

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RIN 1850-ZA02

National Awards Program for Model Professional Development**AGENCY:** Department of Education.**ACTION:** Notice of final eligibility and selection criteria.

SUMMARY: The Secretary announces eligibility and selection criteria to govern the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development for Fiscal Year 1998. Under these criteria, the National Awards Program will recognize a variety of schools (public and private) and school districts with model professional development activities in the pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade levels that have led to increases in student achievement.

EFFECTIVE DATE: These criteria take effect December 1, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sharon Horn, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Room 506e, Washington, DC 20208-5644. Telephone: 202-219-2203 or 202-219-2187. Inquiries also may be sent by e-mail to sharon_horn@ed.gov or by FAX at 202-219-2198. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternate format (e.g., Braille, large print, audioteape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed in the preceding paragraph.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Through this notice the Secretary announces definitions and criteria to govern applications for recognition submitted under the second National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program began in 1996, in coordination with a wide range of national education organizations, to highlight and recognize schools and school districts whose professional development activities are aligned with the statement of Mission and Principles of Professional Development that the Department developed in 1994. See Appendix A. This second National Awards Program, to be conducted during Fiscal Year (FY) 1998, will be implemented in ways similar to last year's program (see, for example, the Notice Inviting Applications for Awards published in the **Federal Register** on June 14, 1996 at 61 FR 30450) but with criteria designed to better inform

applicants of the kind of information that successful applicants will need to provide. Again this year, the Secretary intends to recognize successful applicants at a ceremony in Washington, DC, and present each successful applicant with an award of not less than \$5,000 that the recipient could use to expand, promote, or publicize its professional development activities.

The reasons for wanting to continue the National Awards Program are clear. Schools and school districts throughout the Nation are undertaking efforts to raise academic standards and to improve the academic achievement of all students. For these efforts to be successful they must include strategies for permitting teachers (and other school and local educational agency (LEA) staff) to obtain the skills and knowledge they need to enable all students to achieve. Indeed, whatever the school reform initiative, teachers are the core. However, teachers need access to new knowledge and skills to enable them to continue to teach to higher standards and to respond to the challenges facing education today.

Realizing that high-quality professional development must be at the core of any effort to achieve educational excellence, the Secretary in 1994 directed a broadly representative team within the U.S. Department of Education to examine the best available research and exemplary practices related to professional development and work with the field to develop a set of basic principles of high-quality professional development. Out of this national effort came the Department's Statement of Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This statement reflected both extensive collaboration with a wide range of education constituents and review of public comment received on a draft Statement of Mission and Principles of Professional Development published in the **Federal Register** on December 9, 1994 (59 FR 63773). The Department issued the final Statement of Mission and Principles (Appendix A) in 1995 after review of public comment and re-examination of the best available research on exemplary practices. This Statement—grounded in the practical wisdom of leading educators across the country—describes the kind of professional development that, if implemented, maintained, and supported, will have a positive and lasting effect on teaching and learning in America.

The Statement of Mission and Principles of Professional Development represents a framework for guiding

school and school district staff as they design and implement their professional development activities. Many of the same national education organizations that worked with the Department to develop the Mission and Principles of Professional Development sought the Department's help last year in identifying and recognizing those professional development efforts across the pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade spectrum that reflect the Mission and Principles. Given the efforts of schools and school districts throughout the Nation to pursue school reform initiatives, the Secretary agreed with these organizations about the urgent need to identify sites whose professional development activities can be models for other schools and districts that are working to enhance their own professional development activities.

Therefore, the Secretary last year announced the first National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. The public expressed great interest in the program, and the Department received over 100 applications. In February of this year, the Department recognized five schools and school districts in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Kansas, and California for the high quality of their professional development activities and the link between those activities and improved student learning. But the importance of high-quality professional development to successful strategies to increase student achievement demands that this awards program be continued and that more schools and school districts have the opportunity for national recognition. Therefore, the Secretary is pleased to announce definitions and criteria to govern the second National Awards Program.

On August 19, 1997, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement published a notice of proposed eligibility and selection criteria for this program in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 44194-98). In response to public comment, the final eligibility criteria invite applicants to identify and describe any important partnering with institutions of higher education and other entities that have contributed to the high quality of their professional development activities. Otherwise, except for minor editorial revisions made to enhance clarity, there are no differences between the eligibility and selection criteria proposed in that notice and the final eligibility and selection criteria announced in this notice.

Note: This notice does not solicit applications. A notice inviting applications

under this competition is published elsewhere in this edition of the **Federal Register**.

Summary of Comments and Changes

In response to the invitation in the notice of proposed eligibility and selection criteria, the Department received two comments.

Comment: One commenter noted that his State requires professional development to be aligned with State education standards, and requested that the "Supplementary Information" section of the notice state that successful applicants must demonstrate a link between their professional development activities and improved student achievement and teacher effectiveness "toward attaining State standards."

Discussion: The notice of proposed eligibility and selection criteria would have required applicants to demonstrate a link between their professional development activities and "high" standards. These high standards are the content and student performance standards that states and school districts have adopted or are adopting as key parts of their strategies to increase student achievement. Upon review of the commenter's suggestion, no change in the background discussion contained in the "Supplementary Information" section of the notice seems necessary. However, the language of Selection Criterion B, "Goals and Outcomes," has been clarified to require applicants to address "how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to State or local standards, or both." Moreover, while alignment with challenging State content and student performance standards is crucial to successful education reform, the language of the criterion is not limited to "State standards" so as not to penalize schools and districts with local standards that now are more rigorous than their States' standards.

Changes: Selection Criterion B, "Goals and Outcomes," has been changed accordingly.

Comment: One commenter noted the importance that institutions of higher education (IHEs) play in promoting high-quality professional development at the school and school district level, and urged that eligibility for the National Awards Program be extended to IHEs.

Discussion: Individual IHEs do play an increasingly important role in helping many schools and school districts improve the quality of their professional development activities. However, the Secretary has determined that eligibility for the program should

continue to be limited to schools and school districts—the places where K–12 teaching and learning actually occurs—both to maintain focus on the quality professional development within schools and school districts, and because of the difficulty of using common criteria to evaluate the relative merit of applications that otherwise would come from such very different kinds of institutions.

Changes: In view of the comment, the "Eligibility Criteria" section of this notice now specifically invites applicants to describe their partnerships with IHEs and other entities in their applications.

Comment: None.

Discussion: The discussion of "Proposed Selection Procedures" contained in the Notice of Proposed Eligibility and Selection Criteria failed to advise the public that, like last year, the Secretary expects to give recognition under this National Awards Program to no more than ten schools and school districts. In addition, the proposed notice stated that the Secretary anticipated the size of a recipient's monetary award to be between \$5,000 and \$10,000. While the Secretary still hopes that this is the case, this notice clarifies that the Department anticipates that each successful applicant will receive a monetary award of no less than \$5,000.

Changes: The "Selection Procedures" portion of this notice has been changed accordingly.

Eligibility Criteria

As with last year's program, eligible applicants are schools and school districts in the States (including schools located on Indian reservations, and in the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the outlying areas) serving students in the pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade range. While only schools and school districts may apply, the Secretary recognizes that the high quality of a school or district's professional development activities may be the result of its successful partnering with institutions of higher education and other entities such as public and private nonprofit organizations, businesses, and community organizations. The Secretary invites applicants to describe these partnerships in their National Award Program applications.

In addition, this year's program retains application selection criteria that are built on two key elements: (1) A demonstration that the professional development activities are fully aligned with the Mission and Principles of Professional Development, and (2) a demonstration of how, consistent with

the Mission and Principles, the professional development activities benefit all affected students and have led to improved student achievement and improved teacher effectiveness. As noted above, the Statement of Mission and Principles of Professional Development reflects broad agreement on what is "best practice." It was prepared in collaboration with a great many national educational associations and upon review of public comment. The Secretary believes that professional development activities can only be considered exemplary if they, in fact, are linked to increased student achievement.

Again this year, the format of applications remains fairly simple. However, the application material has been revised to better identify topics applicants will need to consider in order to demonstrate alignment with the Mission and Principles of Professional Development and a link to increased student achievement. In addition, to promote fairness among those seeking recognition under the National Awards Program, all applications must be prepared in accordance with formatting instructions included in the application packet.

Selection Criteria

Applicants are free to respond to these selection criteria in any way they choose as long as they comply with the formatting requirements set out in the application packet. The degree to which applicants demonstrate alignment with the Mission and Principles of Professional Development and a link to increased student achievement will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Guiding Principles

In evaluating applications for the National Awards Program, reviewers will look to see whether the application, taken as a whole, demonstrates that the school's or school district's professional development activities are comprehensive and lead to improved teacher effectiveness and increased student achievement. In doing so, reviewers will be guided by the extent to which and how well applicants respond to the following criteria, the most important of which would concern objective evidence of success. Each criterion includes one or more questions that are designed to help applicants formulate their responses. It is not necessary for applicants to answer each question individually. But, taken as a whole, the description of their professional development activities must address each criterion and provide enough information so that reviewers

can determine whether the school's or district's professional development is comprehensive and leads to improved teacher effectiveness and increased student achievement. In this regard, this description must provide evidence of improved student achievement and show how the improvement is linked to the professional development activities that have been implemented.

A. Background and Overview of Professional Development

In this section applicants must provide a brief explanation of why they consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing its key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

In responding to this criterion, applicants should consider the following questions:

1. What are the infrastructure, content, and process components of professional development in the school or district?
2. How does professional development in the school or district reflect the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development?
3. Why is professional development in the school or district exemplary?

B. Goals and Outcomes

In this section, applicants must describe their professional development goals, how they were developed, how they relate to school improvement, and how they are based on needs assessment and address the achievement of all students (regardless of gender; socio-economic level; disadvantaged status; racial, ethnic or cultural background; exceptional abilities or disabilities; or limited English proficiency). Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development. In doing so, they must include how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to State or local standards, or both.

In responding to this criterion, applicants should consider the following questions:

1. What are the broad goals of professional development in its school or district?

2. What are the goals for ALL students' achievement through professional development?

3. What are the ways that the professional development goals are connected to long-term school improvement plans?

4. What process was used to create the professional development goals and plan, and who was involved in the development?

5. What are the ways in which teachers' professional development needs are assessed and incorporated in the plan for professional development?

6. How do the professional development goals and outcomes focus on increasing teachers' expertise in teaching to high standards?

7. What changes in teaching and student learning result from participation in professional development in the school or district? What is the rationale for believing these changes would result in improved teaching and learning?

C. Professional Development Design and Implementation

Overall, the applicant's response to this section must show how the context, content, and processes of its professional development activities are consistent with the Department's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. The description must provide evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative policy and support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

The applicant must describe the data-based processes that are used for ensuring that professional development is connected to the school or district improvement plan and that the professional development design supports the attainment of expected changes in teaching practice and student learning. The description must include any formal and informal processes used to routinely collect information for monitoring how the school or district is progressing toward its goals; for assessing the links between the plan, professional development activities, and teacher and student outcomes; and for adjusting what isn't working.

Applicants already integrating technology into classroom instruction also must include a discussion of how professional development has

contributed to ensuring that technology is an effective teaching tool or, if applicable, how technology has been used to support effective professional development.

In responding to this criterion, applicants should consider the following questions:

1. How is professional development a part of what ALL teachers do? What role do administrators and other members of the school community play in professional development?

2. How do the applicant's professional development design and activities reflect research and best practice?

3. How does the applicant's professional development design and activities reflect comprehensive evaluation? What data are routinely collected to assess the alignment of program activities and outcomes? How are collected data used to refine professional development?

4. Why were the specific content, instructional strategies, and learning activities selected for professional development?

5. What are the processes for ensuring and documenting that the improvement plans, professional development activities, and teacher and student outcomes are in alignment?

6. What structures support the implementation of professional development at individual, collegial and organizational levels?

7. What resources and types of sustained support (financial and other) are available for professional development for individuals, groups, and the whole school or district? How are current resources obtained?

8. How does the applicant ensure that the school community understands how the professional development components fit together and connect to the overall school plan?

D. Objective Evidence of Success

This portion of the application is fundamental to the characterization of the applicant's professional development and is the *most important selection criterion* that reviewers will use. Applicants must demonstrate clearly that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed; the focus is objective evidence. In doing so, applicants are expected to make a compelling argument for how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students, emphasizing areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g.,

gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been closed.

In responding to this criterion, applicants should consider the following questions:

1. What evidence is there that demonstrate that professional development in the school or district has improved the effectiveness of all teachers?
2. What evidence is there that professional development in the school or district has improved student achievement across all grade levels and all subject areas?
3. What evidence is there that professional development in the school or district leads to a narrowing of existing achievement gaps between groups of students?

E. Implications for the Field

In this section of the application, applicants must describe the lessons learned as their professional development activities have matured.

In responding to this criterion, applicants should consider the following questions:

1. What knowledge and documentation (e.g., training materials, strategies, or processes) are available that can benefit others?
2. What lessons and practical advice about providing quality professional development has the applicant learned that other schools and districts could use?

Selection Procedures

The Secretary will evaluate applications using unweighted selection criteria. The Secretary believes that the use of unweighted criteria is most appropriate because they will allow the reviewers maximum flexibility to apply their professional judgments in identifying the particular strengths and weaknesses in individual applications. However, to receive recognition under the National Awards Program, reviewers will need to find that the applicant's professional development activities reflect model practices as evidenced by exemplary responses to *each* of the criteria identified under the "Selection Criteria" section of this notice. A key element in review of any application will be the extent to which the applicant demonstrates clear links between professional development activities and increases in student achievement. See Selection Criteria D, *Objective Evidence of Success*. In analyzing the response to Selection Criterion E, *Implications for the Field*, reviewers will not expect the same level of specificity from applications as will be expected in response to the other selection criteria.

In examining the response to Selection Criterion E, reviewers will be primarily interested in seeing that applicants have considered the lessons they have learned and can pass on to others.

After an initial screening, the Department will use outside panels of experts to evaluate the quality of the applications against these basic criteria. This stage in the process may include telephone interviews with project contacts to discuss and clarify information, and will lead to the selection of up to twenty semifinalists. The Department then will use outside experts to conduct site visits, which may involve the examination of documentation to confirm the effectiveness of the semifinalists' professional development activities, and the collection of additional supporting information from them. Based on the recommendations of the site reviewers (and possibly through a final panel of outside experts), the Secretary will select those schools or school districts that merit national recognition. Again this year, the Secretary intends to recognize up to ten schools and school districts with the very best professional development practices at a national ceremony in Washington, DC. Successful applicants also will receive other forms of recognition including a monetary award that the Department anticipates will be no less than \$5,000 per recipient. Recipients will be able to use these funds to support their professional development activities and make them known to others.

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Note: The official version of this document is the document published in the **Federal Register**.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 8001.

Dated: October 24, 1997.

Ricky T. Takai,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

Appendix A—Mission and Principles of Professional Development, U.S. Department of Education—Professional Development Team

July 5, 1995

Professional development plays an essential role in successful education reform. Professional development serves as the bridge between where prospective and experienced educators are now and where they will need to be to meet the new challenges of guiding *all* students in achieving to higher standards of learning and development.

High-quality professional development as envisioned here refers to rigorous and relevant content, strategies, and organizational supports that ensure the preparation and career-long development of teachers and others whose competence, expectations and actions influence the teaching and learning environment. Both pre- and in-service professional development require partnerships among schools, higher education institutions and other appropriate entities to promote inclusive learning communities of everyone who impacts students and their learning. Those within and outside schools need to work together to bring to bear the ideas, commitment and other resources that will be necessary to address important and complex educational issues in a variety of settings and for a diverse student body.

Equitable access for all educators to such professional development opportunities is imperative. Moreover, professional development works best when it is part of a systemwide effort to improve and integrate the recruitment, selection, preparation, initial licensing, induction, ongoing development and support, and advanced certification of educators.

High-quality professional development should incorporate *all* of the principles stated below. Adequately addressing each of these principles is necessary for a full realization of the potential of individuals, school communities and institutions to improve and excel.

The mission of professional development is to prepare and support educators to help all students achieve to high standards of learning and development.—Professional Development

- Focuses on teachers as central to student learning, yet includes all other members of the school community;

- Focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement;

- Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, and others in the school community;

- Reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership;

- Enables teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards;

- Promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools;

- Is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development;

- Requires substantial time and other resources;

- Is driven by a coherent long-term plan;

- Is evaluated ultimately on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning; and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

National Awards Program for Model Professional Development; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 1998

Purpose of the Program: To recognize a variety of schools and school districts with model professional development activities in the pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade levels that have led to increases in student achievement. The FY 1998 competition focuses on schools and school districts that meet

the eligibility and selection criteria for this program, as published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Eligible Applicants: Schools (public and private) and school districts in the States (including schools located on Indian reservations, and in the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the outlying areas).

Deadline for the Transmittal of Applications: January 15, 1998.

Applications Available: November 3, 1997.

Estimated Range of Awards: Not less than \$5,000.

Estimated Number of Awards: 10.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Eligibility and Selection Criteria: The eligibility and selection criteria and selection procedures in the notice of final eligibility and selection criteria for this program, as published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**, apply to this competition.

For Application Information Contact: To obtain a copy of the application or to obtain information on the program, call or write Sharon Horn, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW—Room 506e, Washington, DC 20208-5644. Telephone: 202-219-2203 or 202-219-2187. Inquiries also may be sent by e-mail to sharon_horn@ed.gov or by FAX at 202-219-2198. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

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Ricky T. Takai,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

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