

## MEMORANDUM

December 19, 2014

TO: Board Members

FROM: Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: **2012–2013 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring 2014**

CONTACT: Carla Stevens (713) 556-6700

The purpose of the ASPIRE Award Survey was to gain insight regarding the level of knowledge and perceptions of Houston Independent School District (HISD) teachers and staff after seven years of implementation of growth-based performance pay in HISD, as well as their perceptions regarding the overall concept of teacher performance pay. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to provide recommendations to improve the ASPIRE Award program.

### Highlights:

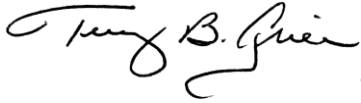
- Of the 18,269 Houston Independent School District (HISD) campus-based employees surveyed, there were 4,689 participants who responded to the survey (25.7 percent) administered in January 2014. **The response rate is fairly low and the results, while informative, may not be generalized to the population.**
- When comparing survey results over the last eight years, there was a decrease in the percent of respondents who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance pay from 69.2 percent in December 2007 to 53.2 percent in January 2014.
- Based on survey data collected in 2014, the largest percentage of respondents indicated that over the past several years they *used standardized data to make instructional decisions* (56.5 percent) *to a great extent*.
- When comparing the percentage of respondents that indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* toward the concept of the Teacher-Performance Pay Model and to the ASPIRE Award Program for that year, it was first reported at 44.4 percent (December 2007 survey administration), reached a peak of 53.3 percent in 2009, and was most recently reported at 46.5 percent (January 2014 survey administration).
- On the teacher appraisal system, participants were asked to rate the rigor of the system on a scale of 1 (not rigorous) to 5 (very rigorous) and fair on a scale of 1 (not fair) to 5 (very fair). Eighty three percent of respondents rated the system as rigorous while 56.9 percent rated the system as fair, with a rating of 3, 4, or 5.
- Based on January 2014 results, a higher percentage of respondents *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that their maximum award amount was commensurate with their professional contribution, 40.4 percent, compared to 28.5 percent who were *neutral* and 31.1 percent who *agreed* or *strongly agreed*.
- Out of a total of 4,689 respondents on the January 2014 survey, 1,790 or 38.2 percent of the respondents provided at least one response for improving the 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award model. The four highest emergent categories based on the percentage of the responses

centered on the following; commentary describing how the money should be allocated (15.6 percent); measuring growth/performance (10.7 percent); make the model equitable, fair, and inclusive (9.1 percent); and discontinue the award (8.0 percent).

**Administrative Response:**

The district continues to use the information from the ASPIRE Award program evaluation and the ASPIRE Award survey to make annual improvements to the ASPIRE Award model.

Should you have any questions or need further information, please contact my office or Carla Stevens in Research and Accountability at 713-556-6700.

  
\_\_\_\_\_ TBG

Attachment

cc: Superintendent's Direct Reports  
Chief Schools Officers  
School Support Officers  
School Office Directors  
Audrey Gomez



# RESEARCH

Educational Program Report

2012-2013 ASPIRE  
AWARD SURVEY

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



## 2014 BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Juliet Stipeche**

PRESIDENT

**Rhonda Skillern-Jones**

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

**Manuel Rodriguez, Jr.**

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

**Anna Eastman**

SECRETARY

**Wanda Adams**

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

**Paula Harris**

**Michael L. Lunceford**

**Greg Meyers**

**Harvin C. Moore**

**Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.**

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

**Carla Stevens**

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**Laurie S. Zimmerman, Ph.D.**

RESEARCH SPECIALIST

**Jennifer O'Brien**

RESEARCH SPECIALIST

**Ed La Sage**

RESEARCH MANAGER

### **Houston Independent School District**

Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center

4400 West 18th Street

Houston, Texas 77092-8501

[www.houstonisd.org](http://www.houstonisd.org)

It is the policy of the Houston Independent School District not to discriminate on the basis of age, color, handicap or disability, ancestry, national origin, marital status, race, religion, sex, veteran status, or political affiliation in its educational or employment programs and activities.

# ASPIRE AWARD SURVEY RESULTS, Spring 2014

## FINDINGS RELATED TO TEACHER PERCEPTIONS, KNOWLEDGE, AND INPUT, 2012–2013

### Executive Summary

#### Program Description

On January 12, 2006, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) Board of Education approved the Teacher Performance-Pay Program (TPPM) awarding teachers financial incentives based on three strands of performance pay. These strands involved campus-level performance on the state accountability rating and individual teacher performance on the basis of student progress on state and district assessment programs. The awards were paid out in January, 2007. The experience gained in the first year and consultations with national experts and teachers provided the impetus for recommending the improvement and enhancement of the model which then became the award program for the district's school improvement framework, "Accelerating Student Progress: Increasing Results and Expectations" (ASPIRE). The ASPIRE Award program has completed its seventh year of payout, occurring in January 2014 (the eighth payout for performance pay in the district).

This report provides the results of an annual survey administered on January 2014 designed to collect perceptions and input from HISD teachers and staff after eight years of implementation of growth-based performance pay (see the *2005–2006 Teacher Performance-Pay and 2006–2007 ASPIRE Award Survey*; *2007–2008 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring 2009*; *2008–2009 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring, 2010*; *2009–2010 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring 2011*; *2010–2011 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring 2012*; *2011–2012 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring 2013* for previous results). This report addresses the district's strategic plan of providing an effective teacher in every classroom. Survey data focused on eight areas of interest that include:

- Background characteristics of survey respondents;
- Perceptions of respondents regarding the concept of teacher performance pay and the teacher appraisal system;
- Perceptions of respondents regarding their level of agreement to specific instructional practices or behaviors encouraged by the ASPIRE Award program;
- Perceptions of respondents and level of understanding of respondents regarding the Teacher Performance-Pay Model (TPPM) and the ASPIRE Award program;
- Percent of respondents that attended training on value-added or comparative growth;
- Effectiveness of communicating information about the ASPIRE Award;
- Perceptions of respondents regarding their level of compensation and the ASPIRE Award model; and,
- Recommendations for changing the 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award suggested by respondents.

#### Highlights

- Of the 18,269 Houston Independent School District (HISD) campus-based employees invited to participate, 4,689 participants (25.7 percent) responded to the survey administered in January 2014.

Of the 3,403 respondents who indicated an award category, 60.1 percent were core teachers (Groups 1–3), 11.0 percent were elective/ancillary teachers, 7.4 percent were instructional support staff, 7.4 percent were teaching assistants, 8.3 percent were operational support staff, and 5.7 percent were either principals or assistant principals/deans of instruction. Any conclusions drawn from this survey should be made with caution given the low response rate.

- When comparing survey results over the last seven years, there was a decrease in the percent of respondents who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance pay from 69.2 percent in December 2007 to 53.2 percent in January 2014. When comparing 2013 to 2014, there has been an increase in the respondents that indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance pay by 1.5 percentage points.
- Based on survey data collected in 2014, the largest percentage of respondents (56.5 percent) indicated that over the past several years, they *used standardized data to make instructional decisions to a great extent*.
- When comparing the percentage of respondents that indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* toward the 2005–2006 Teacher-Performance Pay Model or to the specific ASPIRE Award program for that year, it was first reported at 44.4 percent (December 2007 survey administration), reached a peak of 53.3 percent in 2009, and was most recently reported at 46.5 percent (January 2014 survey administration), up from 35.1 percent in March 2013.
- On the teacher appraisal system, participants were asked to rate the rigor of the system on a scale of 1 (not rigorous) to 5 (very rigorous) and fair on a scale of 1 (not fair) to 5 (very fair). Eighty three percent of respondents rated the system as rigorous while 56.9 percent rated the system as fair, with a rating of 3, 4, or 5.
- When comparing survey results from March 2013 to January 2014, there was an increase to 36.6 percent in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award Program was *very high* or *high* (1.0 percentage point), as well as an increase to 19.3 percent in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award Program was *low/very low* (2.0 percentage points).
- Based on January 2014 results, the majority of respondents indicated that they attended value-added (55.7 percent) and/or comparative growth (57.7 percent) training.
- Based on January 2014 results, a higher percentage of respondents *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that their maximum award amount was commensurate with their professional contribution, 40.4 percent, compared to 28.5 percent who were *neutral* and 31.1 percent who *agreed* or *strongly agreed*.
- Based on survey results from March 2010 and January 2014, 46.6 percent and 41.9 percent of respondents *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that the *ASPIRE Award is a fair way of acknowledging a teacher's impact on student growth* compared to 26.7 percent and 30.3 percent of respondents who *agreed* or *strongly agreed* and 26.6 percent and 27.8 percent who were *neutral*, respectively.
- For 2014, 42.1 percent of teaching assistants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award was commensurate with their professional contribution. This item reflected the highest levels of agreement compared to the remaining eligibility categories and for those respondents indicating they were not eligible to receive an award who generally indicated the highest levels of *disagree* or *strongly disagree*.
- Although a majority of respondents indicated that communication was *moderately effective* or *very effective* for *providing clear explanations about the award model* (55.9 percent), *providing clear explanations about value-added calculations* (52.9 percent) and *providing clear explanations about*

*comparative growth calculations* (51.8 percent), these items were noticeably lower than for other areas surveyed (60.8 percent to 69.9 percent).

- When comparing results from May 2009 to January 2014, four of the seven areas of communication showed decreases. *Knowing when specific information about my ASPIRE Award was available* reflected the area of communication for which respondents indicated the highest increase for effectiveness (1.5 percentage points)(Table 11, p. 31).
- Based on the results of the January 2014 survey, 47.3 percent of respondents reported the *ASPIRE e-mail* as being *very effective*, reflecting the highest percentage for effectiveness when compared to the other four venues used to communicate information about the ASPIRE Award program. This was followed by the *ASPIRE portal* (41.9 percent).
- Out of a total of 4,689 respondents on the January 2014 survey, 1,790 or 38.2 percent of the respondents provided at least one response for improving the 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award model. The four highest emergent categories based on the percentage of the responses centered on the following; commentary describing how the money should be allocated (15.6 percent); measuring growth/performance (10.7 percent); make the model equitable, fair, and inclusive (9.1 percent); and discontinue the award (8.0 percent).

## Introduction

The purpose of the ASPIRE Award Model is to reward teachers for their efforts in improving the academic growth of their students. ASPIRE Award employs a value-added methodology that provides teachers with the information that they need to facilitate and measure student progress at the student, classroom, and campus levels. The ASPIRE Award is dedicated to achieving the following goals:

- Encourage cooperation in Professional Learning Communities;
- Be aligned with the district's other school-improvement initiatives;
- Use value-added data based on a national expert's methodology to reward teachers reliably and consistently for student progress; and
- Include core teachers at all grade levels, early childhood through grade 12.

The ASPIRE Award is based on the following principles:

- Performance pay drives academic performance;
- Good teaching occurs in all schools;
- Teamwork is valuable;
- Performance pay does not replace a competitive base salary, and
- Performance pay systems are dynamic and evolve over time.

Given these goals and principles, the ASPIRE Award involves three different indicators of academic performance: Indicator I—Individual Performance: (value-added core teacher progress); Indicator II—Group Performance: Teachers (department value-added or comparative growth); and Indicator III—Group Performance: Campus-Wide (campus value-added and campus growth or achievement). Indicator III is based on the EVAAS campus composite cumulative gain index and the Stanford and Aprenda reading and mathematics performance (percent of all students at/above 50<sup>th</sup> national percentile rank, across all grades) for middle and elementary schools, and Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) participation and performance for high schools. Under the model, every HISD teacher has the opportunity to participate in at least Indicator III.

## Methods

### Data Collection and Analysis

- The ASPIRE award survey items were developed from previous surveys, reviewed, and approved by members of the ASPIRE Award Executive Committee. The 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award Survey was administered on-line from Wednesday, November 20, 2013 to Wednesday, January 22, 2014, with follow-up reminders on Tuesday, January 7, 2014 and Thursday, January 16, 2014. The survey responses were completely anonymous through SurveyMonkey with no IP addresses collected. The survey instructions with the embedded link to access the survey were sent directly to campus-based employees by HISD partner Battelle for Kids. The data obtained from the completed surveys were downloaded from SurveyMonkey and analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft Access. Items that were skipped or for which respondents answered "N/A" were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis. The text analysis tool was used to identify emergent categories for the open-ended questions.

### Data Limitations

- Changes in the structure of the survey and coding practices limited comparisons to the results of previously developed survey instruments. For the January 2014 survey administration, data quality



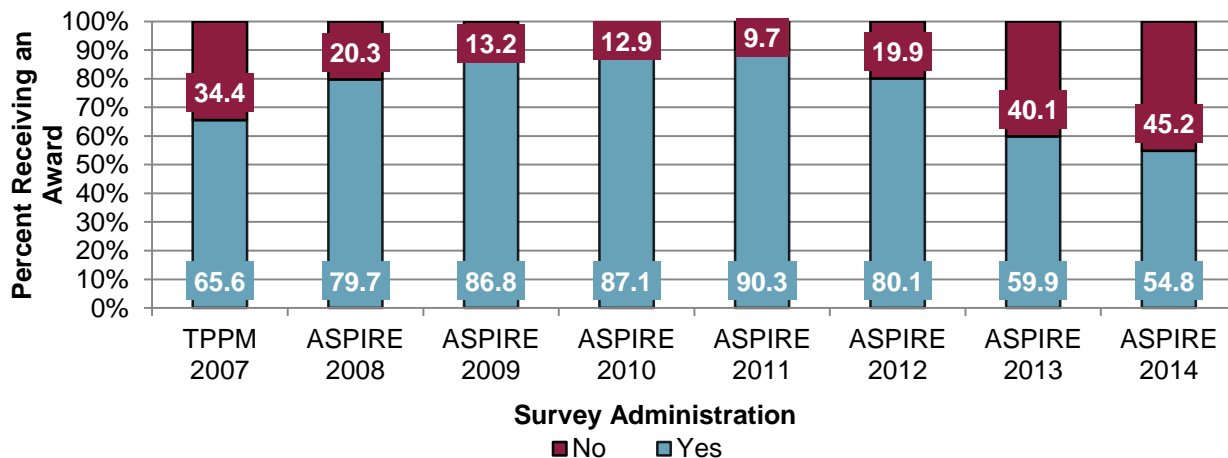
checks were conducted and corrections made regarding skip patterns and questions pertaining to years of experience. Any conclusions from these results should be made with caution due to the low response rate. The responses may not be generalizable to the population of campus-based staff who were initially invited to participate.

## Results

### What were the background characteristics of survey respondents?

- Of the 18,269 Houston Independent School District (HISD) campus-based employees invited to complete the survey, there were 4,689 participants who responded to the survey (25.7 percent) administered in January 2014. Any conclusions drawn from this survey should be made with caution given the low response rate (**Table 1**, p. 26).
- Of the 4,689 respondents, 3,403 indicated their ASPIRE Award categorization for the 2012–2013 school year. Core teachers (Group 1, 2, and 3) represented the highest percentage of respondents with 60.1 percent, followed by elective/ancillary teachers with 11.0 percent (**Table 2**, p. 26).
- The majority of respondents reported holding either a Bachelor's Degree (35.5 percent) or a Master's Degree (33.8 percent). The average experience in HISD was 11.7 years with the average experience at the current campus being 7.5 years, and the average experience in the current assignment being 6.7 years (**Table 3**, p. 26).
- Approximately 88 percent of the respondents were employed in HISD for the 2012–2013 school year, and approximately 79.3 percent were eligible to receive an award. Fifty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they will receive an ASPIRE Award, and 61.7 percent of core foundation teachers who responded received an individual performance award, an award based on teacher progress for the 2012–2013 school year (**Table 4**, p. 27).
- Of the 1,513 December 2007 survey respondents, 65.6 percent indicated that they received an award. The percentage continued to increase through the March 2011 survey, where 90.3 percent of respondents received an award. There was a decline of 10.2 percentage points from 2011 to 2012, with a 25.3 percentage point decline from 2012 to 2014 (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 1. Percent of respondents receiving an award based on results of eight survey administrations**

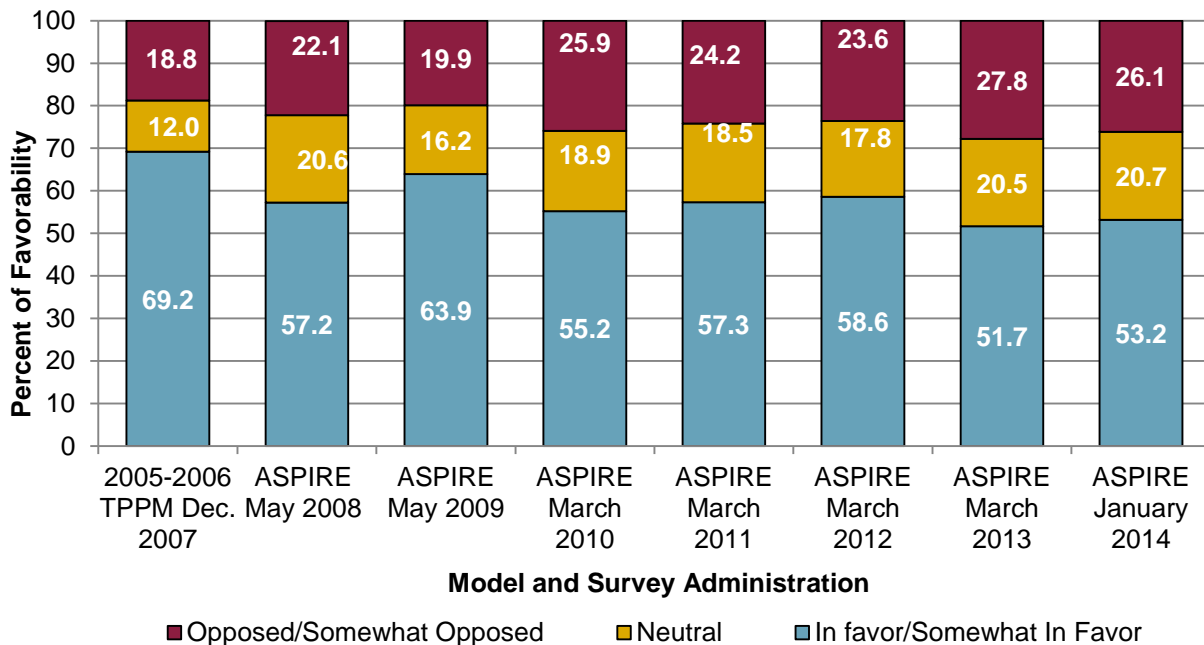


- Over the past eight years, the percentage of survey respondents who reported receiving an award increased from 65.6 percent in 2007 to 90.3 in 2011, but declined by 35.5 percentage points from 2011 to 2014 (Figure 1). This may be due in large part to changes in the award model criteria.
- On the January 2014 survey, respondents were asked to indicate if they taught in a critical shortage area. Since respondents may have taught in more than one critical shortage area, percentages are based on the total number of responses. Of the 4,093 responses, 11.5 percent indicated Special Education, 11.2 percent indicated Bilingual Education, 13.9 percent indicated English as a Second Language (ESL), 5.6 percent indicated secondary mathematics, 5.0 percent indicated secondary science, 0.9 percent indicated secondary Spanish, and 52.0 percent did not teach in a critical shortage area (N/A)(Table 5, p. 27).

**What were the perceptions of respondents regarding the concept of teacher performance pay overall and the teacher appraisal system?**

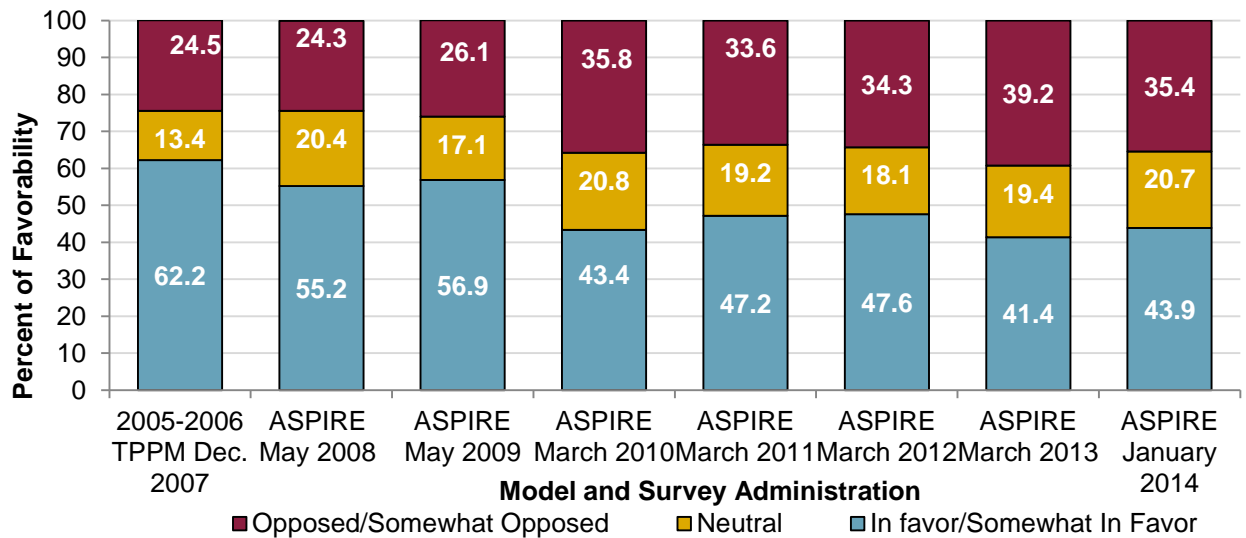
- When comparing survey results over the last eight years, there was an overall decrease in the percent of respondents who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance pay from 69.2 percent in December 2007 to 53.2 percent in January 2014 (Figure 2).
- When comparing survey results over the last eight years, there was an overall increase in the percent of respondents who were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* to the concept of teacher performance pay from 18.8 percent in December 2007 to 26.1 percent in January 2014 (Figure 2).
- The percentage of campus-based staff *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance-pay increased to 58.6 percent after the 2012 payout, decreased to 51.7 percent after the 2013 payout, and then increased to 53.2 percent after the 2014 payout (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of performance pay over eight years**



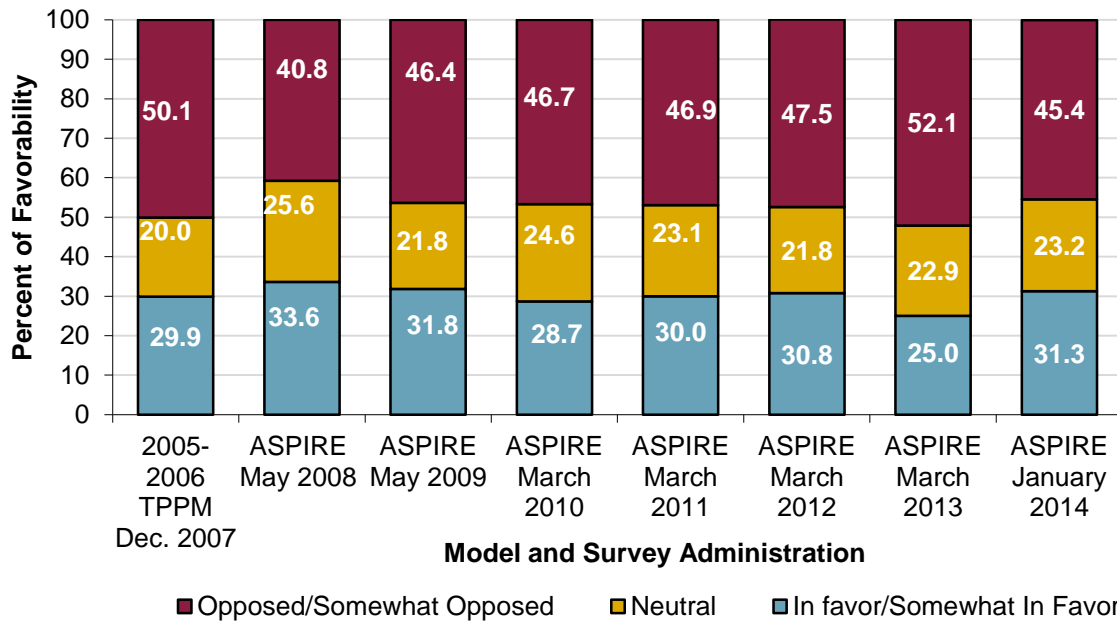
- When respondents on the December 2007 survey administration were asked how favorable they were toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth, 62.2 percent indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor*, compared to 43.9 percent of respondents in January 2014 (**Figure 3**). Nevertheless, this was a 2.5 percentage point increase over 2013 results.
- The percentage of survey respondents indicating that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth increased over the 8-year period from 24.5 percent in 2007 to 35.4 percent in 2014 (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth over eight years**



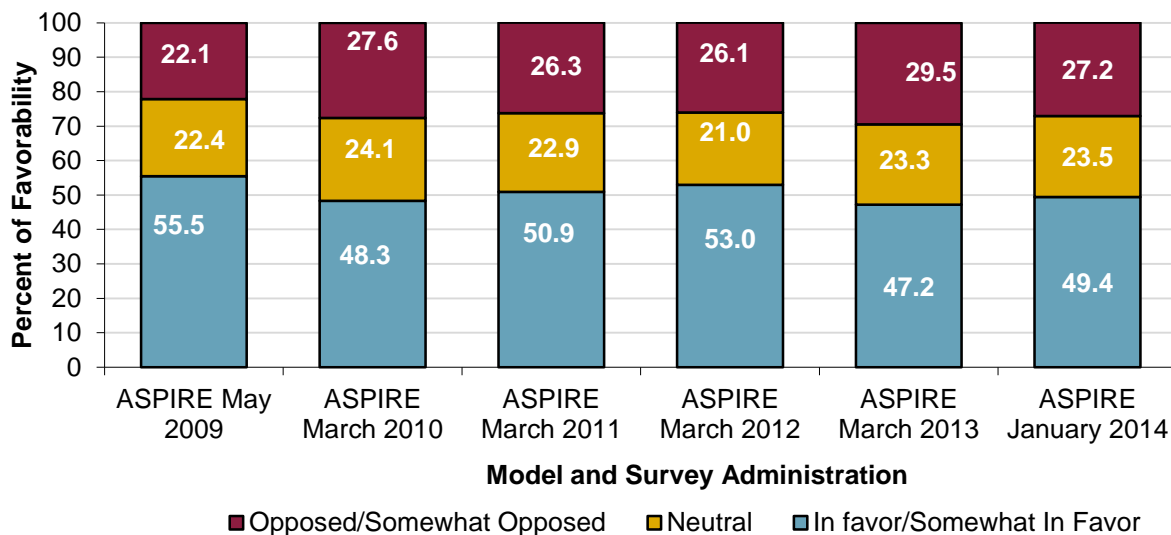
- Over the past eight years, survey respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions about the concept of performance pay based on passing rates. When comparing overall survey results from 2007 to 2014, there was an increase in the percent of respondents indicating that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* to teacher performance pay based on passing rates by 5.0 percentage points, and the largest percentage of respondents still remains opposed to using passing rates for performance pay (**Figure 4**, p. 8).
- When comparing overall survey results from 2007 to 2014, the percent of respondents that indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates varied from year to year, but increased overall by 1.4 percentage points (29.9 percent in 2007 to 31.3 percent in 2014) (Figure 4, p. 8).

**Figure 4. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates over eight years**



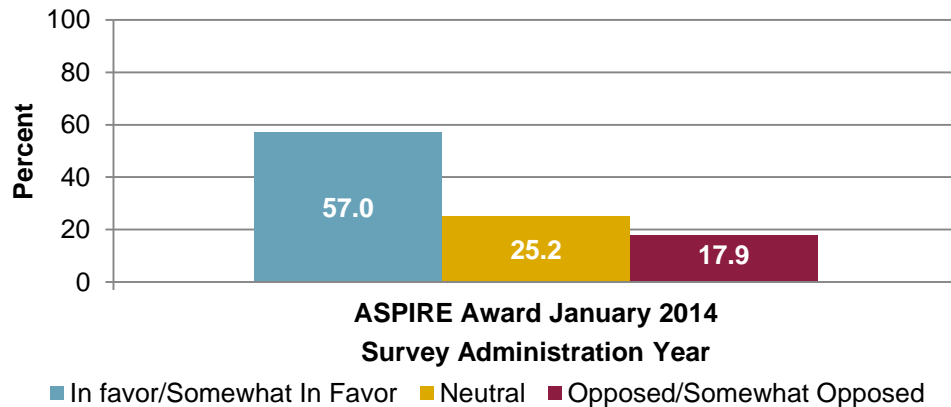
- Over the past six years, survey respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions about the concept of receiving differentiated pay as seen in **Figure 5**. The percentage of campus-based staff *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of differentiated pay decreased overall from 55.5 percent after the 2009 payout to 49.4 percent after the 2014 payout, but showed a 2.2 percentage point increase from 2013.
- Over the past six years, the percent of respondents indicating that they were *opposed* or *somewhat opposed* to differentiated pay increased from 22.1 percent in 2009 to 27.2 percent in 2014 (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of differentiated pay for the past six years**



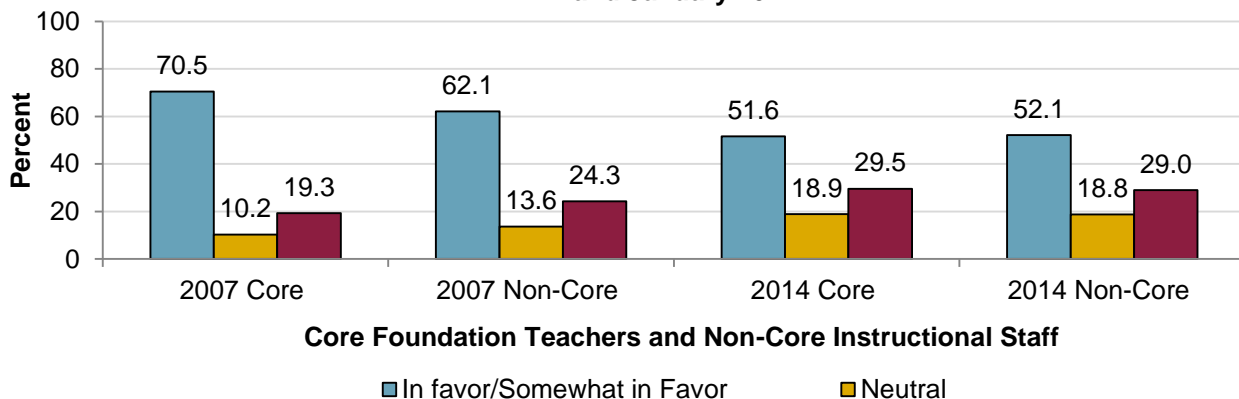
- Baseline data were collected on the favorability of respondents towards the concept of an award for educators in hard-to-staff buildings. The majority of respondents (57.0 percent ) indicated that they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of awarding an incentive to educators in hard-to-staff buildings, with 25.2 percent who were *neutral*, and 17.9 percent who were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of an award for educators in hard-to-staff building**



- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions toward the concept of performance pay overall, comparisons were made between core foundation teachers and non-core instructional staff (December 2007 and January 2014) as summarized in Figure 7. Based on results of the December 2007 survey administration, the percentage of core foundation teachers who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of teacher performance pay exceeded that of non-core instructional staff by 8.4 percentage points; whereas, January 2014 survey results indicated that the percentage of core foundation teachers who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of teacher performance pay was less than that of non-core instructional staff by 0.5 percentage point. Favorable responses have decreased overall for both groups over the last eight years.

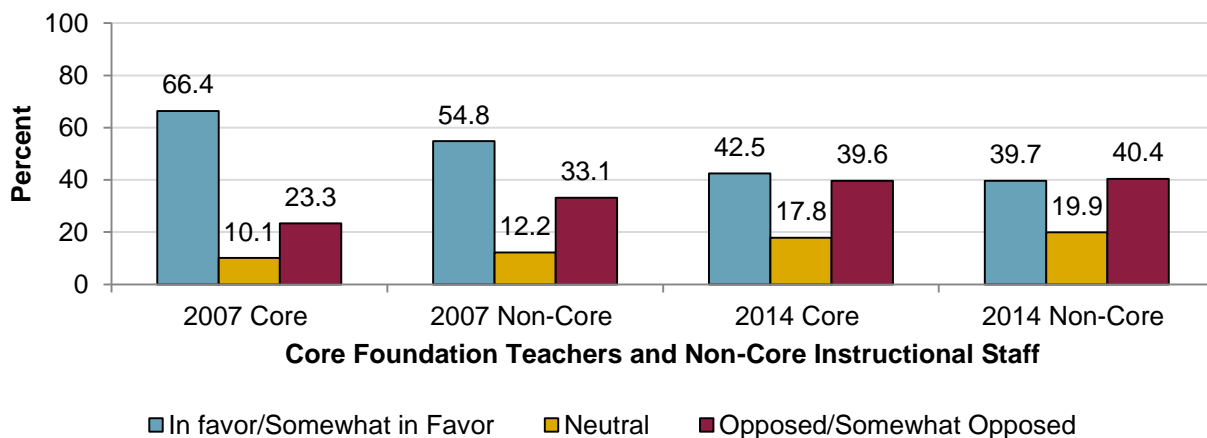
**Figure 7. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay overall by core foundation and non-core instructional staff, December 2007 and January 2014**



Note: To make 2014 comparable to the 2007 survey administration data, non-instructional employees (ASPIRE Award Group 6 and 7) (N=224) and principals (ASPIRE Award Group 1L) (N=94) were not included in this analysis.

- **Appendix A** (p. 33) compares differences in perceptions toward the concept of teacher performance pay overall by eligibility category (January 2014). Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 71.3 percent of principals indicated they were *somewhat in favor* or *in favor* toward the concept of teacher performance pay, reflecting the highest level of agreement of all the eligibility categories. This was followed by assistant principals/deans at 65.9 percent, teaching assistants at 58.0 percent, and operational support staff at 56.5 percent.
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 31.2 percent of elective/ancillary teachers indicated that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay, reflecting the highest level of disagreement to the statement.
- For those respondents that reported they were Not Eligible to receive an ASPIRE award, 50.3 percent were *somewhat in favor* or *in favor* and 30.8 percent were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay, not notably different from eligible teachers.
- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth, comparisons were made between core foundation teachers and non-core instructional staff through time (December 2007 and January 2014). **Figure 8** summarizes the results. The percentage of core foundation teachers who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth exceeded that of non-core instructional staff by 11.6 percentage points based on December 2007 results and only 2.8 percentage points based on January 2014 results.
- The percentage of non-core instructional staff that indicated they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth exceeded that of core foundation teachers by 9.8 percentage points in December 2007 compared to less than one percentage point based on January 2014 results.

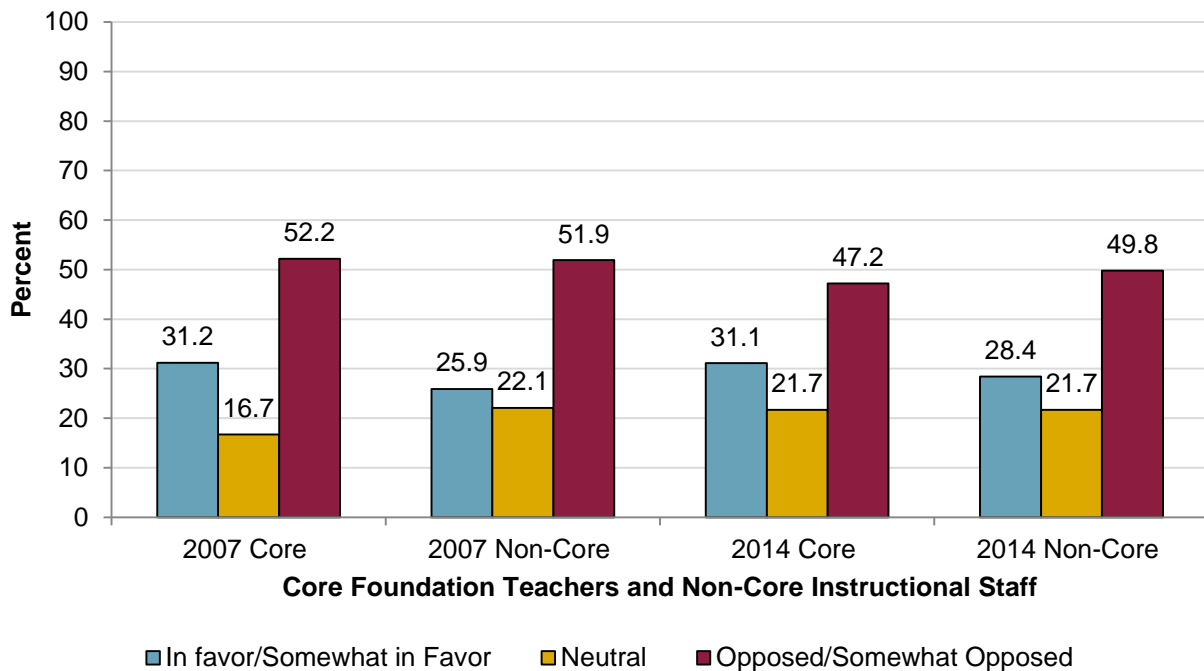
**Figure 8. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth by core foundation and non-core instructional staff, December 2007 and January 2014**



Note: To make 2014 comparable to the 2007 survey administration data, non-instructional employees (ASPIRE Award Groups 6 and 7) (N=394) and principals (ASPIRE Award Group 1L) (N=92) were not included in this analysis.

- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions between core foundation teachers and non-core instructional staff over time regarding favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates, comparisons were made using results from the December 2007 survey administration and the January 2014 survey administration. **Figure 9** summarizes the results. The percent of core foundation teachers who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of teacher performance pay based on passing rates only exceeded that of non-core instructional staff by 5.3 percentage points in December 2007 and by just 2.7 percentage points in January 2014.
- Approximately 52 percent of core foundation teachers and non-core instructional staff indicated that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates for the December 2007 survey administration which decreased to 47.2 percent of core foundation teachers and 49.8 percent of non-core instructional staff based on survey results from the January 2014 administration (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Percent of respondents indicating favorability toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates by core foundation and non-core instructional staff, December 2007 and January 2014**



Note: To make 2014 comparable to the 2007 survey administration data, non-instructional employees (ASPIRE Award Groups 6 and 7) (N=402) and Principals (ASPIRE Award Group 1L) (N=93) were not included in this analysis.

- **Appendix B** (p. 34) summarizes the results by eligibility category regarding perceptions towards the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth, **Appendix C** (p. 35) summarizes the results by eligibility category regarding perceptions towards the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates only, and **Appendix D** (p. 36) summarizes the results by eligibility category regarding perceptions towards the concept of differentiated pay based on the January 2014 survey administration.

- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 66.3 percent of principals and 55.3 percent of assistant principals/deans of instruction indicated they were *somewhat in favor* or *in favor* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth, reflecting the highest levels of agreement of all the eligibility categories (Appendix B, p. 34).
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 48.2 percent of elective/ancillary teachers and 42.0 percent of core teachers, grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS®, indicated that they were *opposed* or *somewhat opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual student growth (Appendix B, p. 34).
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 53.8 percent of principals and 25.7 percent of elective/ancillary teachers indicated they were *somewhat in favor* or *in favor* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on individual passing rates, reflecting the highest and lowest levels of agreement, respectively, of all the eligibility categories based on January 2014 results (Appendix C, p. 35).
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 47.1 percent of assistant principals/deans and 25.8 percent of operational support staff indicated that they were *opposed* or *somewhat opposed* toward the concept of teacher performance pay based on passing rates, reflecting the highest and lowest levels of disagreement, respectively, of all of the eligibility categories (Appendix C, p. 35).
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 70.2 percent of principals indicated they were *somewhat in favor* or *in favor* toward the concept of differentiated pay, reflecting the highest level of agreement of all the eligibility categories. This was followed by assistant principals/deans of instruction at 63.1 percent. Elective/ancillary teachers had the lowest levels of agreement with only 38.6 percent *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* (Appendix D, p. 36).
- Of the respondents that indicated that they were eligible to receive an award and who indicated a particular eligibility category, 38.6 percent of elective/ancillary teachers indicated that they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the concept of differentiated pay, reflecting the highest level of disagreement to the statement (Appendix D, p. 36).
- On the teacher appraisal system, participants were asked to rate the rigor of the system on a scale of 1 (not rigorous) to 5 (very rigorous) and fair on a scale of 1 (not fair) to 5 (very fair). Eighty three percent of respondents rated the system as rigorous while 56.9 percent rated the system as fair, with a rating of 3, 4, or 5.

**What were the perceptions of respondents regarding their level of agreement to specific instructional practices or behaviors encouraged by the ASPIRE Award program or practiced over the past several years?**

- Over the past six years, respondents were asked whether the ASPIRE Award encouraged specific behaviors. **Table 6** (p. 27) compares the responses of respondents for three items to the baseline year. The largest percentage of respondents in 2009 indicated that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the ASPIRE Award encouraged them to *continue teaching in the classroom* (47.9 percent), *remain working in HISD* (44.0 percent) (baseline year is 2012), and that the ASPIRE Award



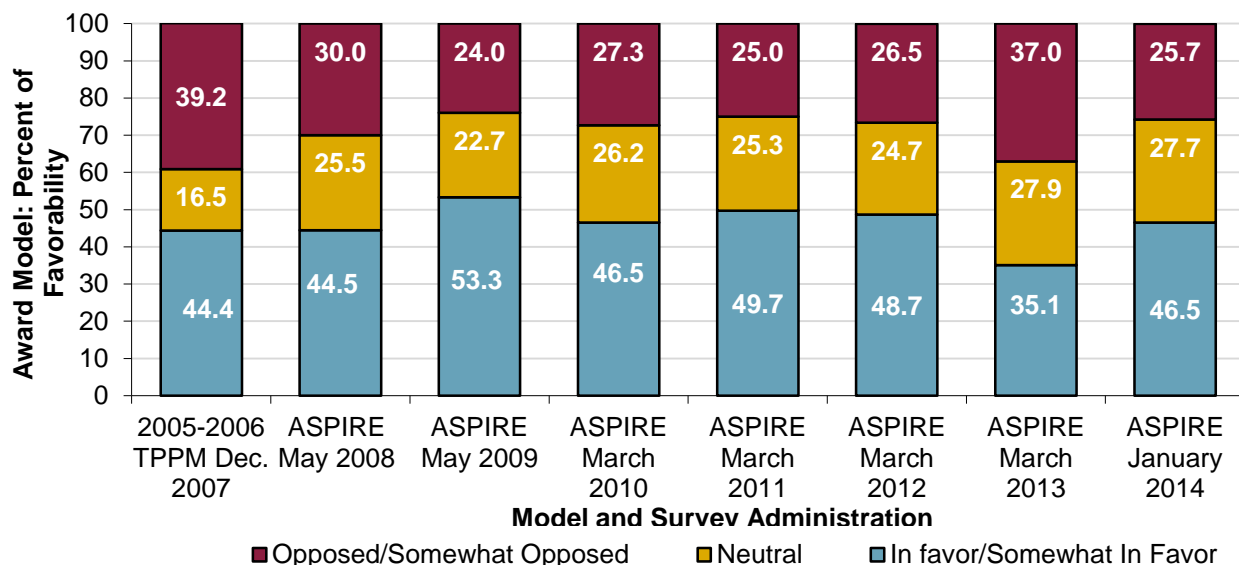
encouraged them to *come to work on a daily basis* (47.0 percent). These percentages decreased to 35.0 percent, 35.9 percent, and 37.4 percent, respectively in 2014 survey data.

- Based on survey data collected in 2014, the largest percentage of respondents indicated that over the past several years, they *used standardized data to make instructional decisions* (56.5 percent) *to a great extent* (**Table 7**, p. 28).
- Based on survey data collected in 2014, 18.1 percent of respondents indicated that they did not *use value-added data as a diagnostic tool for my classroom*, reflecting the largest percentage of respondents (Table 7, p. 28).
- When comparing 2009 to 2014 survey results, respondents indicated that they increased their frequency *to a great extent* for the six items for which data were available for both years, with differences ranging from 10.6 percentage points (team teaching) to 24.7 percentage points (more frequent use of data) (**Table 8**, p. 28).

### What were the perceptions and level of understanding of respondents regarding the Teacher Performance-Pay Model (TPPM) and ASPIRE Award program?

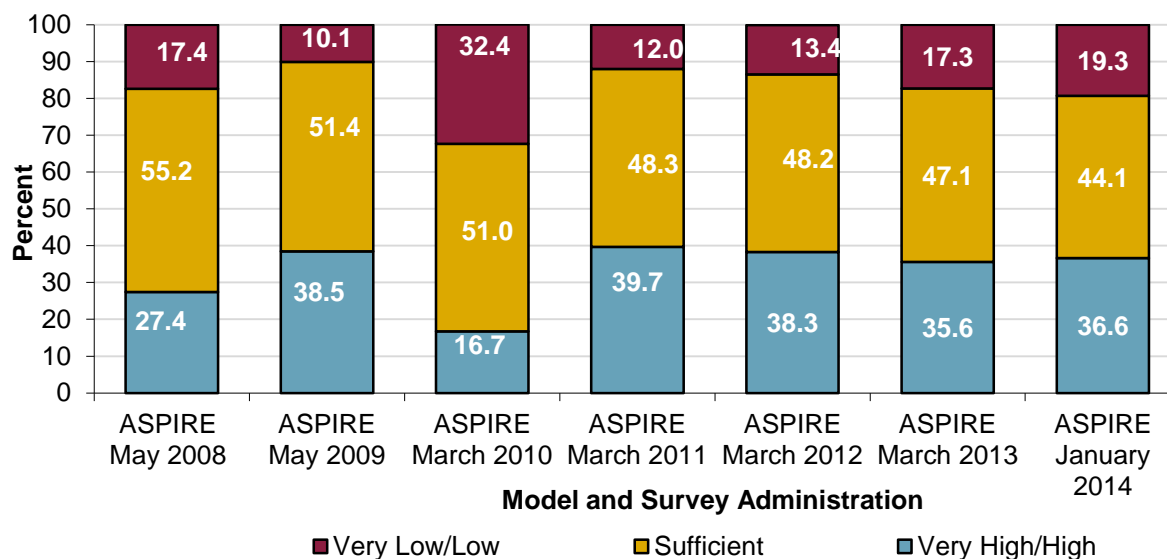
- **Figure 10** (p. 14) summarizes the perceptions of respondents towards the respective performance-pay models through time. When comparing the percentage of respondents that indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* toward the 2005–2006 Teacher-Performance Pay Model and to the specific ASPIRE Award program for that year, it was first reported at 44.4 percent (December 2007 survey administration), reached a peak of 53.3 percent in 2009, and was most recently reported at 46.5 percent (January 2014 survey administration). This is an 11.4 percent point increase from March 2013. These results were after the payout or simultaneously with the payout of each model.
- When comparing survey results after or simultaneously with each payout, the percentage of respondents that indicated they were *somewhat opposed* or *opposed* toward the 2005–2006 Teacher Performance-Pay Model and to the ASPIRE Award program decreased by 13.5 percentage points over an eight-year period, with the low being in 2009 at 24.0 percent (Figure 10, p. 14).
- When comparing the percentage of respondents indicating that they were *neutral* toward the model implemented that year, the ASPIRE January 2014 percent was 11.2 percentage points higher than in 2007 (Figure 10, p. 14).

**Figure 10. Percent of survey respondents' favorability toward the performance-pay model paid out that year**



- **Figure 11** (p. 15) summarizes the results regarding the level of understanding respondents indicated toward the ASPIRE award models for each of the last seven years.
- When comparing survey results from May 2008 to January 2014, the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award program was *very low* or *low*, increased by 1.9 percentage points, and there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award program was *sufficient* (11.1 percentage points) (Figure 11, p. 15).
- When comparing survey results from March 2013 to January 2014, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award program was *very high* or *high* (1.0 percentage point), as well as an increase in the percentage of respondents that indicated their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award program was *low/very low* (2.0 percentage points) (Figure 11, p.15).

**Figure 11. Percent of survey respondents' level of understanding of the performance-pay model paid out that year**

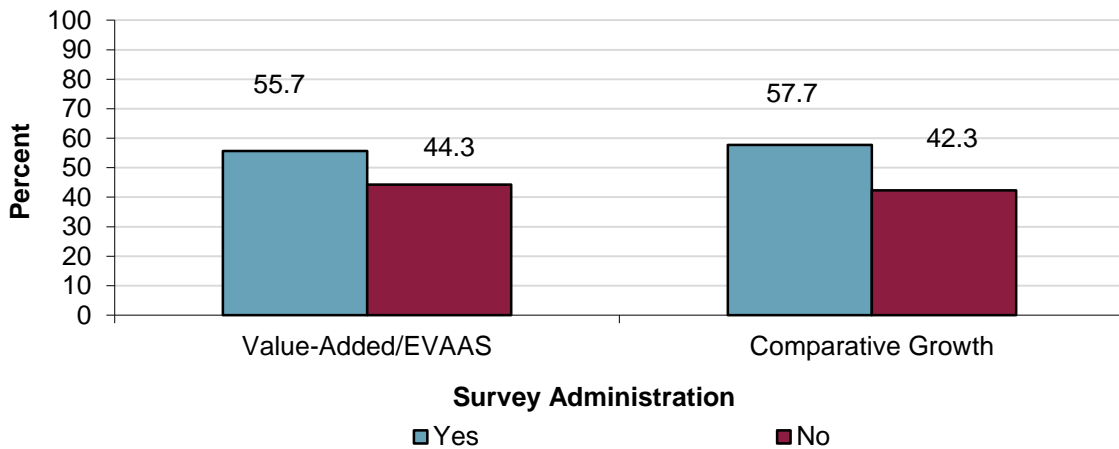


- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions regarding the level of understanding toward ASPIRE, comparisons by eligibility category for ASPIRE January 2014 respondents are summarized in **Appendix E** (p. 37). Based on respondent data from the nine eligibility categories, principals and assistant principals indicated having a very high/high level of understanding (68.1 and 53.0, respectively) compared to core teachers, elective/ancillary teachers, instructional support staff, teaching assistants, operational support staff, and those indicating that they were Not Eligible to receive an ASPIRE award (ranging from 28.3 percent for Operational Support Staff to 47.0 percent for Elective/Ancillary teachers).
- On the January 2014 survey, 23.8 percent of respondents that indicated they were operational support staff and 23.5 percent of respondents that indicated they were Not Eligible to receive an award perceived their level of understanding of the ASPIRE Award program as *very low* or *low*, reflecting the greatest lack of understanding for ASPIRE survey respondents (Appendix E, p. 37).
- On the January 2014 survey, at least 34.4 percent of core teachers, elective/ancillary teachers, instructional support staff, and teaching assistants reported a *very high* or *high* level of understanding regarding the ASPIRE Award program (Appendix E, p. 37).

**What percentage of respondents attended Value-Added/EVAAS training sessions and/or Comparative Growth training sessions, and what was the level of understanding?**

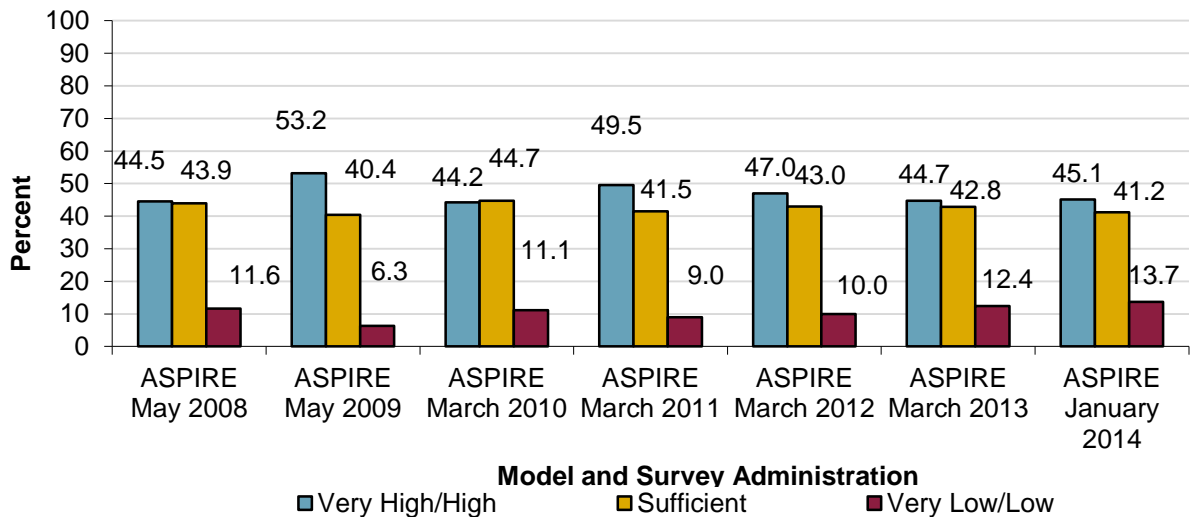
- **Figure 12** provides a comparison of the percent of respondents receiving training in Value-Added/EVAAS and or Comparative Growth. The majority of respondents reported receiving training in Value-Added/EVAAS (55.7 percent) and Comparative Growth (57.7 percent). Out of 3,777 employees that responded, 64.6 indicated that they were aware of training opportunities regarding comparative growth and value-added analysis.

**Figure 12. Percent of survey respondents receiving training**



- When comparing the perceptions of respondents from May 2009 to January 2014, there was an 8.1 percentage point decrease regarding respondents that rated their level of understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress as *very high* or *high* (Figure 13).
- Over the past seven years, the percent of respondents who rated their level of understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress as *very low* or *low* increased overall by 2.1 percentage points, although there was an overall decrease of 1.6 percentage points from 2008 to 2012 (Figure 13).

**Figure 13. Percent of respondents indicating their level of understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress over seven years**

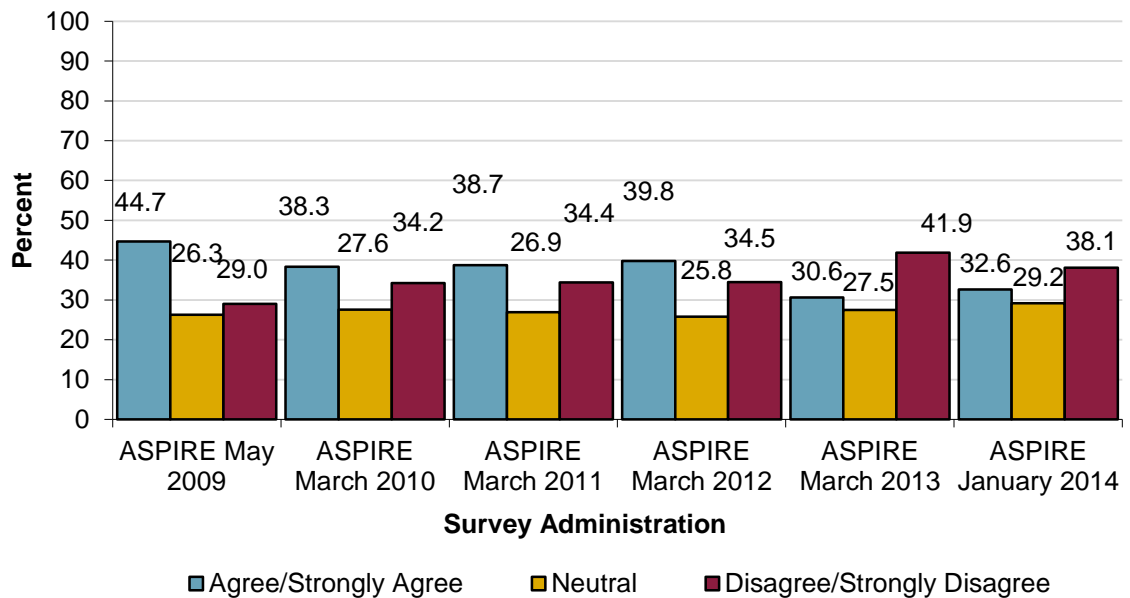


- On the May 2008 ASPIRE Award survey, there were seven items that were designed to determine the level of understanding for different training components related to the ASPIRE Award. **Table 9**

(p. 29) depicts the comparison of the baseline data collected in May 2008 with data collected in January 2014.

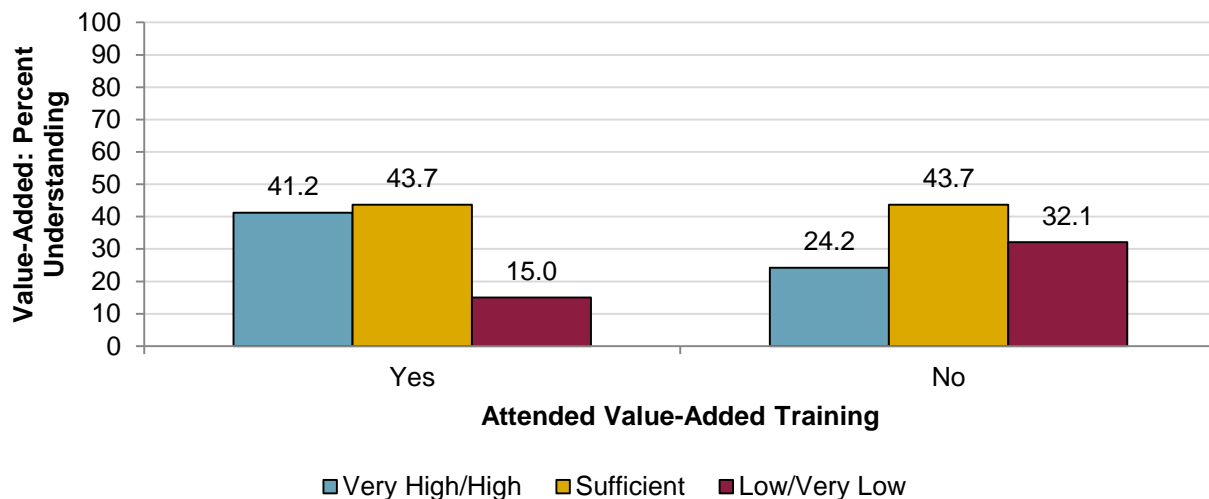
- The percentage of respondents indicating a *high/very high* level of understanding increased for six of the seven components. However, 2014 had a lower number of respondents compared to 2008 (Table 9, p. 29).
- Based on survey data collected in 2008 and 2014, the training component for which the largest percentage of respondents indicated, in both years, a *very high* or *high* level of understanding centered on *my understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress* (44.5 and 45.1 percent, respectively) (Table 9, p. 29).
- Based on survey data collected in 2008 and 2014, the training component for which the largest percentage of respondents indicated, in both years, a *very low* or *low* level of understanding focused on *how the ASPIRE Awards were calculated/determined* (33.9 percent and 38.5 percent, respectively) (Table 9, p. 29).
- One question asked respondents whether they perceived a connection between classroom instruction and performance-pay results. **Figure 14** compares the percent of respondents from the past six years' surveys. Based on the May 2009 and January 2014 survey results, there was a decrease in the percentage of survey respondents who *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that there was a connection between classroom instruction and ASPIRE Award results (44.7 percent and 32.6 percent, respectively).
- For the 2009 survey, 29.0 percent of the respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement that there was a connection between classroom instruction and ASPIRE Award results; however, this increased to 38.1 percent on the January 2014 survey (Figure 14). Nevertheless, these results showed slight improvements from the March 2013 responses.

**Figure 14. Percent of respondents indicating a connection between classroom instruction and ASPIRE Award results over six years**



- A cross tabulation was conducted to determine whether there were differences in the level of understanding of value-added analysis regarding respondents who reported receiving value-added analysis training and those that reported receiving no training. **Figure 15** summarizes the results.
- For 2014, a higher percentage of respondents who attended value-added analysis training reported a *high* or *very high* understanding of value-added analysis compared to those who did not attend value-added training (41.2 percent and 24.2 percent, respectively) (Figure 15).
- For 2014, 84.9 percent of respondents who attended value-added analysis training reported a *sufficient* or higher understanding of value-added analysis compared to those who did not attend value-added training at 67.9 percent (Figure 15).

**Figure 14. Cross tabulation summarizing the percent of respondents indicating their level of understanding of value-added analysis and attending value-added training**



Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

### What were the perceptions of respondents regarding their level of compensation and the ASPIRE Award Model?

- There were eight items that were designed to examine the perceptions of respondents regarding the amount of money awarded and the ASPIRE model. Baseline data for five of the items were collected during the May 2009 survey administration, and the results 2010 (three years ago) and 2014 (most recent) are summarized in **Table 10** (p. 30).
- On the 2010 and 2014 survey administrations, the statement for which the largest percentage of respondents indicated *strongly agree* or *agree* centered on *continuing the ASPIRE Award and modifying the model on an annual basis* (48.7 percent and 45.8 percent, respectively) (Table 10, p. 30).
- In both administrations, a higher percentage of respondents *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that their maximum award amount was commensurate with their professional contribution (44.9 percent and

40.4 percent) compared to 28.5 percent and 28.5 percent who were *neutral* and 26.6 percent and 31.1 percent who *agreed* or *strongly agreed*, respectively (Table 10, p. 30).

- Perceptions from 2010 to 2014 became more positive and less negative on five of the eight items (Table 10, p. 30).
- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions about the connection between classroom instruction and performance pay results, comparisons were made by eligibility category and respondents who indicated they were not eligible as summarized in **Appendix F** (p. 38).
- For 2014, the percentage of teaching assistants and operational support staff who *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that there was a connection between classroom instruction and the ASPIRE Award results (47.7 percent and 42.3 percent, respectively) exceeded core teachers (Groups 1–3), elective/ancillary teachers, instructional support staff, principals, assistant principals/deans, and those respondents that indicated they were not eligible to receive an award (Appendix F, p. 38).
- The highest percentage of respondents that *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that there was a connection between classroom instruction and the ASPIRE Award results was from core teachers, grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS® (49.4 percent) (Appendix F, p. 38).
- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions regarding the maximum award amount reflecting adequate recognition for efforts to increase student progress, comparisons were made by eligibility category and respondents who indicated they were not eligible as summarized in **Appendix G** (p.39).
- For 2014, 46.2 percent of core teachers grades 3–10 and 43.4 percent of teaching assistants, *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award adequately recognized their efforts to increase student progress, reflecting the highest levels of agreement compared to the remaining eligibility categories and for those respondents indicating they were not eligible to receive an award (Appendix G, p. 39).
- For 2014, 57.8 percent of instructional support staff, 50.7 percent of elective/ancillary teachers and 46.8 percent of core teachers, grades 3–12 without EVAAS indicated that they *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award adequately recognized their efforts to increase student progress (Appendix G, p. 39).
- To determine whether differences existed with regard to the statement, *the maximum award amount for my ASPIRE Award category is commensurate with my professional contribution*, comparisons were made by eligibility category and for those respondents that indicated they were not eligible to receive an award. **Appendix H** (p. 40) summarizes the results.
- For 2014, 42.1 percent of teaching assistants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award was commensurate with their professional contribution, reflecting the highest levels of agreement compared to the remaining eligibility categories and those respondents indicating they were not eligible to receive an award (Appendix H, p. 40).
- On the 2014 survey administration, 60.5 percent of instructional support staff, 56.3 percent of elective/ancillary teachers, and 50.5 percent of principals indicated that they *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award was commensurate with their professional contribution (Appendix H, p. 40).
- To determine whether there were differences in perceptions indicating favorability toward the concept of an award for educators in hard-to-staff buildings, comparisons were made by eligibility category and respondents who indicated they were not eligible as summarized in **Appendix I** (p.41).

- On the 2014 survey administration, 62.7 percent of assistant principals/deans and 62.0 percent of principals indicated that they *strongly agreed* or *agreed* toward the concept of an award for educators in hard-to-staff buildings (Appendix I, p. 41).

#### What was the level of effectiveness for communicating information about the ASPIRE Award?

- For the May 2009 and subsequent survey administrations, there were ten items for which respondents rated the level of effectiveness regarding communication about the ASPIRE Award. Two of the ten items were added to the 2012 survey, and one item was added to the 2013 survey regarding effective communication. The responses are summarized in **Table 11** (p. 31) using the item development as the baseline year.
- When comparing results from May 2009 to January 2014, four of the seven areas of communication showed decreases. *Knowing when specific information about my ASPIRE Award was available* reflected the area of communication for which respondents indicated the highest increase for effectiveness (1.5 percentage points)(Table 11, p. 31).
- Based on the results of the May 2009 and 2014 surveys, 70.1 percent and 69.2 percent of respondents indicated that communication was *moderately effective* or *very effective* for *knowing where to find information about my specific ASPIRE Award*, reflecting the highest percentages for effectiveness for 2009 and 2014, respectively (Table 11, p. 31).
- Based on the January 2014 surveys, the areas for which the highest percentage of respondents perceived communications to be *not effective* or *somewhat effective* focused on *providing clear explanations about comparative growth calculations* (48.2 percent), *providing clear explanations about value-added calculations* (47.2 percent) and *providing clear explanations about the award model* (44.1 percent) (Table 11, p. 31).
- On the January 2014 survey, five questions were designed to rate the effectiveness of specific types of communication. The results are summarized in **Table 12** (p. 31).
- Based on the results of the January 2014 survey, 47.3 percent of respondents reported the *ASPIRE e-mail* as being *very effective*, reflecting the highest percentage for effectiveness when compared to the other four methods used to communicate information about the ASPIRE Award program. This was followed by the *ASPIRE portal* (41.9 percent) (Table 12, p. 31).
- When comparing the five different methods for communicating information about the ASPIRE Award program, 11.7 percent of respondents perceived *School Messenger* as being *not effective*, and 11.8 percent of respondents indicated *don't know* regarding their perceptions of *School Messenger* (Table 12, p. 31).

#### What were the recommendations for changing the 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award suggested by respondents?

- Out of a total of 4,689 respondents on the January 2014 survey, 1,790 or 38.2 percent of the respondents provided at least one response for recommending changes to the 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award, whereas 61.8 percent of respondents did not provide any recommendations for changing the model. **Table 13** (p. 32) summarizes the frequency and percent of responses.



- A total of 3.7 percent and 4.0 percent of the 2,347 responses reflected that no changes were needed to the model or the response was simply, *No Comment*. The top five emergent categories reflected approximately 51.0 percent of the responses (Table 13, p. 32).
- The predominant suggestion centered on the allocation of money (15.6 percent). Some respondents indicated that STAAR teachers or teachers in tested grade levels, teachers working in hard-to-staff schools and teachers providing instruction to low-income students and/or at-risk students should receive more money. Alternatively, respondents indicated that elective/ancillary teachers, special education teachers, Career and Technology teachers, librarians, nurses, early childhood teachers to grade 2 teachers (Group 2) should receive more money. Some respondents indicated that administrators should not receive any performance-pay money, their performance pay should be capped, or indicated that payouts for administrators were disproportionate in comparison to payouts for teachers. One respondent stated, “Aspire should be only for classroom teachers and teachers aids. Exclude principals, administrators, superintendent and anyone who does not teach students” (Table 13, p. 32).
- Approximately 11 percent of the responses focused on measuring growth and/or achievement. Respondents indicated that beginning-of-year (BOY) and end-of-year (EOY) tests should be used to measure growth, only passing rates should be used as a performance measure, and awards should be individual/campus/department/grade and/or subject. One suggestion was, “For this program to be effective and fair, you need to compare the growth of students from the beginning of the academic year to its end (e.g. August-May). If this award is for educators, it should be awarded to teachers” (Table 13, p. 32).
- Approximately 9 percent centered on making the model equitable, and inclusive so that all employees were treated equally, compensated equally, and/or had the opportunity to receive the same amount of award as the top dollar earners. Elective/ancillary teachers, special education teachers, early childhood through grade 2, instructional support (i.e. counselors, librarians, and literacy coach), teaching assistants, and operational support staff (i.e. registrars, computer network specialists, and attendance specialists) were not eligible to receive the same level of compensation as core teachers with an EVAAS report. They felt “de-valued” by the way the model was designed. Some respondents indicated that the differences in eligibility and compensation were divisive for campuses. Moreover, respondents indicated that student success was a team effort, but the contribution of the team was not being equally valued for all members (Table 13, p. 32).
- A total of 188 responses, or 8.0 percent of respondents to this question indicated that the ASPIRE Award be discontinued. One respondent cited, “I would end the ASPIRE Award Program and provide teachers with annual pay increases that would be equivalent to the money spent or allotted for the ASPIRE Award Program annually. This program creates hostility, unnecessary competition, and chaos, when our mutual goals should be the educating of the children.” Another respondent stated, “Eliminate it. I know of several teachers in my school building who have openly admitted to teaching to the test and/or not sharing ideas because they want to show maximum growth over the others. It is not a healthy award system and does not promote collaboration and community” (Table 13, p. 32).
- Approximately 7 percent of responses centered on eligibility rules/categorization. These centered on reinstating the attendance bonus, making hourly employees eligible, not including appraisal ratings as an eligibility requirement, and increasing the number of days participants could miss. Respondents indicated that plant operators, janitors, food service, and hourly employees should be eligible for an award. With regard to eligibility rules, respondents indicated that the attendance rule should allow for more days absent or eliminate the requirement. Regarding categorization, respondents indicated they

would like to be categorized based on their job duties as opposed to their job title. Regarding their appraisal rating, respondents cited, “If a teacher is a 1 or a 2, but their students still grew, they should receive their award,” and “summative rating should not be included” (Table 13, p. 32).

## Discussion

The purpose of the 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award Survey was to gain insight regarding the level of knowledge and perceptions of Houston Independent School District (HISD) teachers and staff after seven years of implementation of growth-based performance pay in HISD, as well as their perceptions regarding the overall concept of performance pay. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to provide recommendations for making changes to the current model and for helping the district develop new teacher career pathways and a differentiated compensation system that rewards, recognizes, and retains effective teachers. This annual survey serves as a mechanism to gather valuable feedback from program participants.

External factors, such as policy decisions, roll-out of a new model, or roll-out of any new model component may have influenced perceptions of growth-based performance pay since its inception. Although survey administrations followed the January payout with the exception of the 2014 survey administration when it was concurrent with the inquiry period, it is important to understand that eleven months had elapsed from the time of payout until the first survey administration (December 2007). Changes were instituted in the pay for performance model, communication about the model was enhanced, and training on the new model had commenced. Therefore, perceptions about the 2005–2006 Teacher Performance-Pay Model (TPPM) may have been influenced by anticipating these positive changes.

On February 12, 2010 the Board of Education approved using value-added data as the 34th criterion to evaluate teacher effectiveness. Questions and uncertainties arose regarding the impact of this policy for teachers. When the 2008–2009 ASPIRE Award Survey was launched on February 23, 2010 amid this policy change, sufficient time had not elapsed to fully address questions or correct misconceptions. It is highly likely that the climate of concern that was evident among teachers during that time impacted their responses to the survey items. This is apparent in the decreases across the board in almost all items from 2009 to 2010.

During the spring of 2011, budgetary shortfalls at the state level may have impacted perceptions and response rates during survey administration. Campuses were required to develop different budgetary plans, depending on the estimated shortfall in state funding that would result in the reduction in campus staff. Although final announcements were not made until April, an environment of speculation and uncertainty developed throughout all levels of the district.

There were several factors that may have impacted the response rates for the 2012 survey. These included: multiple surveys targeting campus-based staff, including the ASPIRE Award and Career Pathways and Compensation Survey, administration of the new state assessment, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), and rolling out the new teacher appraisal and development system. Teachers and other campus-based personnel were more focused and concerned about the new state assessment and the new teacher appraisal system. The 2012–2013 school year marked the first year of inclusion of value-added and comparative growth measures formally introduced into the new teacher appraisal and development system.

There have been four key areas that have shown mixed results over the past four to eight years. First, when comparing the survey response rate for December 2007 to the response rate for January 2014, there was an overall increase from 11.4 percent to 25.7 percent, but a decrease of 25.1 percentage points from May 2009, 12.0 percentage points from March 2010, and 4.6 percentage points from March 2011. However, there was an increase of 6.8 percentage points from March 2013. The response rate is low and caution is warranted in interpreting the data.

Another key area, support for the program, showed mixed results over the eight-year period. Although the percentage of campus-based staff *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the concept of teacher performance pay decreased from 69.2 percent after the 2007 payout to 55.2 percent after the 2010 payout, this increased to 58.6 after the 2012 payout, but then decreased to 53.2 percent with the 2014 payout. When respondents were asked about their perceptions of the award model for that year, 44.4 percent of respondents were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the 2005–2006 Teacher Performance-Pay Model (December 2007) compared to the peak of 53.3 percent who were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the ASPIRE Award program in May 2009. Alternatively, the majority of respondents have not been *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of the ASPIRE Award program over the past five years.

A related measure, support for the concept of differentiated pay, showed mixed results. Baseline data were collected during the May 2009 survey administration. Approximately 56.0 percent of respondents indicated they were *in favor* or *somewhat in favor* of differentiated pay in 2009, and this decreased to 48.3 percent in March 2010, but increased to 50.9 percent in March 2011, followed by an increase to 53.0 percent in March 2012, but then decreased to 47.2 percent in March 2013, and finally increased to 49.4 percent in January 2014.

The final key area centered on training sessions for value-added analysis and/or comparative growth. Historically, training courses have been offered on-line so that staff could complete the modules at their own pace. In addition, face-to-face training sessions were held around the district, and live webinars were offered to help teachers avoid travel and to be archived for future use. The majority of respondents attended value-added training (55.7 percent) and/or comparative growth training (57.7 percent) in 2012–2013.

Collecting feedback about effective communications was undertaken over the past five years to identify areas for improvement as well as areas that were effective. Based on survey results from 2009 to 2014, there was a decrease in effectiveness in four of the seven areas for which data were available. However, the newly added items, *providing clear explanations about the award model*, *providing clear explanations about value-added calculations*, and *providing clear explanations about comparative growth calculations* further indicate challenging areas for effective communication. Based on 2014 survey data, 48.2 percent of respondents indicated that communication was *not effective* or *somewhat effective* for *providing clear explanations about comparative growth*, 47.2 percent of respondents indicated that communications were *not effective* or *somewhat effective* for *providing clear explanations about value-added calculations*, and 44.1 percent of respondents indicated that *providing clear explanations about the award model* was *not effective* or *somewhat effective*. As value-added data and comparative growth data will now factor into all core teachers' appraisals, clear communication as well as effective training concerning them is a priority.

When looking at the respondents by eligibility category, differences exist regarding how the ASPIRE Award program is perceived and the level of knowledge concerning the program. Administrators, such as principals and assistant principals/deans of instruction, indicate favorable perceptions concerning performance pay and their level of knowledge, with the following exceptions: connection between classroom instruction and performance pay results, maximum ASPIRE award amount adequately recognized my efforts to increase student progress, and maximum ASPIRE award amount was commensurate with my professional contribution. Core teachers have more positive perceptions than elective/ancillary teachers with one exception. Elective/ancillary teachers indicated that they had higher levels of knowledge regarding the ASPIRE Award program than core teachers (Groups 1–3). The differences in perceptions between core foundation teachers and non-core instructional staff have declined through time when looking at favorability in performance pay, student growth, and passing rates.

For a performance pay system to be sustainable, the incentive amount has to be meaningful to all participants. Only 29.7 percent of principals *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award amount (\$15,000) was commensurate with their professional contribution. Teaching assistants indicated the highest

percent for any category at 42.1 percent. Of the nine eligibility categories, instructional support staff and elective/ancillary teachers had the lowest level of agreement with regard to their maximum award amounts (\$1,350 and \$3,000) at 14.3 percent and 17.5 percent, respectively. For those respondents that indicated they were not eligible to receive an award, only 24.8 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their maximum ASPIRE Award amount was commensurate with their professional contribution. On the 2014 survey, allocation of funding was the largest emergent category regarding recommended changes to the ASPIRE Award model, which included responses about increasing the award amount.

The survey administered after each payout has served as a vehicle for respondents to recommend changes to the current model. Feedback is particularly valued to improve the ASPIRE Award program. As one respondent stated, "I am satisfied with how things are managed at this time."

## References

- Houston Independent School District. (2009). 2005–2006 Teacher Performance-Pay and 2006–2007 ASPIRE Award Survey. Houston, TX: HISD.
- Houston Independent School District. (2009b). 2007–2008 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring, 2009. Houston, TX: HISD.
- Houston Independent School District. (2010). 2008–2009 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring, 2010. Houston, TX: HISD.
- Houston Independent School District. (2011). 2009–2010 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring, 2011. Houston, TX: HISD.
- Houston Independent School District. (2012). 2010–2011 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring, 2012. Houston, TX: HISD
- Houston Independent School District. (2012). 2011–2012 ASPIRE Award Survey, Spring, 2013. Houston, TX: HISD

**Table 1. Eight Year Summary of Survey Response Rates by Pay for Performance Model**

<b>Model and Year</b>	<b>Date of Survey Administration</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b># of Respondents</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
2005–2006 TPPM	December 2007	16,296	-	1,851	11.4
2006–2007 ASPIRE Award	May 2008	16,504	-	6,383	38.7
2007–2008 ASPIRE Award	May 2009	16,907	8,073	4,102	50.8
2008–2009 ASPIRE Award	March 2010	19,312	-	7,284	37.7
2009–2010 ASPIRE Award	March 2011	20,048	-	6,083	30.3
2010–2011 ASPIRE Award	March 2012	18,747	-	3,441	18.4
2011–2012 ASPIRE Award	March 2013	19,072	-	3,603	18.9
2012–2013 ASPIRE Award	January 2014	18,269	-	4,689	25.7

**Table 2. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents by Categorization, 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award, January 2014 Survey Administrations**

<b>Category</b>	<b>2012–2013</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Group 1, Core Teacher Grades 3–10 w/EVAAS	1,062	31.2
Group 2, Core Teacher PK–2	702	20.6
Group 3, Core Teacher Grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS	283	8.3
Group 4, Elective/Ancillary Teacher	375	11.0
Group 5, Instructional Support	253	7.4
Group 6, Teaching Assistant	252	7.4
Group 7, Operational Support	282	8.3
Group 1L, Principals	104	3.1
Group 2L, Assistant Principals/Deans of Instruction	90	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,403</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 3. Background Characteristics of 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award Survey Respondents**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Highest Degree Held</b>		
High School	218	4.7
Some College	318	6.8
Associate's Degree	141	3.0
Bachelor's Degree	1,658	35.5
Some Graduate School	643	13.8
Master's Degree	1579	33.8
Doctoral Degree	119	2.5
Average experience in HISD		11.7
Average experience at current campus		7.5
Average experience in current assignment		6.7

**Table 4. Number and Percent of Respondents Employed in HISD, Eligibility Status, Award Status, and Strand II Award Status**

Item	Yes	No	N
Were you employed in the Houston Independent School District during the 2012–2013 school year?	87.8	12.2	4,575
Were you eligible to receive an ASPIRE Award for the 2012–2013 school year?	79.3	20.7	3,864
Will you receive an ASPIRE Award for the 2012–2013 school year (to be paid out in January 2014)?	54.8	45.2	3,648
If you were a core teacher with an EVAAS® report, will you receive an individual performance ASPIRE Award?	61.7	38.3	1,069

**Table 5. Teaching in a Critical Shortage Area: Response Count and Response Percentage, 2012–2013**

Critical Shortage Area	N	%
Special Education	471	11.5
Bilingual Education	458	11.2
English as a Second Language (ESL)	570	13.9
Mathematics (Grades 6–12)	228	5.6
Science (Grades 6–12)	204	5.0
Spanish (Grades 6–12)	35	0.9
N/A	2,127	52.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,093</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 6. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Their Level of Agreement for which the ASPIRE Award Encouraged Specific Behaviors, May 2009 and January 2014**

			Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree/Agree	
	N		%		%		%	
The ASPIRE Award encourages me to:	Base-line*	2014	Base-line*	2014	Base-line*	2014	Base-line*	2014
Continue teaching in the classroom	2,750	2,309	26.3	41.4	25.7	23.6	47.9	35.0
Remain working in HISD	1,829	2,315	31.7	40.9	24.2	23.2	44.0	35.9
Come to work on a daily basis	3,222	2,311	27.3	39.7	25.7	22.9	47.0	37.4

\*Baseline year for the item *Remain working in HISD* was 2012; it was 2009 for all other items.

**Table 7. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating the Frequency of Selected Instructional Practices, January 2014**

Over the past several years, I have	N	Not At All	Somewhat	Moderately	To A Great Extent
		%	%	%	%
Increase the amount of time I spend collaborating with my colleagues	2,316	7.4	10.9	28.3	53.4
Use standardized data to make instructional decisions	2,187	5.5	10.3	27.8	56.5
Use value-added data to make instructional decisions	2,031	14.8	13.0	29.9	42.3
Use TAKS-STAAR data as a diagnostic tool for my classroom	1,923	9.8	11.4	26.6	52.3
Use Stanford data as a diagnostic tool for my classroom	1,991	14.2	13.5	27.2	45.1
Use value-added data as a diagnostic tool for my classroom	1,974	18.1	14.8	28.4	38.7
Increase the amount of time spent in professional development	2,288	9.0	14.8	33.0	43.2

**Table 8. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Increased Participation in Specific Areas of Teacher/Staff Collaboration over the Past Several Years, May 2009 and January 2014**

To what extent have you increased your participation in the following areas of teacher/staff collaboration as a result of the ASPIRE Award?	N		Not At All		Somewhat		Moderately		To a Great Extent	
			%		%		%		%	
	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014
More frequent use of data	2,954	2,264	19.3	4.9	17.6	11.6	32.2	27.9	31.0	55.7
Incorporation of core-area topics/TEKS in non-core courses	2,653	2,037	22.2	7.7	15.0	11.0	33.9	30.2	28.9	51.1
Vertical team meetings/planning	2,793	2,207	23.3	10.4	16.1	16.2	30.1	30.9	30.4	42.5
Subject level meetings/planning	2,806	2,217	21.4	6.5	13.7	11.2	28.3	26.5	36.6	55.8
Grade level meetings/planning	2,803	2,213	21.6	7.5	14.2	10.2	27.0	24.8	37.2	57.5
Team teaching	2,599	2,015	29.2	21.7	15.3	14.5	26.9	24.6	28.6	39.2



**Table 9. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Their Level of Understanding for the ASPIRE Award Program and Its Components for the 2006–2007 and 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award, May 2008 and January 2014 Survey Administrations**

Please rate your level of understanding to the following items:	N		Very Low/Low		Sufficient		Very High/High	
			%		%		%	
	2008	2014	2008	2014	2008	2014	2008	2014
My understanding of ASPIRE is:	5,882	3,631	17.4	19.3	55.2	44.1	27.4	36.6
My understanding of value-added analysis is:	5,844	3,539	21.3	25.0	50.0	42.7	28.7	32.3
My understanding of the difference between student achievement and academic progress is:	5,848	3,584	11.6	13.7	43.9	41.2	44.5	45.1
My understanding of how value-added information can help me as an educator is:	5,832	3,439	18.3	23.8	45.1	40.9	36.6	35.3
My understanding of how to read/interpret value-added reports is:	5,817	3,484	23.7	24.3	47.0	42.5	29.3	33.1
My understanding of the different strands of the ASPIRE Award Program was:	5,835	3,561	23.2	27.5	48.7	42.9	28.1	29.5
My understanding of how the ASPIRE Awards were calculated/determined is:	5,852	3,541	33.9	38.5	43.9	37.3	22.2	24.2

**Table 10. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Their Perceptions About Award Amounts and the ASPIRE Award Model, March 2010 and January 2014**

	N		Strongly Disagree/ Disagree		Neutral		Agree/ Strongly Agree	
			%		%		%	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
There is a connection between classroom instruction and ASPIRE Award results.	5,428	3,430	34.2	38.1	27.6	29.2	38.3	32.6
The maximum award amount for my ASPIRE Award category adequately recognizes my efforts to increase student progress.	5,274	3,431	44.4	36.8	26.5	26.8	29.1	36.5
The maximum award amount for my ASPIRE Award category encourages me to remain in a campus-based position.	5,319	3,429	37.2	36.0	32.4	31.0	30.3	33.1
The maximum award amount for my ASPIRE Award category is commensurate with my professional contribution.	5,325	3,424	44.9	40.4	28.5	28.5	26.6	31.1
The ASPIRE Award is a fair way of acknowledging a teacher's impact on student growth.	5,417	3,466	46.6	41.9	26.6	27.8	26.7	30.3
The formal inquiry process allowed me the opportunity to question the accuracy of my award.	4,812	3,004	22.8	24.5	39.7	38.6	37.5	37.0
The ASPIRE Award should be continued in its current form.	5,408	3,438	45.2	38.1	31.5	32.5	23.3	29.3
The ASPIRE Award should be continued with modifications incorporated on an annual basis.	5,367	3,415	18.9	20.3	32.4	33.9	48.7	45.8

**Table 11. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Their Perceptions About Communicating Effectively, May 2009 and January 2014**

	N		Not Effective/ Somewhat Effective		Moderately Effective/ Very Effective	
	Baseline	2014	Baseline	2014	Baseline	2014
Knowing where to find information about the ASPIRE Award in general.	3,383	3,584	32.6	33.2	67.4	66.8
Knowing when specific information about my ASPIRE Award was available.	3,371	3,571	31.5	30.1	68.4	69.9
Knowing where to find information about my specific ASPIRE Award.	3,367	3,555	30.0	30.8	70.1	69.2
Knowing how to interpret and understand my specific ASPIRE Award Notice.	3,368	3,556	38.6	39.1	61.4	60.8
Understanding the difference between submitting a question by e-mail versus submitting a formal inquiry about your final award.	3,362	3,557	38.6	38.5	61.4	61.5
Understanding where to find information about the inquiry process on the portal.	3,364	3,561	36.4	36.5	63.7	63.5
Understanding that formal inquiries were required to be submitted by a specific deadline.	3,352	3,555	34.7	33.8	65.4	66.3
Providing clear explanations about the award model.*	2,828	3,556	40.7	44.1	59.2	55.9
Providing clear explanations about value-added calculations.*	2,807	3,534	45.4	47.2	54.7	52.9
Providing clear explanations about comparative growth calculations**	3,011	3,517	51.9	48.2	48.1	51.8

\*Baseline year for the items *asterisked* was 2012, and \*\*Baseline year was 2013; it was 2009 for all other items.

**Table 12. Number and Percent of Survey Respondents Indicating Their Perceptions About the Level of Effectiveness for Different Types of Communication, January 2014**

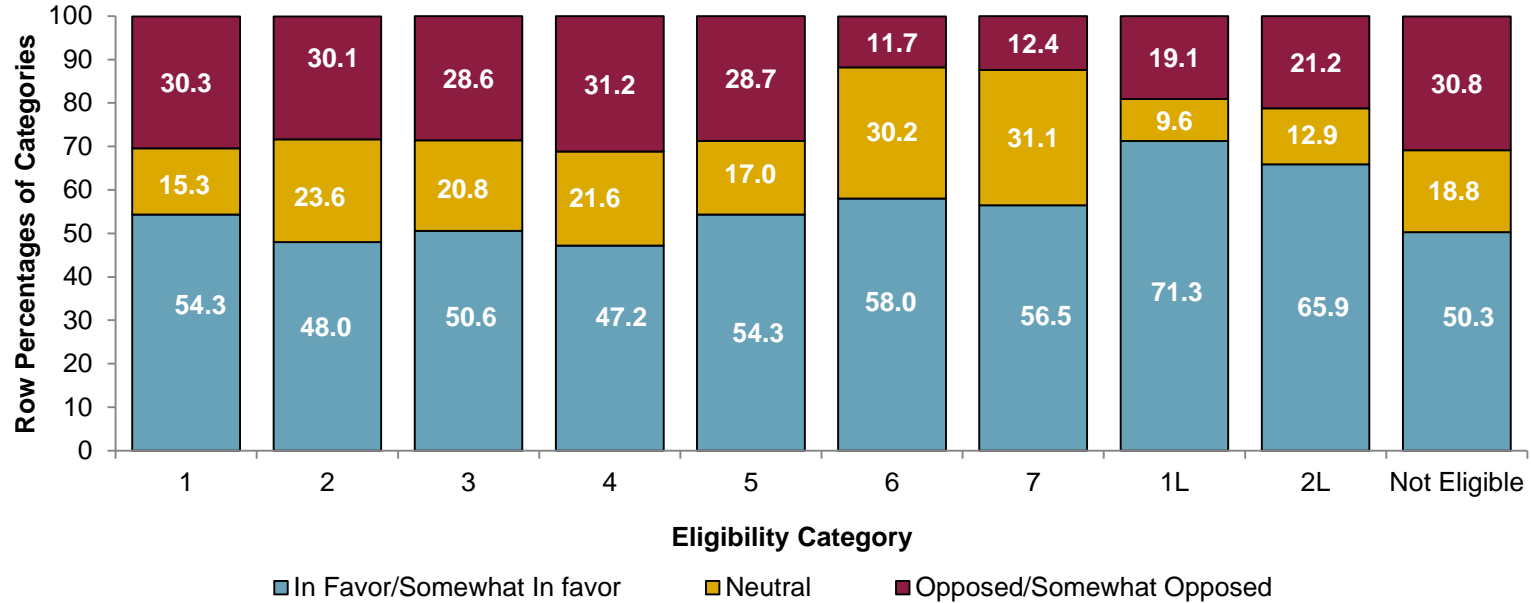
	N	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Moderately Effective	Very Effective	Don't Know
School Messenger	3,582	11.7	17.1	27.2	32.3	11.8
ASPIRE eNews	3,586	9.3	18.4	29.7	35.0	7.6
Academic Services Memos (electronic format)	3,554	9.8	17.4	28.6	31.7	12.5
ASPIRE e-mail	3,596	6.1	14.8	26.5	47.3	5.2
ASPIRE portal	3,555	7.4	15.9	28.9	41.9	5.9

**Table 13. Number and Percent of Responses for Recommended Changes and Educational Impact to the 2012–2013 ASPIRE Award, January 2014**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Allocate more money for awards/allocate money for specified group(s)/reallocate money so that particular groups benefit and designated groups receive no award or their award is capped/allocate funds to buying resources	365	15.6
Measuring growth/achievement (BOY/EOY/student growth/passing rates/campus, department, grade, subject, and/or individual award	250	10.7
Make the model equitable, fair, and inclusive	213	9.1
Discontinue the Award	188	8.0
Change the Eligibility Rules and make plant operators, janitors, food service, hourly employees, and tutors eligible/Attendance Rule (more days/eliminate)/Attendance bonus (reinstitute the bonus)/Don't include Appraisal Ratings (Biased in some cases) especially Student Performance Measures	161	6.9
Factors impacting growth or the calculation of growth	151	6.4
Improve communications about the award/provide clearer explanations about the model and value added calculations/provide feedback for teachers based on their data/more timely communications about changes in the award model/teacher input	150	6.4
Unintended Consequences (divisive, cheating, free-riding)	148	6.3
Performance measures or criteria (e.g. position in hard-to-staff school, number of highly effective teachers and retention of them, college readiness and college acceptance, parent's role, working with students new to the district)	136	5.8
N/A or No Comment	94	4.0
No Changes/Satisfied	86	3.7
Don't Know/Not Sure	76	3.2
Pay Raise	69	2.9
Award not commensurate	62	2.6
Calculation/Formula	49	2.1
Training	49	2.1
Miscellaneous	40	1.7
Expectations	36	1.5
Don't Like the Program	11	0.5
Payout Timeline	10	0.4
Old Model	3	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,347</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## APPENDIX A

### CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATING THE MAXIMUM FAVORABILITY TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE PAY BY ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY, JANUARY 2014



**Key:**

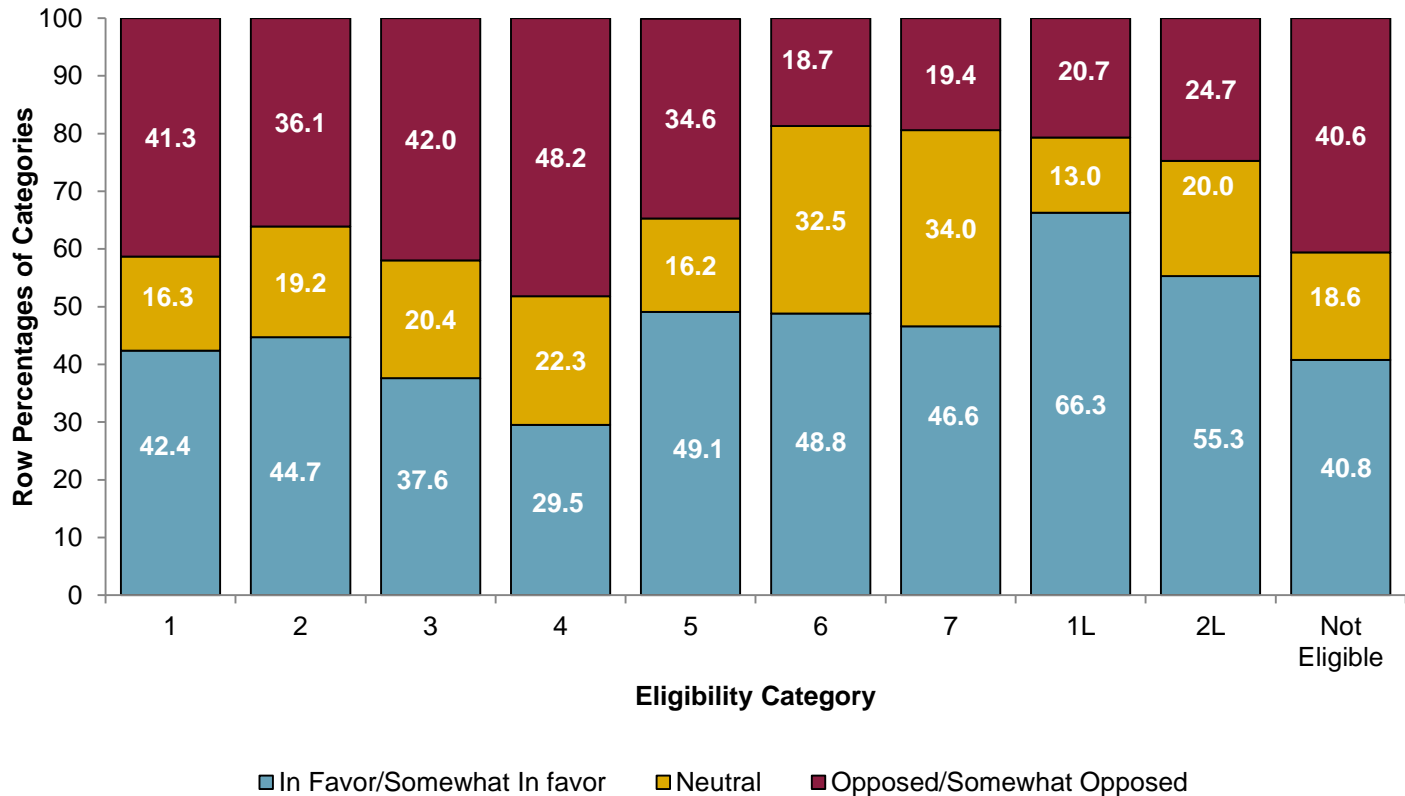
- Group 1: Core Teacher Grades 3–10 w/EVAAS®
- Group 2: Core Teacher PK–2
- Group 3: Core Teacher Grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS®
- Group 4: Elective/Ancillary Teacher
- Group 5: Instructional Support Staff

- Group 6: Teaching Assistant
- Group 7: Operational Support Staff
- Group 1L: Principal
- Group 2L: Assistant Principal/Deans
- Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

## APPENDIX B

### CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING FAVORABILITY TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE PAY BASED ON INDIVIDUAL STUDENT GROWTH BY ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY, JANUARY 2014



**Key:**

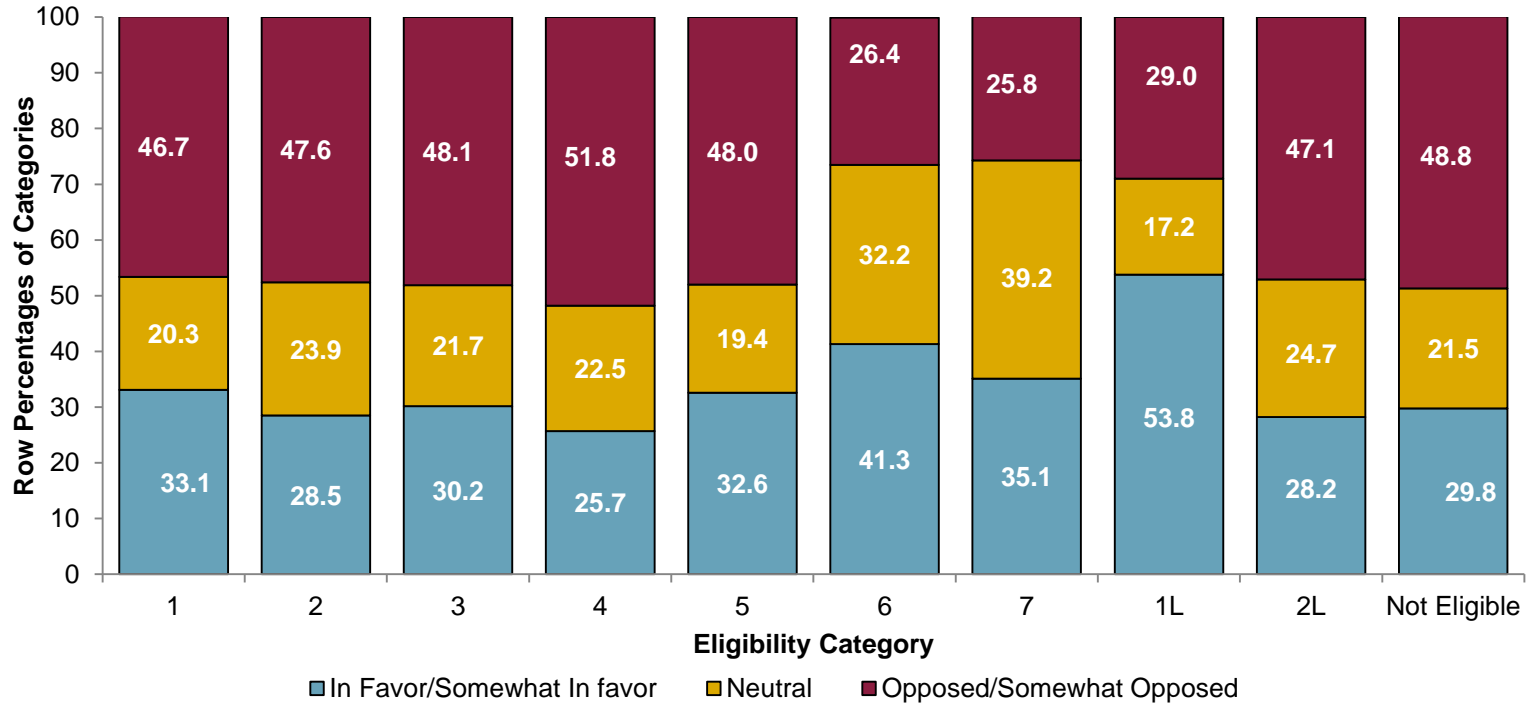
- Group 1: Core Teacher Grades 3–10 w/EVAAS®
- Group 2: Core Teacher PK–2
- Group 3: Core Teacher Grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS®
- Group 4: Elective/Ancillary Teacher
- Group 5: Instructional Support Staff

- Group 6: Teaching Assistant
- Group 7: Operational Support Staff
- Group 1L: Principal
- Group 2L: Assistant Principal/Deans
- Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

## APPENDIX C

CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING FAVORABILITY  
TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE PAY BASED ON PASSING RATES ONLY BY  
ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY, JANUARY 2014



**Key:**

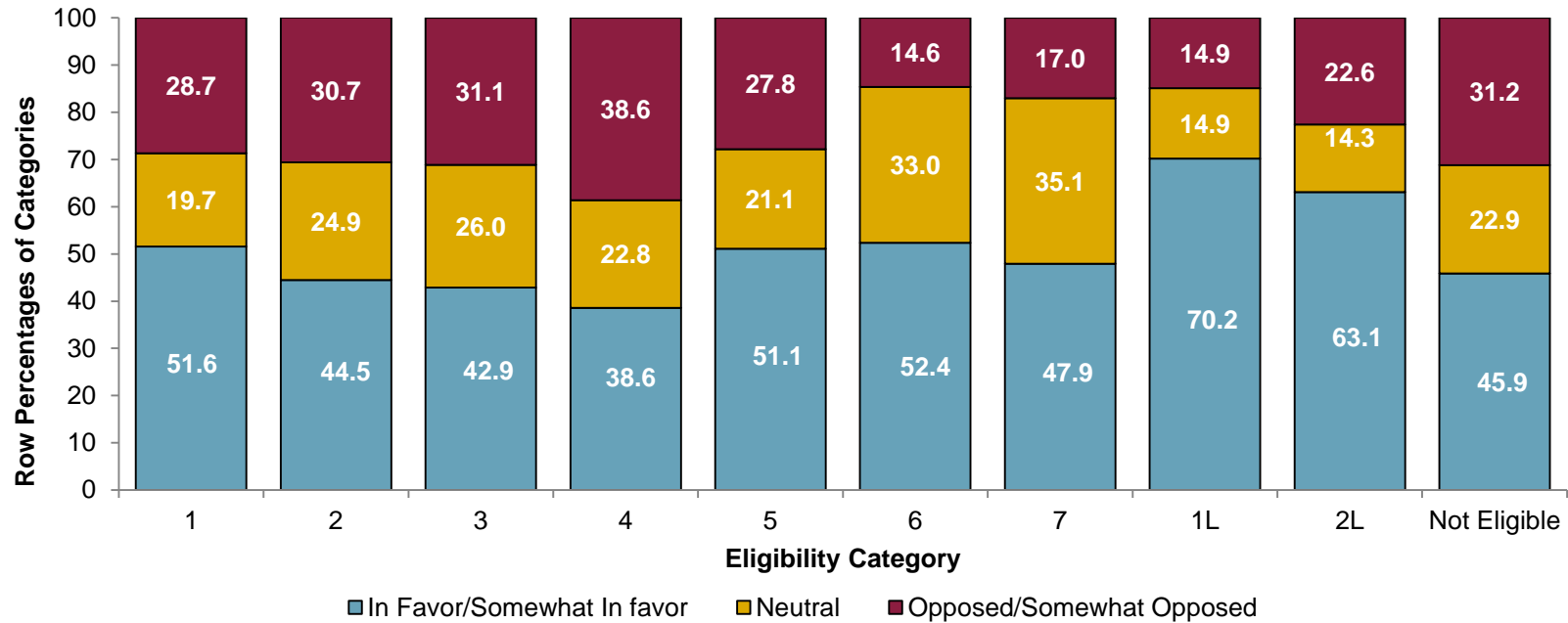
Group 1: Core Teacher Grades 3–10 w/EVAAS®  
 Group 2: Core Teacher PK–2  
 Group 3: Core Teacher Grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS®  
 Group 4: Elective/Ancillary Teacher  
 Group 5: Instructional Support Staff

Group 6: Teaching Assistant  
 Group 7: Operational Support Staff  
 Group 1L: Principal  
 Group 2L: Assistant Principal/Deans  
 Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

## APPENDIX D

CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING FAVORABILITY TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF DIFFERENTIATED PAY BY ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY, JANUARY 2014



**Key:**

- Group 1: Core Teacher Grades 3–10 w/EVAAS®
- Group 2: Core Teacher PK–2
- Group 3: Core Teacher Grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS®
- Group 4: Elective/Ancillary Teacher
- Group 5: Instructional Support Staff

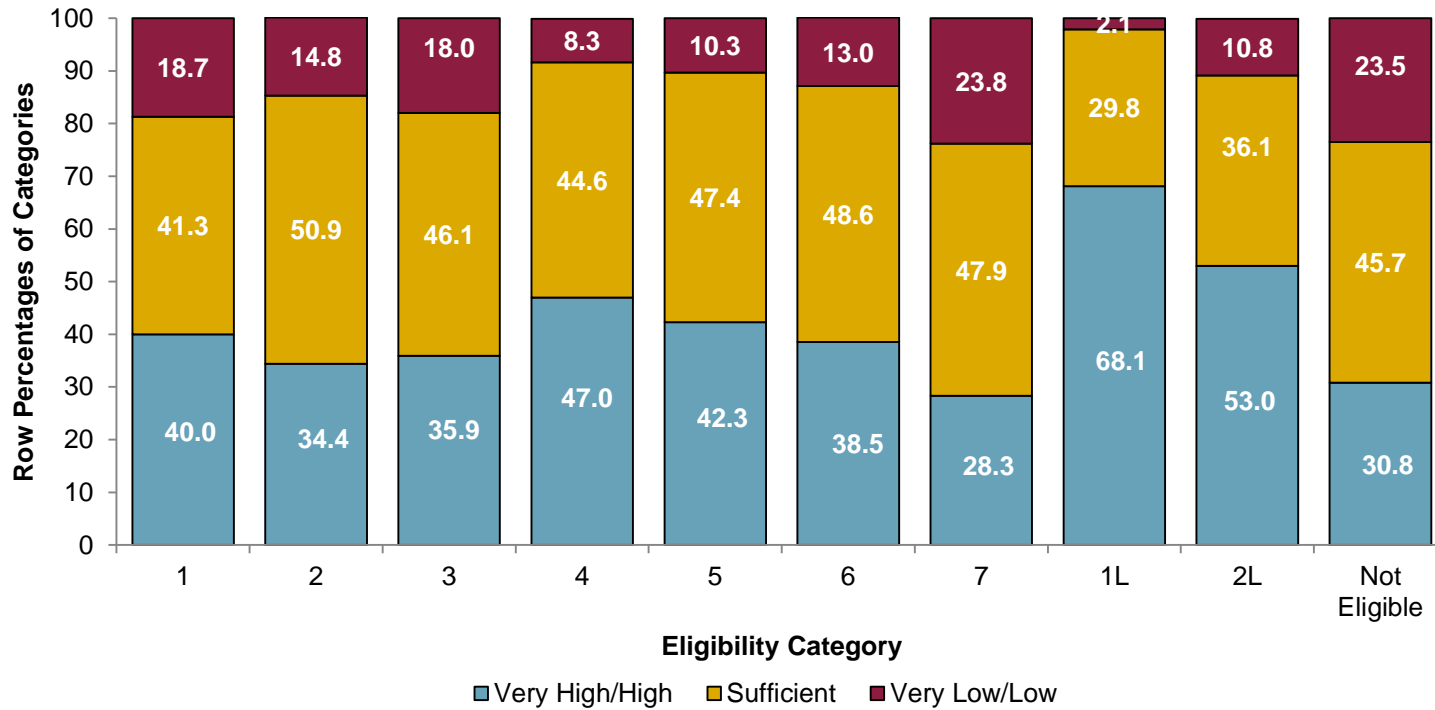
- Group 6: Teaching Assistant
- Group 7: Operational Support Staff
- Group 1L: Principal
- Group 2L: Assistant Principal/Deans
- Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.



## APPENDIX E

### CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS' LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE 2012–2013 ASPIRE AWARD PROGRAM, JANUARY 2014



**Key:**

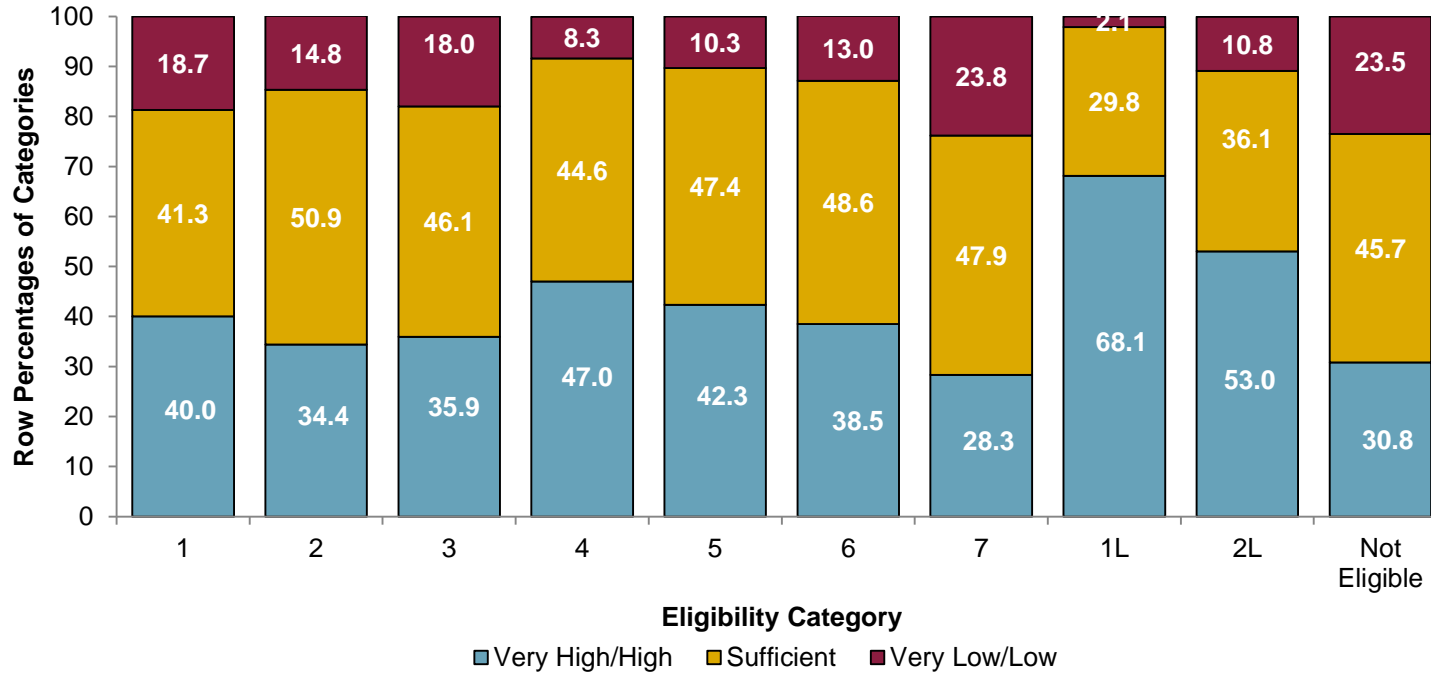
- Group 1: Core Teacher Grades 3–10 w/EVAAS®
- Group 2: Core Teacher PK–2
- Group 3: Core Teacher Grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS®
- Group 4: Elective/Ancillary Teacher
- Group 5: Instructional Support Staff

- Group 6: Teaching Assistant
- Group 7: Operational Support Staff
- Group 1L: Principal
- Group 2L: Assistant Principal/Deans
- Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

## APPENDIX F

### CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS' INDICATING A CONNECTION BETWEEN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND PERFORMANCE PAY RESULTS BY ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY FOR THE 2012–2013 ASPIRE AWARD PROGRAM, JANUARY 2014



**Key:**

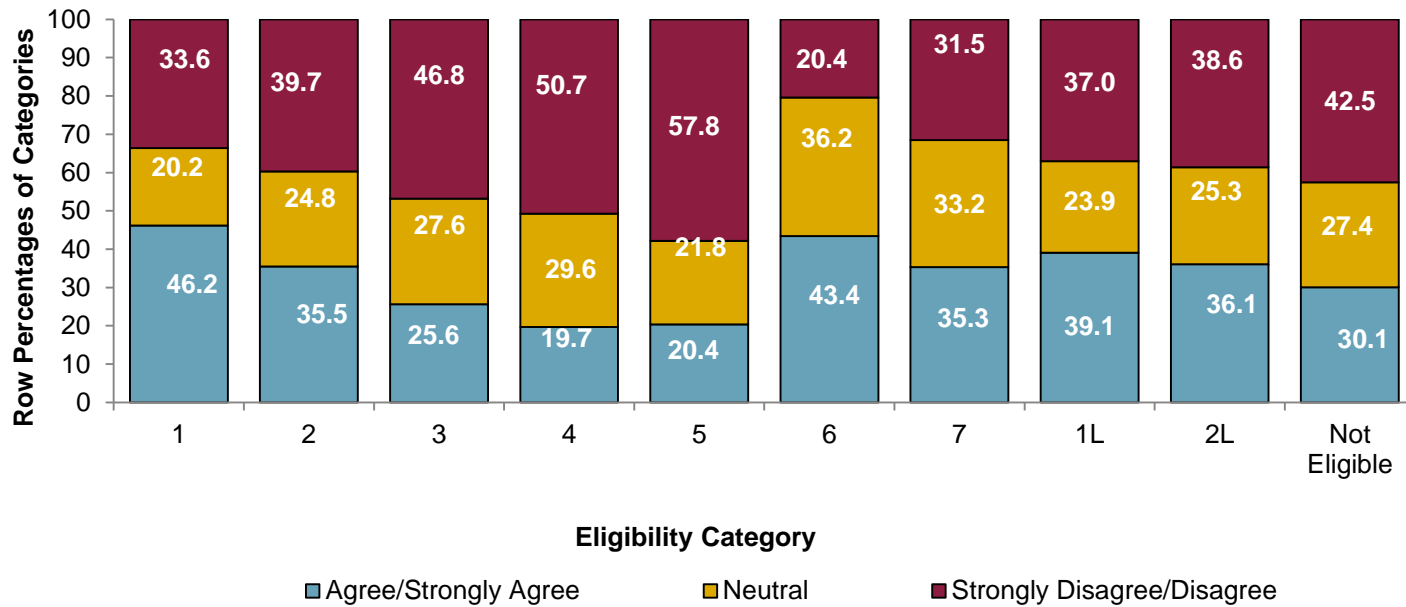
Group 1: Core Teacher Grades 3–10 w/EVAAS®  
 Group 2: Core Teacher PK–2  
 Group 3: Core Teacher Grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS®  
 Group 4: Elective/Ancillary Teacher  
 Group 5: Instructional Support Staff

Group 6: Teaching Assistant  
 Group 7: Operational Support Staff  
 Group 1L: Principal  
 Group 2L: Assistant Principal/Deans  
 Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

## APPENDIX G

### CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATING THE MAXIMUM ASPIRE AWARD AMOUNT ADEQUATELY RECOGNIZED THEIR EFFORTS TO INCREASE STUDENT PROGRESS, JANUARY 2014



**Key:**

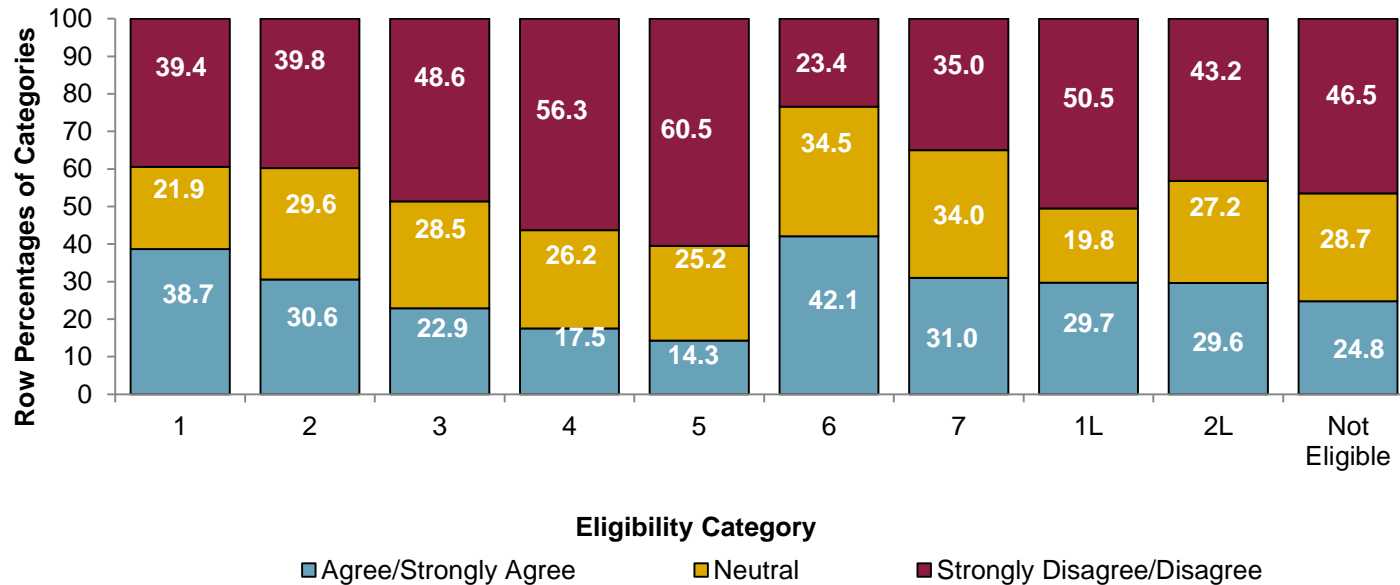
Group 1: Core Teacher Grades 3–10 w/EVAAS®  
 Group 2: Core Teacher PK–2  
 Group 3: Core Teacher Grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS®  
 Group 4: Elective/Ancillary Teacher  
 Group 5: Instructional Support Staff

Group 6: Teaching Assistant  
 Group 7: Operational Support Staff  
 Group 1L: Principal  
 Group 2L: Assistant Principal/Deans  
 Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

## APPENDIX H

CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATING THE MAXIMUM ASPIRE AWARD AMOUNT WAS COMMENSURATE WITH THEIR PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTION, JANUARY 2014



**Key:**

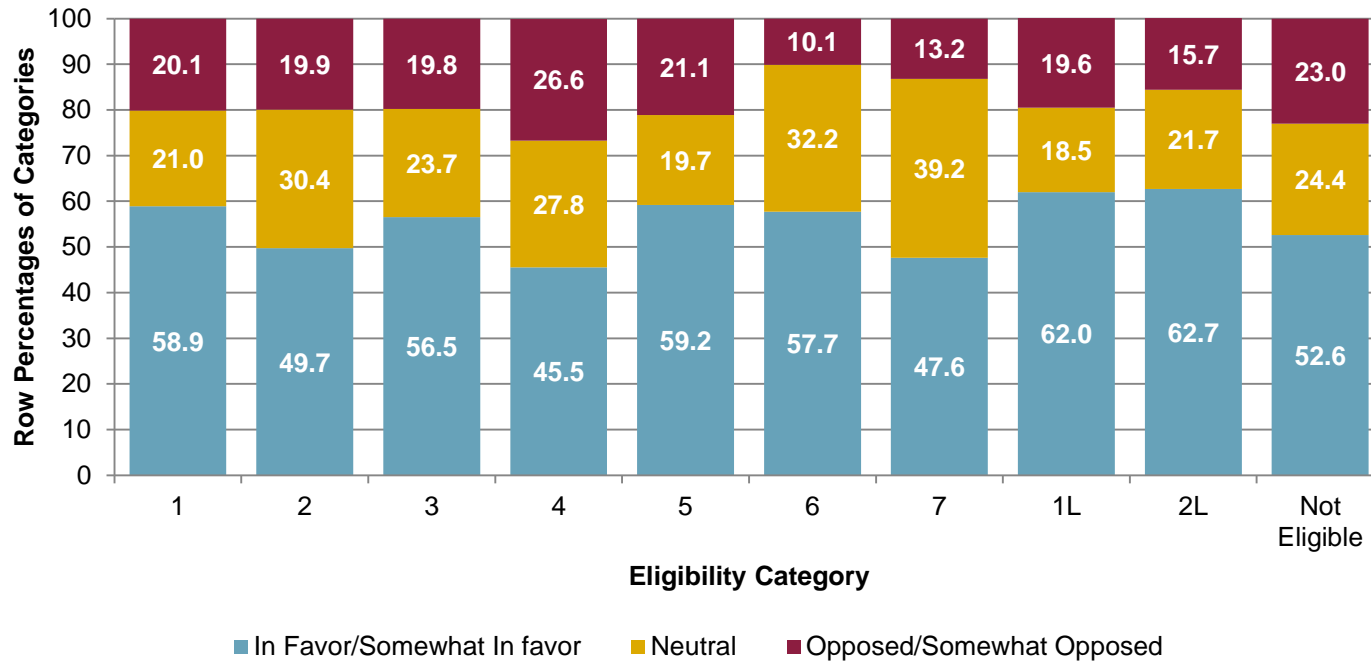
Group 1: Core Teacher Grades 3–10 w/EVAAS®  
 Group 2: Core Teacher PK–2  
 Group 3: Core Teacher Grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS®  
 Group 4: Elective/Ancillary Teacher  
 Group 5: Instructional Support Staff

Group 6: Teaching Assistant  
 Group 7: Operational Support Staff  
 Group 1L: Principal  
 Group 2L: Assistant Principal/Deans  
 Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.

## APPENDIX I

### CROSS TABULATION SUMMARIZING THE PERCENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATING FAVORABILITY TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF AN AWARD FOR EDUCATORS IN HARD-TO-STAFF BUILDINGS, JANUARY 2014



**Key:**

Group 1: Core Teacher Grades 3–10 w/EVAAS®  
 Group 2: Core Teacher PK–2  
 Group 3: Core Teacher Grades 3–12 w/o EVAAS®  
 Group 4: Elective/Ancillary Teacher  
 Group 5: Instructional Support Staff

Group 6: Teaching Assistant  
 Group 7: Operational Support Staff  
 Group 1L: Principal  
 Group 2L: Assistant Principal/Deans  
 Not Eligible

Note: Items that were skipped were coded as missing data and not included in the analysis.