



OKLAHOMA STATE
DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

Teacher Signing Bonus 2024-2025 School Year

Background

In FY24, the State Board of Education approved 5,114 requests for emergency certification. The data highlights the teacher shortage plaguing Oklahoma public schools. To address this complex challenge, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) is developing an incentive to recruit new teachers to the profession.

Through this signing bonus program, teachers who sign a contract to **teach as secondary math or science teachers in a rural public school for the 2024-2025 school year** will be rewarded financially. **Eligible teachers are those who did not teach in an Oklahoma public school during the 2023-2024 school year.** Teachers will be eligible to receive signing bonuses between \$15,000 and \$25,000 based on these criteria:

- In-state certified secondary math or science teachers - \$15,000
- Out-of-state certified secondary math or science teachers - \$25,000

Eligibility

Eligible teachers are those who **did not teach** in an Oklahoma public school during the 2023-2024 school year. Eligible teachers must meet these criteria:

- Hold an alternative or standard certification in secondary math or secondary science.
- Hired to teach during the 2024-2025 school year with a rural Oklahoma Public School.

Eligible Secondary Science and Math Certifications

Math:

Advanced Mathematics (Grades 5-12)
Middle Level Mathematics (Grades 5-8)
Intermediate Mathematics (Grades 5-12)

Science:

Middle Level Science (Grades 5-8)
Biological Sciences (Grades 5-12)
Chemistry (Grades 5-12)
Earth Science (Grades 5-12)
Physics (Grades 5-12)
Physical Science (Grades 5-12)



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Rural Schools

A rural designation for the purposes of the signing bonus program, is based on the percentage of rural school sites within a district. The threshold to be considered “rural” is 75% or more school sites being designated as a rural locale. Districts considered town distant and town remote that have under 2000 students enrolled also meet the ‘rural’ threshold for the purposes of the 2024-2025 Teacher Signing Bonus Program. This data comes from census data that can be found on the following webpage: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>.

Application

Eligible teachers can find a link to the application through [OSDE Single SignOn](#).

Applications are due by September 1st. Bonuses will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

Additional Requirements for Recipients

Each recipient shall participate in once-a-month professional development from the OSDE and participate in surveys issued by the OSDE.

Recipients must not have a prior history of, or become the subject of, an investigation, arrest or conviction for a crime involving minors or students as a victim, or a felony, or a crime of more turpitude.

Payment

The OSDE will communicate directly with the Oklahoma public school district of the teacher, to verify their employment as a certified teacher with an Oklahoma public school. Each school district must provide the appropriate verification of the teacher’s employment and submit an invoice to OSDE. Upon completion of this action, OSDE will provide the school district with the funds for the payment (including the cost of payroll taxes), and the school district will provide the funds to the teacher. Bonuses are taxable.

Bonuses are not included in TRS deductions. Under OAC 715:10-13-1, stipends not given across the board to all employees are excluded from regular annual compensation. The one-time award would therefore be excluded from regular annual compensation and contributions would not be due.



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FAQ

Q. What if a teacher is not certified to teach secondary math or science?

A. Teachers will need to obtain certification for the 2024-2025 school year to be eligible to apply for the signing bonus.

Q. If a teacher moves from out of state, will their teaching certification be accepted?

A. If a teacher holds a full teaching credential issued by any state's Department of Education, you are [eligible for certification in Oklahoma's most equivalent subject areas](#).

Q. If a certified teacher worked as a substitute teacher or tutor in a public school during the 2024-2025 school year, are they eligible for the signing bonus if they are certified in secondary science or math?

A. Yes. The OSDE encourages certified substitute teachers or tutors to teach full-time in critical shortage areas.

Q. I'm interested in becoming alternatively certified? How can I do that?

A. Please see the information here - <https://sde.ok.gov/oklahoma-alternative-placement-program-teacher-certification>.

Q. How long will the program last?

A. This program is a one-time effort for the 2024-2025 school year.

Payment

Q. How does the signing bonus work?

A. After a teacher applies for a signing bonus, applications will be reviewed by the OSDE. Qualified applicants will be determined by order of application. The teacher and the employing district will receive notification from the OSDE with further instructions.

Q. Are the bonuses taxable?

A. Yes.

Q. Are the signing bonuses paid directly to teachers or to the districts to pass through to teachers in payroll procedures?

A. The bonuses will be paid directly to the districts to pass through to the teachers in the payroll procedures.



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Q. Are the bonuses included in Teacher Retirement System (TRS) deductions?

A. Under OAC 715:10-13-1, stipends not given across the board to all employees are excluded from regular annual compensation. The one-time award would therefore be excluded from regular annual compensation and contributions would not be due.

Q. Are districts required to collect a portion of the bonus payment from any teacher who does not complete the 1-year commitment?

A. No, districts will not be responsible for collecting funds or paying for the collection of funds from any participants. Districts will not be required to pay back any portion of the signing bonus.

For questions regarding the Teacher Signing Bonus Program, please contact
SignOnBonus@sde.ok.gov