

Making The Grade— And Money

• **A HUNDRED BUCKS** for passing a test? Educators have begun partnering with programs that offer gifts to motivate students—often from inner-city communities—to excel in school. Some Massachusetts teens receive money for high scores on AP exams. A charter high school in Cincinnati, using private donations, will reward youths who get to class on time and behave well. Not bad for day’s schoolwork—or is it? JET’s guest experts weigh in.

—by *Aisha I. Jefferson*



PRO

DR. TYRONE HOWARD

Director

BLACK MALE INSTITUTE AT UCLA



“We have to take a long look at pay for performance because our young people are disengaging from schools. Dropout rates are high in our communities. We have to find a hook to get the kids

back involved. I agree with those who say they should be doing these things already, but the truth is, they aren’t. We live in a “what is” world, not a “what should be” world. Young people are telling us every day, ‘we aren’t going to school because there is nothing there for me.’ Pay incentives can work if they’re done in a thoughtful way that helps students understand that there won’t always be an immediate payoff for what they do.”

CON

DR. GARRETT A. DUNCAN

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“Pay for performance as motivation for students is fundamentally misguided because it suggests that these children are externally motivated, have no internal drive and that the only way they can be compelled to work is by providing outside incentives. It also taps into stereotypes of low-income students and students of color needing additional pressures to be educated, as opposed to the generally accepted belief that the typical suburban kid— who’s often White—is internally motivated to learn. If the same money was redirected toward enriching curriculum, there would be no need for these added incentives.”