

Florida's School Recognition Program Technical Assistance for Pasco County Schools

Developed By:

The United School Employees of Pasco
And
The District School Board of Pasco County

Introduction –

In an effort to ease the divisive environment that Florida's School Recognition Program causes both within and between Pasco's schools, the United School Employees of Pasco and the District School Board of Pasco County have developed the following guidance to be used in allocating and spending any money received through the program. The following guidance contains answers to frequently asked questions, as well as some sample procedures and forms that have been used in allocating dollars from the School Recognition Program.

Frequently Asked Questions –

1. Which schools actually qualify for money through Florida’s School Recognition Program?

Schools receiving an A performance grade or schools improving at least one performance grade category from the previous year are eligible for recognition and financial awards. A list of the Pasco schools receiving this money is included with this technical assistance paper.

2. What is the award for each school that qualifies?

Each recognized school will receive \$100 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student based on last year’s enrollment.

3. How will qualifying schools receive their funds?

School districts will place these funds in a school account at the district level and the funds will be immediately available when the school’s staff and school advisory council decide how to use the award money. These funds are not to be placed in a school’s internal accounts.

4. Who decides how the award will be used?

The legislation gives the award school’s staff and school advisory council (SAC) the authority to make this decision.

5. What process should the school’s staff and SAC use to decide how to use the award?

The legislation does not specify a decision making process. And, while the law excludes the distribution of such funds from collective bargaining, there is no prohibition against establishing a district policy for a uniform and fair process to be used in determining that distribution. This technical assistance paper will provide school staffs and advisory councils with procedures that have been developed and successfully implemented by schools in the past with minimal problems resulting.

6. Which group's vote carries more weight?

The joint spending plan must be approved by both the school staff and the SAC. Neither group has the power to overrule the decision of the other regarding their support or non-support of a final spending plan.

7. Does any one staff member or SAC member hold a weighted vote when the final plan is considered?

No. When conducting a vote on the final plan, all staff and SAC members should receive exactly one vote within their respective group.

8. Are Place staff eligible to vote?

Yes, Place staff are included in voting for SRP of the Year, Contract Ratification, and should be included with this process.

9. Are itinerant staff eligible to vote?

Yes, itinerant staff who work at your school should be included with this process. They have knowledge and insight into what occurs at your school, and typically there are not enough itinerant individuals to skew the voting process. Thus, the district recommends they be able to vote at each school they work at.

10. What can the award be used for?

Funds are to be used for nonrecurring bonuses to the faculty and staff, nonrecurring expenditures for educational equipment or materials, or for temporary personnel to assist the school in maintaining or improving student performance. The school's staff and SAC must decide to spend these funds on any one or any combination of these three purposes. The legislation as it is written does not favor any one of these options over another.

11. Is there a deadline for making the decision on how to use an award?

Yes. Section 1008.36(4), F.S., states that if the school's staff and the school advisory council cannot reach agreement by November 1, the awards must be equally distributed to all classroom teachers currently teaching in the school.

1012.01 Definitions. --

(a) Classroom teachers. --Classroom teachers are staff members assigned the professional activity of instructing students in courses in classroom situations, including basic instruction, exceptional student education, career education, and adult education, including substitute teachers.

This means the following groups would be ineligible for bonuses should a decision not be made by November 1.

- (b) Student personnel services - ex. guidance counselor, social worker, psychologist*
- (c) Librarians/media specialists - ex. media and technology specialists*
- (d) Other instructional staff - ex. reading specialists, resource teachers, etc.*
- (e) Education paraprofessionals - ex. paraprofessionals and instructional assistants*

12. Do standard salary deductions (FICA, Medicare, and Federal Income Tax) apply to bonuses?

Yes. Standard salary deductions must be applied to school recognition bonuses.

13. Does personal income received from a bonus count towards the calculation of retirement income?

No

14. Can someone receive two bonuses?

When an employee moves from one school that is awarding a bonus to another school that is awarding a bonus, the employee may receive the bonus from either or both schools. Each school decides who will receive bonuses and if the individual is included in both schools plans then that is what occurs.

15. Can an individual no longer employed by Pasco County Schools receive a bonus?

Yes. If the school plan includes individuals who were at the school the year the award was earned, then they can receive a bonus. The payment of that bonus will work differently, but is a possibility.

16. Are SRP eligible for bonuses?

Yes. SRP are eligible for bonuses as long as a decision is made by the staff and SAC by November 1 of the award year. The amount of any bonus as well as those who receive the bonus is determined by the staff and SAC at each school.

17. Are SRP that service our school but are assigned to other schools/departments, like transportation, eligible for bonuses?

Yes. Again the decision as to which employees receive a bonus and the amount of the bonus is determined by the schools staff and SAC.

18. Does the bonus amount have to be the same for everyone?

The decision is made by the staff and SAC. Different groups may receive different amounts depending on the plan that is developed.

19. What if I am involuntarily transferred or otherwise moved against my will from a school that received a school recognition award?

It has been recommended that should a bonus be awarded to a specific employee group within a school, employees in that specific group who were involuntarily transferred during the year that award was based upon, but still remain an employee of the school system should be eligible for their share of the bonus award. However, this is still a School-based decision.

20. What about any carryover funds that may exist from a prior year?

Schools with a carryover balance that is not earmarked for specific expenditure in one of the three state approved expenditure categories must disclose the amount of the carryover to the faculty, staff, and SAC prior to any school recognition spending decisions being made for the current year.

21. Can our school create a sub-committee to help evaluate proposals?

Yes, as long as any staff or SAC member who has an idea is permitted to submit it for consideration, selection of the sub-committee members is democratic, and everyone has an opportunity to vote on the final proposal. Included with this technical assistance paper is a procedure for creating a school recognition fund distribution team that involves employees from all job classifications within a school, as well as a member from the School Advisory Council.

22. Is there any policy prohibiting the awarding of School Recognition Funds as bonuses to the staff?

No. Decisions on how to spend award money are to be made at the school level.

23. Can a school administrator require that award money only be used for additional staff or supplies?

Not without the consensus of the staff and SAC. School administrators serve as single voices within the collective school staff and advisory councils. They hold one vote each as a staff member, and one vote as a SAC member if they serve on the advisory council.

Suggested Process Guidelines

- Form a School Recognition Fund Distribution Team

- Composition Guidelines

Membership Category	Elementary	Middle	High
Administration	1	1	1
SAC Chair or SAC Designee	1	1	1
SAC Parent/Community Member	1	1	1
USEP Building Representative	1	1	1
Teachers	3-4	4-6	5-7
SRP	1-2	1-2	2-3
Total Membership	8-10	9-12	11-14

- Those Teachers and SRP interested in serving on the team should submit their names for consideration. An election will be held within the appropriate membership category for any group in which there are more interested staff members than positions available. In the event of vacant teacher and/or SRP positions on the School Recognition Fund Distribution Team, the principal and leadership team shall work together to fill the empty positions. Positions may remain vacant if no volunteers can be found.
- The Administration member shall be appointed by the school principal, the SAC Parent/Community member shall be selected by the School's Advisory Council, and the USEP Building Representative will be selected by the building representatives. Should the SAC Chair be unable to participate then the SAC will appoint a second individual from their group.
- Gather Recommendations
 - A timeline should be established that allows any staff and/or SAC member to submit a proposal for consideration by the Recognition Fund Distribution Team.
- Develop Proposals
 - The recognition Fund Distribution Team should gather all proposals from the SAC and Staff. Ideas should be considered which are acceptable by law (*nonrecurring bonuses to the faculty and staff, nonrecurring expenditures for educational equipment or materials, or for temporary personnel to assist the school in maintaining or improving student performance*). The Team should then learn the staff/SAC priorities and insights (utilize attached 'Sample Prioritization Ballot').
- Develop Plans
 - The team will develop a plan on how to spend all of the award based on the submitted recommendations. A maximum of three (3) plans should be developed.

- Hold Elections
 - The developed plan(s) shall be distributed to the staff and SAC, and notice should be given for a meeting to be held no less than 24 hours after the plan is distributed
 - A meeting should be held for the Recognition Fund Distribution Team to explain the plan(s) and answer any questions the staff and/or SAC may have. Should any alterations to the plan(s) occur as a result of this meeting, such changes shall be clearly notated on the plan(s), and a copy shall be redistributed to all staff and SAC members 24 hours prior to an election taking place.
 - Separate meetings of the staff and SAC may occur as long as changes made to the plan as a result of either meeting are shared with everyone.
 - An election should then be held in which each member of the staff has exactly one (1) vote. Only those staff members currently assigned to the school that received the award are eligible to vote. A similar vote should be held with the SAC in which each member of the SAC has exactly one (1) vote. Should a member of the staff also sit on the SAC, he/she is entitled to exactly one (1) vote in each group.
 - A paper ballot should be utilized with a tabulation of the results occurring immediately following. A cross sampling of individuals should be used to count the votes and anyone interested in observing should be permitted.
 - The proposal will be considered to have passed with a fifty percent (50%) plus one (1) person vote count in favor of the plan.
 - Should the plan fail in either or both groups, feedback should be gathered as to what sections of the plan need to be changed. The Recognition Fund Distribution Team should then alter the plan based on the feedback received. The staff and SAC election process should then begin again, starting with distribution of the new plan to the staff.
- Additional Guidelines
 - No member of the Recognition Fund Distribution Team, School Advisory Council, administration or USEP shall have the authority to interfere or circumvent these procedures or in any way coerce the team or staff as to its recommendations.
 - All plans shall be in writing and should contain specifics on how all funds will be spent. The proposal and final adoption shall delineate, in detail, an accounting for how all funds are to be spent. It should also include a recommendation for use of any remaining funds should there be any.
 - Minutes should be kept at all meetings and they should be retained along with voting ballots for three years.

Sample Timelines

- Step 1** _____ - Call for recommendations/proposals should be sent out to all staff and
Date SAC members. Allow at least one week for responses.
- Step 2** _____ - Parties interested in serving on the School Recognition Fund Distribution
Date Team must submit their name for consideration. Allow 2-3 days.
- Step 3** _____ - School elections held for School Recognition Fund Distribution Team
Date members if needed.
- Step 4** _____ - School Recognition Fund Distribution Team meetings begin to
Date review proposals and determine staff/SAC priorities. Allow up to one week.
- Step 5** _____ - School Recognition Fund Distribution Team develops plan(s) and
Date distributes them to staff and SAC. Allow up to two weeks.
- Step 6** _____ - Meeting(s) held with staff and SAC to discuss plan(s), answers
Date questions, and solicit feedback. Allow up to one week.
- Step 7** _____ - Any revisions to School Recognition Fund Distribution Team plan(s)
Date distributed to staff and SAC members. Should be at least 24 hours before
step 8.
- Step 8** _____ - Voting and Public Counting.
Date
- Step 9** _____ - Additional time for plan revision and re-vote if needed.

*Steps 1-3 may occur in the same time frame. Please inform SAC members that extra meetings may need to be held to accomplish this process in a timely manner.

Sample Voting Ballot Single Plan

Recognition Funds Plan

1. \$xx,xxx in Staff Bonuses

- a.
- b.
- c.

2. \$xx,xxx to School Equipment

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

___ YES, I support the plan

___ NO, I do not support the plan

Sample Voting Ballot

Multiple Plans

Recognition Funds Plan #1

3. \$xx,xxx in Staff Bonuses
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
4. \$xx,xxx to School Equipment
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Recognition Funds Plan #2

1. \$xxx,xxx in Staff Bonuses
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Recognition Funds Plan #3

1. \$xx,xxx in New Positions
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
2. \$xx,xxx to School Equipment
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

___ I Support Plan #1

___ I Support Plan #2

___ I Support Plan #3

___ I Do Not Support Any of These Plans

**** In the event that none of the above options receive a 50% plus one majority vote, a runoff will be conducted between the top two plans, with an option not to support either of the runoff plans included.****

Sample Prioritization Ballot List Proposal

Directions: Please identify your top three choices for using our school's recognition dollars. Choices should be prioritized, with one (1) being the highest priority and (3) being the lowest. Costs have been included for supply and special project proposals. If you choose a staff bonus option, please fill in the dollar amounts you believe should be given to each group of employees listed in that option. Each option should only be selected once.

5. Staff Bonus Option A.....
6. Staff Bonus Option B.....
7. Staff Bonus Option C.....
8. Educational Equipment and Materials Option D.....
9. Educational Equipment and Materials Option E.....
10. Educational Equipment and Materials Option F.....
11. Educational Equipment and Materials Option G.....
12. Educational Equipment and Materials Option H.....
13. Temporary Personnel Option I.....
14. Temporary Personnel Option J.....
15. Temporary Personnel Option K.....
16. Other_____

First Choice **Option**_____

Second Choice **Option**_____

Third Choice **Option**_____

**** The School Recognition Fund Distribution Team will tally the results of this ballot and develop a final proposal that addresses as many of the most popular options as possible given our schools award amount. This proposal will be provided to the staff and SAC for final approval****