

COVID-19 Guidance Impact on Strategic Compensation

During a [special called meeting on April 9](#), the state board of education (SBE) passed a series of emergency rules to address disruptions caused by COVID-19. This guidance is designed to support local education agencies (LEAs) in designing any necessary revisions to 2019-20 strategic compensation plans.

Under the umbrella of strategic compensation there are **alternative salary schedules** and **differentiated pay plans**.

Differentiated pay plans – T.C.A. § 49-3-306 requires LEAs to adopt and implement differentiated pay plans to aid in staffing hard-to-staff subject areas and schools and attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers. Additionally, SBE Rule 0520-01-02-.02 requires LEAs to develop, adopt, and implement a differentiated pay plan under guidelines established by the SBE, which are subject to approval by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), to aid hard-to-staff subject areas and schools and in hiring and retaining effective teachers.

Alternative salary schedules – T.C.A. § 49-3-306 and SBE Rule 0520-01-02-.02 provide LEAs the flexibility to propose their own alternative salary schedule, such as not automatically recognizing advanced degrees at the Master's level or providing base pay increases based on performance data, to the commissioner of education and SBE for approval. SBE approved alternative salary schedule approvals are valid for three (3) years. Every three (3) years, LEAs must re-submit approval to the SBE to continue with the alternative salary schedule. If substantive changes are proposed during the three (3) year approval cycle, the LEA must contact the TDOE to determine whether SBE consideration and approval is necessary.

Guidance for Strategic Compensation Plan Revisions

Due to COVID – 19 school closures and the cancellation of state assessments, no teacher performance data will be issued by the TDOE for the 2019-20 school year. LEAs with a 2019-20 differentiated pay plan or alternative salary schedule requiring the use of 2019-20 teacher performance data must submit the [2019-20 Differentiated Pay Plan Revision form](#) for TDOE review **by 5 p.m. on May 22, 2020**. All LEAs will be contacted no later than June 15, 2020 with feedback and/or approval for the proposed revisions to the 2019-20 plan.

When designing revisions to the 2019-20 differentiated pay plan, LEAs should ensure the revisions meet the requirements of T.C.A. § 49-3-306 and SBE Rule 0520-01-02-.02 by including at least one component of the differentiated pay plan criteria which, in addition to performance, are:

- High needs subject areas and schools (hard to staff)
- Instructional roles and responsibilities

When designing revisions to the 2019-20 alternative salary schedule, LEAs should ensure the revisions meet the requirements of T.C.A. § 49-3-306 and SBE Rule 0520-01-02-.02 for determining base pay.

In both cases, LEAs should:

- Consult with their local school board attorney regarding the proposed revisions, and
- Check to guarantee no teacher is subject to a decrease in salary as a result of the proposed revisions.

Please contact Compensation.Questions@tn.gov for additional information on strategic compensation.