

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RIN 1850-ZA02

National Awards Program for High-Quality Professional Development**AGENCY:** Department of Education.**ACTION:** Notice of Proposed Eligibility and Selection Criteria.

SUMMARY: The Secretary proposes 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 would 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.

DATES: Comments must be received by the Department on or before September 18, 1997.

ADDRESSES: All comments concerning these proposed definitions and selection criteria should be addressed to Sharon Horn, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW—Room 506E, Washington, DC 20208 phone: 202-219-2203. Comments also may be sent by e-mail to sharon_horn@ed.gov or by FAX at (202) 219-2198.

Comments that concern information collection requirements must be sent to the Office of Management and Budget at the address listed in the Paperwork Reduction Act section of this notice. A copy of those comments may also be sent to the Department representative named in the **ADDRESSES** section.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sharon Horn, phone: (202) 219-2203. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Through this notice the Secretary proposes 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 would recognize successful applicants at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., 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 reexamination of the best available research on exemplary practices. This statement is grounded in the practical wisdom of leading educators across the country about 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 more schools and school districts have the opportunity for national recognition. Therefore, the Secretary is pleased to propose definitions and criteria to govern the second National Awards Program.

The Secretary will announce the final eligibility and selection criteria in a notice in the **Federal Register**. The final eligibility and selection criteria will be determined by responses to this notice and other considerations of the Department.

Note: This notice does not solicit applications. A notice inviting applications under this competition will be published in the **Federal Register** concurrent with or following publication of the notice of final eligibility and selection criteria.

Proposed Eligibility Criteria

As with last year's program, eligible applicants would be 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) that provide educational programs in the pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade levels.

The Secretary also proposes to retain 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 of 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 would remain fairly simple. However, the application material would be revised to better identify topics applicants would need to address 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 would need to be prepared in accordance with formatting instructions included in the application packet.

Proposed Selection Criteria

Applicants would be free to develop their applications in any way they choose as long as they comply with the 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 would 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 is comprehensive and leads to improved teacher effectiveness and increased student achievement. In doing so,

reviewers would 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 proposed criterion includes one or more questions that are designed to help applicants formulate their responses. It would not be necessary for applicants to answer each question individually. But, taken as a whole, the description of their professional development activities should respond to the topic of each criterion with enough information so that reviewers can determine whether the school or district's professional development is comprehensive and leads to improved teacher effectiveness and increased student achievement.

A. Background and Overview of Professional Development

In this section applicants would 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 Principles of Professional Development. This description would 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 applicant's school or district reflect the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Professional Development Principles?
3. Why does the applicant consider professional development in the school or district to be exemplary?

B. Goals and Outcomes

In this section, applicants would 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), not just a subgroup. Applicants also would address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development. In doing so, they would include how professional development goals and

outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

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

1. What are the applicant's broad goals of professional development in its school or district?
2. What are the applicant's goals for ALL students' achievement through professional development?
3. What are the ways that the professional development goals are connected to the school or district's long-term school improvement plans?
4. What process was used to create the professional development goals and plan, and who is 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 was 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 would 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 would provide evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., roles and policy) 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 would describe the data-based processes that are used for checking 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 would include any formal and informal processes used to routinely collect information for monitoring how the school or district is progressing toward their goals; for assessing the links

between the plan, professional development activities and teacher and student outcomes; and, for adjusting what isn't working.

Applicants with resources to procure and use technology in the classroom also would include a discussion of how the needs of teachers to more effectively use technology are met and how the impact on student achievement is addressed and assessed.

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

4. What are the processes for documenting and monitoring the alignment of the improvement plans, professional development activities, and teacher and student outcomes?

5. How do organizational structures support the implementation of professional development at individual, collegial and organizational levels?

6. 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?

7. How does the applicant's design of its overall professional development activities reflect comprehensive evaluation? What data are routinely collected to assess the alignment? How are collected data used to refine professional development?

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 would be fundamental to the characterization of the applicant's professional development, and would be the *most important selection criterion* that reviewers would use. Applicants would need to demonstrate clearly that teacher effectiveness and student achievement have increased as a direct result of the implemented professional development. Data that indicate this connection should be described. The focus here is on evidence. In doing so, applicants would 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 from data-gathering processes demonstrate that professional development in the school or district has improved all teachers' effectiveness?

2. What evidence is there that professional development in the school or district has improved students' 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 would describe the lessons learned as the applicant's professional development has matured. Applicants also would describe ways in which others would benefit from learning about their professional development activities, indicating what knowledge and practical advice (e.g., tools, strategies, or processes) the applicants would be able to offer.

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

1. What lessons about providing quality professional development has the applicant learned that other schools and districts could use?

Proposed Selection Procedures

The Secretary intends to 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 judgements in identifying the particular strengths and weaknesses in individual applications. However, to receive recognition under the National Awards Program, reviewers would 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 "PROPOSED 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 at 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. Reviewers, in examining the response to Selection Criterion E, will be primarily interested in seeing that applicants have considered the issues raised by that Criterion.

After an initial screening, the Department would 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 would use outside experts to conduct site visits, which may involve the collection of additional information, of these semifinalists, and through recommendations of the site-reviewers (and possibly through a final panel of outside experts) present final recommendations to the Secretary on which schools or school districts merit national recognition. The Secretary would select for recognition those applications of highest quality based on the results of the review process. Again this year the Secretary intends to recognize those schools and school districts with the very best professional development practices at a national ceremony in Washington, D.C. Successful applicants also would receive other forms of recognition including a monetary award that the Department anticipates would be in the range of \$5,000 to \$10,000 per recipient. Recipients would be able to use these funds to support their professional development activities and make them known to others.

Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995

This notice and the proposed application packet contains information collection requirements. As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3507(d)), the Department of Education has submitted a copy of this notice and the application packet to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for its review.

Collection of Information: National Awards Program.

Schools and school districts that operate programs for children in the pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade levels are eligible to apply for national recognition of the quality of their professional development activities. Information in the application would

include (1) a description of the applicant's professional development activities in terms of specific criteria designed to clarify the kinds of activities that would align with the Department's statement of the Mission and Principles of Professional Development, and (2) basic identifying and demographic information about the applicant school or school district. Applications also would be limited in page number and have to meet basic formatting requirements. The Department would use this information to select the highest-quality applicants through a review of responses to the criteria and site visits that can confirm the accuracy of information contained in the applications.

All information is to be collected once only from each applicant. Annual reporting and record keeping burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 30 hours for each response for 200 respondents, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. For the 20 applicants selected for site reviews, there will be an additional annual reporting and record keeping burden that is estimated to average 20 hours for each response. Thus, the total annual reporting and record keeping burden for this collection is estimated to be 6,400 hours.

Organizations and individuals desiring to submit comments on the information collection requirements should direct them to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, OMB, room 10235, New Executive Office Building, Washington, DC 20503; Attention: Desk Officer for U.S. Department of Education.

The Department considers comments by the public on this proposed collection of information in—

- Evaluating whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Department, including whether the information will have practical utility;
- Evaluating the accuracy of the Department's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;
- Enhancing the quality, usefulness, and clarity of the information to be collected; and
- Minimizing the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other

technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology; e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

OMB is required to make a decision concerning the collection of information contained in this notice of proposed eligibility and selection criteria between 30 and 60 days after publication of this document in the **Federal Register**.

Therefore, a comment to OMB is best assured of having its full effect if OMB receives it within 30 days of publication. This does not affect the deadline for the public to comment to the Department on the proposed notice.

Executive Order 12866

Potential Costs and Benefits

This notice of proposed eligibility and selection criteria has been reviewed in accordance with Executive Order 12866. Under the terms of the order the Secretary has assessed the potential costs and benefits of this regulatory action.

The potential costs associated with the notice of proposed eligibility and selection criteria are those resulting from statutory requirements and those determined by the Secretary as necessary for administering this program effectively and efficiently. Burdens specifically associated with information collection requirements are identified and explained elsewhere in this preamble under the heading Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. In assessing the potential costs and benefits—both quantitative and qualitative—of this notice of proposed eligibility and selection criteria, the Secretary has determined that the benefits of the proposed eligibility and selection criteria justify the costs.

The Secretary has also determined that this regulatory action does not unduly interfere with local governments in the exercise of their governmental functions.

Summary of Potential Costs and Benefits

The benefit from the proposed eligibility and selection criteria will be 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 potential costs of these proposed eligibility and selection criteria are discussed elsewhere in this notice under the section on the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

Invitation To Comment

Interested persons are invited to submit comments and recommendations regarding these proposed eligibility and selection criteria. All comments submitted in response to these proposed eligibility and selection criteria will be available for public inspection, during and after the comment period, in Room 506E, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

To assist the Department in complying with the specific requirements of Executive Order 12866 and its overall requirement of reducing regulatory burden, the Secretary invites comments on whether there may be further opportunities to reduce any regulatory burdens found in this notice.

Intergovernmental Review

This program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. The objective of the Executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism by relying on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

In accordance with the order, this document is intended to provide early notification of the Department's specific plans and actions for this program.

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

Dated: August 14, 1997.

Ramon Cortines,

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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