one ASPIRE Award-eligible position to another ASPIRE Award-eligible position during the eligibility period, the award will be determined on the basis of the ASPIRE Award-eligible position the employee held the greatest percentage of the school year (based on the 187-day duty schedule).
For example: On September 5 (prior to the fall snapshot), an employee teaches third-grade math (Category B: a departmentalized, core foundation teacher). On February 5, the employee transfers to a content specialist position on the same campus (Category G: an instructional support position). Both assignments are ASPIRE Award-eligible. However, the award model and eligibility requirements differ. In this case, the greater percentage of the “school year” was spent as a third-grade, departmentalized, core foundation teacher. Therefore, the award amount would be determined on the basis of the job of a third grade, departmentalized, core foundation teacher.
2. For an employee who transfers from an ASPIRE Award-eligible position to a non-eligible position during the eligibility period, he or she will not be eligible for an award (see General Eligibility Requirements: Rules 2 and 3).
3. The ASPIRE Award for employees who function in multiple categories (above) will be determined on the basis of the job in which they function the majority of their work day.
4. Employees must have credentials for the position in which they function to be eligible under that category.
For example: A teacher teaching ninth-grade math must be certified or on permit to teach ninth-grade math to be eligible as a core foundation 9–12 teacher.
5. For employees who meet the criteria of a core foundation teacher (including Additional Position Eligibility Requirement 3) and for whom a value-added report is produced, the position categorization will be where direct growth can be measured
For example: If a teacher teaches second- and third-grade reading, and a value-added report is obtained for third grade based on the direct measure of student growth is obtained for third grade, the teacher would be eligible under Category B, as a core foundation 3–8, departmentalized teacher. If an employee teaches music the majority of the day, and one class of reading (for which he or she may receive a value-added report), then the employee will be eligible under Category F: Elective/Ancillary Teacher.

2009–2010 ASPIRE Awards

Program and Eligibility Requirements



6. The production of a value-added report does not necessarily categorize an employee as a core foundation teacher for the purposes of determining ASPIRE Award-position eligibility.

For example: If a value-added report is produced to measure the growth of students by a tutor for diagnostic and instructional improvement, the tutor is not eligible as a core foundation teacher unless all the criteria for a core foundation teacher position are met (see the Position Eligibility Requirements and Categorization section).

ASPIRE Award Calculation and Payout Rules

The ASPIRE Awards for teachers will be calculated on the basis of the HISD board-approved model. Certain situations require the adoption of the following award-calculation rules to apply the award model appropriately.

1. Employees who work less than full time must work at least 40 percent of the school time (equivalent to two days per week) at the same campus to be eligible to receive a prorated ASPIRE Award. The prorated ASPIRE Award will be based on the full-time equivalent (FTE) of their eligible position, the portion of time spent in the eligible position, and the ASPIRE Award level.

For example: A half-time employee or 0.5 FTE who spends all of his or her time at a single campus will be eligible to receive 50 percent of the award. This same employee who works 50 percent of his or her time at two campuses (0.25 FTE at each campus) will not be eligible.

2. Awards for employees whose job record/position is assigned to non-campus departments or to a school-improvement officer for time reporting, but who are assigned to and work on specific campuses a minimum of 40 percent of the time, and report directly to the principal (the principal is responsible for supervising and evaluating the individual employee) will be calculated and prorated on the basis of the percentage of campus assignments. Examples include evaluation specialists, content specialists, speech therapists, and various Special Education positions.

For example: A department-assigned, campus-based employee works 50 percent of his or her time at campus A, 25 percent at campus B, and 25 percent at campus C. If the employee is eligible for an ASPIRE Award based on campus data, then the employee would receive 50 percent of the eligible payout at campus A and would not receive an award for campus B or C.

3. The ASPIRE Award for employees assigned to multilevel campuses (e.g., T. H. Rogers) will be determined by an average of both campus-award amounts for Strands I and III.
4. Employees must be in good standing at the time of payment. Therefore, an employee under investigation or reassigned pending investigation is not eligible for an ASPIRE Award payment until he or she is cleared of any allegation. If the investigation is concluded with a confirmation of inappropriate employee behavior, the employee is not eligible to receive an ASPIRE Award payment. Additionally, employees who retire in lieu of termination or resign in lieu of termination are not eligible to receive an ASPIRE Award payment.
5. If an employee meets all of the eligibility requirements for an award and then resigns or retires from the district prior to the payout of the awards, the employee is still eligible for the award. It is incumbent upon the employee to provide the district with correct forwarding information so that the award payment can be processed.
6. *For Principals Only:* The campus must also be in good standing. If the campus had an approved waiver to the district-testing procedures, and if any testing improprieties are reported and confirmed or otherwise substantiated at the campus, the principal will be ineligible to receive an ASPIRE Award payment.