



Noble Network: The Distinguished Teacher Pathway: Keeping Great Teachers in the Classroom

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Noble, founded as Noble Street Charter School in 1999, is a nonprofit organization that runs 17 charter public high schools and one middle school in the city of Chicago, serving more than 12,000 students from all Chicago neighborhoods. To retain talented teachers in Noble classrooms, [Distinguished Teacher](#) identifies, recognizes, and rewards a select group of Noble teachers who have exemplified success in five key areas: student growth, classroom culture, instructional rigor, inclusion and relevance, and extended impact. Distinguished Teacher benefits include recognition, \$10,000 compensation in addition to base salary, and the potential for expanded impact in the Noble Network.

News about Distinguished Teacher Pathway Awards

[14 Noble Educators Receive Elite “Distinguished Teacher” Recognition including Annual \\$10,000 Awards, December 17, 2020](#)

[20 Chicago Public School Educators Receive Elite “Distinguished Teacher” Recognition, May 30, 2019](#)

Teacher incentive pay is one component of an effective charter school/district human resource system that attracts and retains an effective teacher force. Characteristics of incentive pay programs vary across school districts (e.g., size, eligibility for, and duration of award; individual versus group incentives, single criterion or multiple criteria for eligibility).

Two research teams [Pham et al., 2019](#) and [See et al., 2020](#) reviewed recent studies about the effectiveness of teacher incentive compensation systems to identify the impact of specific elements of the systems on teacher retention. Both research team report mixed results - several studies reported improvements in retention, several reported inconsistent results, and others reported no effect on retention. These differences were related to study design, as well as to how incentive systems were organized and implemented. However, [research results](#) favor the conclusion that providing bonuses to effective teachers already teaching in high-poverty or low-

achieving schools can reduce teacher attrition and costs associated with attracting and recruiting new staff.

	Research findings – impact on retention	Noble Distinguished Teacher
Selection of eligible teachers	More effective if selection based on multiple criteria connected with organization’s philosophy and goals (Pham, 2019)	Multiple criteria clearly linked to network vision, goals, culture
Number available	Limited number of awards does not harm collegiality or elevate competition between teachers	No set number of awards
Size of financial award	Must be “substantial” (See et al., 2020) but further research needed to balance with cost-effectiveness (Pham, 2019)	Need more time to investigate impact on retention
Duration of stipend	Effective while incentive is available (See et al., 2020); more research needed about long-term impact (Pham, 2019)	Addition to base pay as long as classroom teacher to support longer-term retention
Non-financial incentives	School culture as well as financial rewards are important for retention (See et al., 2020)	Recognition, leadership, and professional learning

Incentive or merit pay programs have the potential to support retention if they are of sufficient size during the time that the award is available. An effective compensation/career pathway structure must be clearly connected to network/district priorities ([ERS Strategic Design of Teacher Compensation](#)).

