



# Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

To: Superintendents

From: Anna Shults, Chief Academic Officer

Date: September 12, 2025

Subject: Teacher Appreciation Grant Guidance for SY 2025-2026

Per IC 20-43-16, the Teacher Appreciation Grant (TAG) program is established to provide millions of dollars directly to schools and thousands of dollars to Indiana's educators to attract, reward, and retain teachers who *significantly impact student outcomes*. [House Enrolled Act \(HEA\) 1001-2025](#) outlines requirements which must be met in order to receive TAG dollars. This guidance document provides a comprehensive overview of those requirements for the 2025-2026 school year.

## LEA Eligibility

Each corporation and charter school must notify the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) via this [Jotform](#) if they intend to participate or opt-out. By opting-out, teachers at that corporation or charter school will not be eligible to receive this grant funding in recognition of their impact.

Per Indiana statute, to be eligible for a grant under the program, a school corporation or charter school must:

- identify no more than 20% of certified teachers as eligible grant recipients based on criteria provided by IDOE
  - This may include any eligible educators from the interlocal cooperative administering a special education program, a career and technical education program, or other cooperative. (Note: co-ops may apply separately and are encouraged to communicate with their partner districts on which entity is applying for their teachers.);
- determine the appropriate stipend tier for each identified educator
  - Tier 1: Recognition Stipend, Tier 2: Exemplary Stipend, or Tier 3: Exemplary Plus Stipend; *and*
- report how each certified teacher met the specified designation criteria within that tier.

IDOE will review all requests upon receipt and provide notification of approval prior to distributing grants.



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## Educator Eligibility

Per Indiana statute, a grant received by a school corporation or charter school may only be used to pay stipends to select teachers who:

- have instructed students in a school or district for at least one school year prior to the 2025-2026 school year;
- maintain employment at the same school or district at the time of the grant distribution;
- significantly impacted student outcomes using national, state, or local assessment measures; *and*
- are designated as meeting **all** stated eligibility requirements within their respective stipend tier (1-3).

## Distribution of Funds

IDOE will distribute all TAG awards by April 15, 2026, for any school corporation or charter school that submits a TAG Participation Jotform confirming their intent to apply.

Per statute, the school corporation or charter school must distribute all grants to teachers within 60 business days of receiving the funds from IDOE. Any portion of the grant not distributed as stipends to teachers by June 30, 2026, must be returned to IDOE.

## Stipend Criteria

Eligibility for each stipend tier is dependent on certified educators meeting the outlined criteria in the table on the following page. A school corporation or charter school may also choose to establish and include additional local criteria within each tier.

Schools may award stipends from a single tier, however, schools are encouraged to award stipends from multiple tiers.



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Stipend Tier	Required Criteria
<b>Tier 1: Recognition Stipend</b>	<p><b>Eligible educators must:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● significantly impact student outcomes using national, state, or local assessment measures; <b>and may include</b></li> <li>● Optional criteria defined by the school corporation or charter school (ie: teacher leadership responsibilities, committee involvement)</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 2: Exemplary Stipend</b>	<p><b>Eligible educators must:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● significantly impact student outcomes using national, state, or local assessment measures <b>and</b> meet <b>one</b> of the following:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. formally mentor or coach another teacher to improve student outcomes, or provide instructional leadership to improve student outcomes across multiple classrooms; <b>or</b></li> <li>2. serve in a high need or geographic shortage area.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Optional criteria defined by the school corporation or charter school (ie: teacher leadership responsibilities, committee involvement)</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 3: Exemplary Plus Stipend</b>	<p><b>Eligible educators must:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● significantly impact student outcomes using national, state, or local assessment measures</li> <li>● formally mentor or coach another teacher to improve student outcomes, or provide instructional leadership to improve student outcomes across multiple classrooms; <b>and</b></li> <li>● serve in a high need or geographic shortage area</li> <li>● Optional criteria defined by the school corporation or charter school (ie: teacher leadership responsibilities, committee involvement)</li> </ul>

## Stipend Amount

HEA 1001-2025 establishes the below grant amount for each stipend tier. If the total amount requested by Indiana schools exceeds the available appropriation, then the distribution for TAG stipends will be proportionately reduced.

- Tier 1: Recognition Stipend = \$3,500
- Tier 2: Exemplary Stipend = \$5,000
- Tier 3: Exemplary Plus Stipend = \$7,500

**These amounts do not impact base salaries year-over-year and should be thought of as a one-time stipend for qualifying educators. Further, IC 20-28-9-27 excludes TAG stipends from the funding floor calculation. A stipend to an individual teacher in a particular year is**



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**not subject to collective bargaining and is in addition to the minimum salary or increase in salary set under IC 20-28-9-1.5.**

IDOE will provide school corporations and charter schools with their allocation on October 31, 2025.

## Stipend Guidance

### **Student Outcomes** *(Required criteria for Tier 1, Tier 2, & Tier 3 stipends)*

#### ***What qualifies as a national, state, or local assessment?***

The list below is not exhaustive. School corporations should rely upon normed data from valid and reliable assessments and growth measures currently included in the local teacher evaluation process.

- **National assessments** - NAEP, AP, IB, and Cambridge assessments
- **State assessments** - IREAD, ILEARN, assessments purchased via Formative Grant funds
- **Local assessments** - Common formative assessments aligned to academic standards and approved curriculum

#### ***What constitutes “significantly impacting student outcomes”?***

While all educators are held to a standard of one year's growth in one year's time for every student, “significant impact” should be thought of as exceeding this expectation and can be further defined locally as appropriate for each subject area.

### **Formal Mentoring or Coaching** *(One of three options for Tier 2 and required criteria for Tier 3 stipends)*

Indiana schools have long prioritized developing and supporting new teachers. Many districts already have a mentoring program or a defined mentoring structure approved by their local school board. In that case, applying those formalized requirements to Tier 2 and Tier 3 stipend decisions is sufficient, assuming they were in place during the 2024-2025 school year and align with the spirit of the guidance provided below. If not, the below information should be used to shape a formal mentoring program where none currently exists and will allow for Tier 2 and Tier 3 stipends to be awarded in spring 2027.

#### ***What does it mean to formally mentor or coach another educator?***

When a teacher formally mentors another teacher, it means they're part of a structured,



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corporation-supported program designed to support the professional growth of teachers with a focus on coaching designed to improve student learning. This is a defined role with clear expectations, goals, and training while maintaining student-facing teaching responsibilities.

## *What does formal mentoring typically involve?*

- **Strategic Pairing:** Mentors are carefully matched with mentees based on experience, grade level, subject area, or professional goals.
- **Defined Objectives:** The mentorship is tied to specific goals, such as improving classroom management, instructional strategies, or curriculum planning.
- **Scheduled Meetings:** Regular check-ins are built into the calendar for the duration of the school year.
- **Training and Support:** Mentors receive guidance on how to coach, observe, and provide feedback effectively.
- **Documentation and Evaluation:** Progress is tracked and outcomes are measured to assess the impact of the mentorship.

## *What are the core responsibilities of a teacher mentor?*

Effective teacher mentoring requires an intentional focus in the following areas:

- **Instructional Practice**
  - Model effective teaching strategies and classroom techniques
  - Help mentees differentiate instruction for all learners
  - Support lesson planning, pacing, and curriculum alignment with state standards
- **Classroom Management**
  - Share strategies for creating a positive learning environment
  - Guide mentees in setting routines, norming procedures, managing behavior, and building student relationships
- **Assessment and Feedback**
  - Assist in designing formative and summative assessments
  - Teach how to use data to inform instruction
  - Provide feedback on student work and teaching performance
- **Professional Responsibilities**
  - Clarify corporation/school policies, procedures, and expectations

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- Support time management, organization, and documentation
- Encourage ethical and professional conduct
  
- **Communication and Collaboration**
  - Coach on effective communication with students, parents, and colleagues
  - Promote teamwork and participation in professional learning communities
  - Celebrate wins and help build resilience and self-efficacy
  
- **Reflective Practice**
  - Encourage self-assessment and goal setting
  - Facilitate reflective conversations about teaching successes and challenges

**High Need Subject** *(One of three options for Tier 2 and required criteria for Tier 3 stipends)*

*What is considered as a “high need” subject area?*

- Special Education, K-12
- English Learners, K-12
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
- Open positions for certified educators that remain unfilled for greater than 90 days - position posting documentation required to be on file affirming 90 days or more

**Geographic Shortage Area** *(One of three options for Tier 2 and required criteria for Tier 3 stipends)*

***How does a school demonstrate a geographic need?***

If a school corporation or charter school believes that they have a shortage area based on their geography, they must submit an explanation of how their geographic location is causing a shortage for the position.



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<b>TAG Timeline: Key Dates &amp; Actions</b>	
<b>September 12, 2025</b>	TAG Guidance and TAG Participation Jotform released to schools
<b>October 3, 2025</b>	Deadline for school corporations and charter schools to submit the TAG Participation <b>Jotform</b> to IDOE.
<b>October 31, 2025</b>	<p>IDOE will provide the specific dollar amount available to each school corporation and charter school that has not opted-out. The allocation amount will be based on enrollment and equal to a proportion share of all participating school corporations and charter schools. Each school corporation and charter school will be able to spend this full allocation as long as they submit their number of eligible teachers and attest to the teachers' eligibility.</p> <p>IDOE will share further detailed guidance on how to submit educator names, stipend amounts, and evidence the teacher meets the specified designation criteria within the identified tier.</p>
<b>Fall 2025</b>	IDOE will conduct virtual and in-person information sessions about TAG guidance statewide.
<b>January 30, 2026</b>	Deadline for school corporations and charter school submission of required information per teacher being awarded a TAG stipend to IDOE.
<b>April 15, 2026</b>	All TAG funds will be distributed to school corporations and charter schools by this date.
<b>+ 60 business days</b>	The school corporation or charter school must distribute stipends to identified teachers within 60 business days of receiving the funds from IDOE.
<b>June 30, 2026</b>	Deadline to return to IDOE any grant funds that have not been distributed as stipends to teachers

## Questions

Please contact [TAG@doe.in.gov](mailto:TAG@doe.in.gov) with any questions.