**Section 25.444 Illinois Teaching Excellence Program**

The annual payments and incentives established under Section 21B-70 of the Code shall be subject to the requirements of this Section and shall be contingent upon the appropriation of sufficient funds (see subsection (a)). When permitted or required by the State Superintendent, documentation called for in this Section may be submitted via electronic means.

a) When the funding available in any fiscal year is inadequate to cover all the payments requested by "qualified educators", as defined in Section 21B-70(a) of the Code, payments shall be paid on a first-come, first-served basis, regardless of the type of payment being requested, but shall be subject to any limitations established for a particular payment type under Section 21B-70 of the Code. Therefore, although a qualified educator, as defined in Section 21B-70(a) of the Code, is someone who meets the requirements for a particular payment, not all qualifying educators in any given year will be assured of receiving the applicable payments.

b) A qualified educator shall qualify for a payment as called for in Section 21B-70(c)(1), (c)(2), (c)(3), or (d)(1) of the Code when that educator is employed by a school district or other public entity providing early childhood, elementary, or secondary education, including special education, as the individual originally assigned to a full-time position whose functions:

1) are specifically authorized by the grade levels and content-area endorsements on the PEL and include the provision of instruction to students;

2) are specifically authorized by a school support personnel endorsement for school counselor on a PEL and include the provision of counseling services to students; or

3) are specifically authorized by the grade levels and content-area endorsements on an ELS-CTE, ELS-CTEP, or ELS-PCTE and include the provision of instruction to students.

c) Qualification for Payments

1) A qualified educator shall qualify for one or more incentive payments under Section 21B-70(c)(5) of the Code for each year during which:

A) that educator is either:

i) employed by a school district or other public entity providing early childhood, elementary, or secondary education, including special education, in a full-time position whose functions meet the requirements of subsection (b), as verified by the employer using a format specified by the State Superintendent; or

ii) retired (i.e., drawing an annuity from either the Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois pursuant to Article 16 of the Illinois Pension Code [40 ILCS 5/Art. 16] or the Public School Teachers' Pension and Retirement Fund − Cities Over 500,000 Inhabitants pursuant to Article 17 of the Illinois Pension Code [40 ILCS 5/Art. 17]); and

B) the educator *agrees, in writing,* using a format prescribed by the State Superintendent of Education, *to provide up to 45 hours of mentoring or National Board for Professional Teaching Standards* (NBPTS) *professional development or both during the school year to classroom teachers or school counselors* as described in Section 21B-70(c)(5) of the Code. (Section 21B-70(c)(5) of the Code)

2) Funds may also be used to provide instructional leadership training for qualified educators interested in supporting implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards or teaching and learning priorities identified by the State Board. *Funds may also be used for professional development training provided by the National Board Resource Center* (see Section 21B-70(c) of the Code).

3) If adequate funds are available after distribution to all qualified educators, incentives under Section 21B-70(d) of the Code may be provided to National Board-certified teacher rural, remote, distant, diverse, or candidate cohort facilitators, to National Board-certified teacher rural, remote, distant, diverse, or candidate liaisons, or to hard-to-staff schools as retention bonuses, as defined by Section 21B-70(a) of the Code.

d) Requirements for Professional Development and Assistance to NBPTS Candidates

1) To verify eligibility for the applicable incentive payment, a qualified educator who provides professional development to new or experienced teachers or school counselors under subsection (c) shall submit to the State Superintendent a written log of the assistance provided, using a format specified by the State Superintendent, demonstrating that the educator addressed one or more of the standards set forth in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 24.130 (The Illinois Professional Teaching Standards) or 23 Ill Adm. Code 24. 140 (The Illinois Professional Educator Standards) as relevant to the classroom-based needs of the recipient teachers, or one or more of the standards set forth in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 23.110 (Standards for the School Counselor), as applicable. Each recipient of professional development shall be identified by name, shall be working in an Illinois public educational setting, and shall sign the log as verification of the dates and hours of service indicated.

2) To verify eligibility for the applicable incentive payment, a qualified educator who assists other Illinois educators in preparing for certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards under subsection (c) shall submit to the State Superintendent a written log of the assistance provided, using a format specified by the State Superintendent. This record shall identify the activities performed and verify that these activities addressed specific requirements candidates must meet for NBPTS certification.

e) Requirements for Mentoring or NBPTS Professional Development

1) Mentoring or professional development provided in accordance with subsection (c) shall be conducted either:

A) as part of and in conformance with a mentoring or professional development program formally established by a school district; or

B) under the terms of a written agreement among the mentor, the building administrator, mentor coordinator, or other responsible official of the school district employing one or more recipients, and those recipients, that describes the goals of the mentoring or professional development, the duration of the mentor's involvement, and the amount of time expected to be devoted to each recipient.

2) Mentoring or professional development may be provided to recipients either individually or in groups, provided that the mentor must address areas of practice relevant to the needs of each recipient.

3) An individual who provides mentoring or professional development under this Section shall notify the individuals employing district (if different from that of the recipients) to this effect and, to verify eligibility for the applicable incentive payment, shall submit to the State Superintendent a written log that:

A) meets the requirements of subsection (e)(1); and

B) discusses how the mentoring or professional development was related to the academic needs of the recipient teachers' students or the needs of the students served by the recipient counselors, as applicable.

f) Licensed teachers shall receive incentive payments only for providing mentoring and professional development to other teachers, and educator licensed school counselors shall receive incentive payments only for providing mentoring and professional development to other school counselors.

g) Instructional Leadership Training

In any fiscal year in which money remains after funding the categories in subsections (a) through (c), the State Superintendent shall announce no later than June 1 the amount of funding that will be devoted to training for qualified educators. The announcement shall indicate the:

1) specific purposes, from among those specified in Section 21B-70 of the Code of the training to be conducted;

2) amount of any stipend awarded for participating in the training;

3) limitations on the qualified educators who may participate (e.g., school demographics, including student characteristics and achievement levels; school district location); and

4) process a qualified educator would use to apply for a stipend under this subsection (g).

(Source: Amended at 48 Ill. Reg. 7729, effective May 9, 2024)