



OKLAHOMA STATE
DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

SB1256 – Teacher Empowerment Program

Background:

HB4388 was passed during Legislative Session in May 2022. Written by Representatives Hilbert and Baker of the House and Senator Pugh of the Senate, this bill created the Teacher Empowerment Revolving Fund to provide progression incentive bonuses to eligible teachers in Oklahoma. This was amended 3A O.S. 2021, Section 713, relating to the Oklahoma Education Lottery Act.

SB1256 was passed during the Legislative Session in May 2024. Written by Senator Pugh, this bill allows the Oklahoma State Department of Education to establish *advanced, lead, and master* teacher certificates and to establish minimum salary increases for the corresponding certificate levels. The bill removed the barrier that districts must match funds when designating high-quality teachers for the program. Teachers will receive a \$3,000 to \$10,000 pay increase depending on the designation level. Teachers employed at a school with economically disadvantaged students (40% or more), or at a district with enrollment below 1,000 students, will receive an additional one-time award of \$1,500 to \$5,000 depending on their designation.

The Teacher Empowerment Revolving Fund is supported and provided through the Oklahoma Lottery Commission. This is funded by all profit monies in excess of \$65 million, as the initial amount all goes directly to the Oklahoma Education Lottery Trust with specific allocations noted in the bill. As the 2024-2025 school year begins, approximately 45 million dollars is available for districts to designate highly qualified teachers.

The key components of this bill as follows; 1) the required creation of the teacher certifications, *advanced, lead, and master*, where districts shall outline the requirements needed for each level, 2) the establishment of the pay increases for each certification level, at \$3,000, \$5,000, and \$10,000, and 3) Districts are required to have an evaluation process for this program, with minimum requirements to include a teacher observation, out-of-classroom time, and a student performance component. No more than 10% of a district's teachers may be designated.



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Program Highlights:

- There are 3 teacher certification designations, *advanced, lead, and master*.
- Districts can nominate and approve up to 10% of their eligible teachers.
- The Teacher Empowerment Revolving Fund is provided through annual appropriations made by the legislature from the Oklahoma Lottery Commission, from profits in excess of the \$65M in base Oklahoma Education Lottery Trust.
- Teachers can earn \$3,000 to \$10,000 from their local district.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Who is eligible for this program?

A: Certified teachers employed in Oklahoma that meet their district requirements for a certification designation.

Q: How can a teacher apply?

A: Districts apply through the State GMS application system in the teacher single-sign-on (SSO) after designations have been built and approved by the district board.

Q: How frequently can teachers be nominated?

A: Teachers can be nominated once a year. Certificate designations expire on June 30, 2025.

Q: What are the individual certification designation levels?

A: The designation levels are advanced, lead, and master.

Q: What are the requirements for each designation level?

A: School districts have the responsibility to create the minimum requirements for each designation level, however, the Oklahoma State Department of Education will provide recommendations to provide consistency throughout the state.



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Q: How much of an annual salary incentive increase could a teacher earn under these designations?

A: Each teacher will be assessed individually; however, increases are set for each designation level. Advanced, lead, and master have amounts set at \$3,000, \$5,000, and \$10,000.

Q: Is there a maximum number of teachers per district that can participate in the program?

A: Yes. Each district can nominate and approve no more than 10% of their eligible teachers for the program.

Q: Will the designation need to be renewed annually?

A: Yes. The designation is valid for one school year.

Q: How will this incentive increase be paid out?

A: The incentive salary increase shall be paid as regular annual compensation through the school district, with all applicable taxes, etc. withheld.

Q: If a teacher with an active program designation transfers to another district, will they retain the certification in the new district?

A: The new district will make this determination.