Cityscape Schools' Teacher Incentive Allotment Handbook

(*includes Spending Plan*)

2025-2026

Updated July 2025

Many thanks to the Cityscape Schools' **TIA Steering Committee**, who dedicated many hours to the program's development and design on behalf of the district's teachers and students:

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Introduction

On June 2019, the 86th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 3 (HB3), which was signed into law by Governor Abbott, establishing the optional Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) program. TIA is a Texas Education Agency program, "dedicated to recruiting, supporting, and retaining highly effective teachers in all schools, with particular emphasis on high-needs and rural schools" (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

Why TIA? Because of its positive impact on both *recruitment* and *retention* of **high-performing** teachers. Two goals of the TIA are to provide incentive pay to highly effective teachers and to attract and retain effective teachers especially in rural and high-poverty level schools.

Districts and charter schools that *choose* to participate are required to develop a local teacher designation system that is designed to measure teacher's effectiveness on student academic performance. This system is designed to differentiate compensation to pay higher salaries to the strongest teachers, based on their performance on specific measured components.

Districts can receive additional funding of $3000 - $32,000 – per teacher, per school year – for every designated teacher they employ. Districts must spend at least 90 percent of TIA funds on teacher compensation.

District Rationale

Cityscape Schools is an open-enrollment, public charter school district that operates two campuses in Dallas, Texas: East Grand Preparatory and Buckner Preparatory (Pre-kindergarten 3 through 8th grade). Cityscape is a Title 1 (schoolwide) district, whose initial charter was granted in December 2007. For several years, Cityscape stakeholders had many discussions about a teacher recognition program that would assist the district both in retaining high-performing teachers as well as attracting new teachers consider a smaller charter school district when determining where to teach in the Dallas – Fort Worth Metroplex. From these early discussions, the district implemented an active teacher retention plan, a teaching mentoring program, and a formal teacher recruitment program. Despite these enhancements, Cityscape stakeholders continued to develop the recruitment plan, as they believed providing a monetary stipend tied directly to teacher performance and student growth would be of great benefit to students.

In the fall of 2019, superintendent Leonard Brannon formed an exploratory committee to study a new program from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) titled, the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA). This program would assist districts in teacher recruitment, teacher retention, and rewarding high-performing teachers with additional compensation. The exploratory committee's recommendation was to move forward in the application process with the TIA, as it would be a valuable tool to assist the district in recruiting, retaining, and rewarding highly effective and qualified teachers.

After the exploratory committee's approval to proceed, Mr. Brannon invited the members of the committee to present their findings to the district's board of directors in January 2020. The board unanimously approved the district to develop an official teacher incentive program and make application with TEA at the appropriate time. A steering committee of 15 district and campus administrators, teachers, and community members was formed to develop the program, and agreed that the plan would be comprised of the following measurements with their respective weighting: Student Growth (NWEA MAP) at 50 percent and Teacher Observation (T-TESS) at 50 percent.

For the first year (Cohort C), the program included all certified teachers who teach ELAR and/or Math in grades Kindergarten through the 8th grade. The steering committee determined that since the district has used the MAP assessment system for several years, its continued utilization would allow more teachers to be included in the first cohort. At that time, future plans included making application with TEA so that Pre-kindergarten, SPED, Science and History teachers could be included in the program by the 2021-2022 academic school year.

In the summer of 2020, the district was accepted into the TIA program (Cohort C) and began collecting data to be analyzed in the summer of 2021. For the subsequent academic school year (2021-2022), the steering committee determined to make application for a second year (Cohort D) so that pre-kindergarten teachers could be included in the TIA program. Every aspect of the new cohort was identical to the first with the exception of the student growth measurement. For several years, the district had utilized the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System (Pre-K) when measuring student growth for our pre-kindergarten students and classes. Therefore, for the new cohort (pre-kindergarten teachers), the plan was comprised of Student Growth (the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System) at 50 percent and Teacher Observation (T-TESS) at 50 percent. At the time of Cohort D application, there were seven pre-kindergarten teachers employed at Cityscape Schools.

The Cohort D application was successful, and the district began collecting data to be analyzed in the summer of 2022 for all ELAR and Math teachers in grades Pre-K through

8. The district determined that eight teachers earned student growth and teacher observation percentages high enough to earn pending designation status.

During the 2021-2022 academic school year, district officials completed two separate TIA Expansion and Modification applications to 1) include Science teachers to the district plan for the 2022-2023 school year, and 2) amend the spending plan. Both applications were successful and the district's TIA program grew in both quality and quantity.

Finally, for the 2021-2022 academic school year, two teachers were awarded designations by the state (one Recognized and one Exemplary). During the subsequent school year (2022-2023), the number of designated teachers rose to six (four Recognized and two Exemplary) with three additional designated teachers (all Recognized) coming to teach for Cityscape Schools after earning their designations from other school districts. This made a total of nine designated teachers for the 2022-2023 academic school year. For the 2023-2024 school year, the district had 14 TIA designees, including 3 master designees. Last year (2024-2025), the district had 17 total designees with 2 recognized, 11 exemplary, and 4 master instructors. For the coming year, the district will submit four new instructors as "pending designees," which if accepted, would bring our total to 21 instructors as TIA designees (40.3 percent of all district faculty).

In the spring of 2025, Cityscape Schools submitted a renewal application to TIA to be recognized for the next five years as a TIA district. As part of the application, the district made application to expand/modify the district's current plan to include Social Studies teachers utilizing the Exploros student growth measurement system.

Cityscape's TIA Plan

The law (HB3) requires a TIA program to contain at least one valid and reliable teacher observation system (e.g., T-TESS), and at least one valid and reliable measurement of student growth for each identified teacher (e.g., MAP/CIRCLE data). The application guidelines require schools to have ongoing communication and "stakeholder engagement" in the development of their local teacher designation programs.

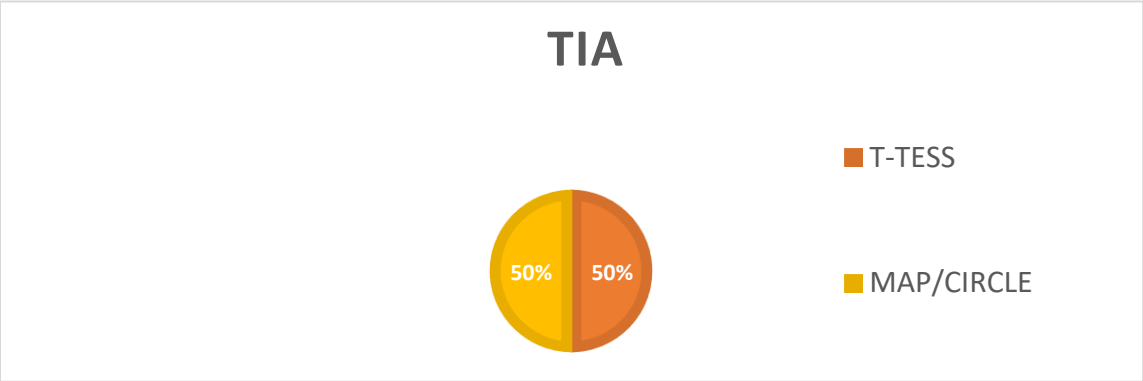
The TIA requires schools to identify qualifying teachers in the following three designations:

RECOGNIZED **EXEMPLARY** **MASTER**

Who will qualify for Cityscape's TIA program?

- Both certified and uncertified teachers are eligible
- Year 1 (Cohort C): teachers in grades K through 8 (ELAR & Math)
- Year 2 (Cohort D): Pre-kindergarten teachers added
- Year 3 (Cohort D): Science teachers added

Weighting Components for Cityscape's TIA program



<u>T-TESS Performance Levels</u> (weighted at 50 percent)

What is T-TESS?

T-TESS is the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System. It is a teacher appraisal system for the state of Texas designed to support teachers in their professional development and help them grow and improve as educators. It became the state recommended system starting with the 2016-2017 school year. Cityscape Schools adopted it as their teacher appraisal system in 2019.

What are the components of T-TESS evaluation and on what are teachers rated?

T-TESS has 2 components: 1) 4 domain/16-dimension rubric and 2) student growth.

T-TESS 4 Domains/16 Dimensions

- Planning
- **Instruction (5 dimensions: Achieving Expectations; Content Knowledge & Expertise; Communication; Differentiation; and Monitor & Adjust)***

- **Learning environment (3 dimensions: Classroom Environment, Routines, & Procedures; Managing Student Behavior; and Classroom Culture)***
- Professional practices & responsibilities

**Only these 8 dimensions will count toward a teacher's TIA designation*

T-TESS 5 Ratings

DISTINGUISHED	ACCOMPLISHED	PROFICIENT	DEVELOPING	IMPROVEMENT NEEDED
(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

What does a teacher have to score on T-TESS to qualify for a TIA distinction?

Teacher Observation Minimum Average Ratings

Designation Level	Minimum Average Score Across Domain 2 and 3	Minimum Rating Required for each Dimension in Domain 2 and 3
Recognized	**3.7** (74% of possible points)	At least 3 (proficient) on all dimensions
Exemplary	**3.9** (78% of possible points)	At least 3 (proficient) on all dimensions
Master	**4.5** (90% of possible points)	At least 3 (proficient) on all dimensions

<u>Student Growth Performance Standards</u> (weighted at 50 percent)

To ensure valid and reliable student growth measures have been adopted for our TIA program, Cityscape utilizes NWEA's nationally normed MAP assessments to measure student growth **for teachers K-8 teaching ELAR, Science, and Mathematics**. Presently, Cityscape utilizes the MAP assessments three times during the school year (beginning, middle, and end) for students in grades Kindergarten through 8. NWEA's test and re-test studies, which evaluate scores from the same students after several months, produce reliability indices that are considered statistically significant. Further, the literature is replete with numerous peer-reviewed journal articles demonstrating strong evidence of

reliability and validity in NWEA's portfolio of MAP assessments and NWEA operates the largest repository of student growth data in the country (Cronin, 2007).

For our pre-kindergarten program, Cityscape uses the nationally normed CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System for our standards aligned pre/post-test. The CIRCLE assessment is on the 2017-2021 Texas Commissioner's list of approved pre-kindergarten progress monitoring instruments, targets specific skills based on assessment results, includes a wide range of reporting features that are instantly accessible for teachers and administrators, and has demonstrated high reliability and validity in multiple research studies. The CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System is a standardized, criterion-referenced measure that relates well to established standardized tests. The data used to support the reliability and validity of the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System came from numerous research studies conducted by the Children's Learning Institute over a five-year span (Children's Learning Institute, 2021). These research studies were primarily conducted in preschools and child-care centers in Texas, Maryland, Ohio, and Florida. The data gathered from these assessments enable Cityscape Schools to utilize necessary resources/assistance to meet academic goals with respect to student growth in our pre-kindergarten program. Ultimately, the stakeholder team, led by superintendent Leonard Brannon, approves the utilization of the CIRCLE assessment system.

What percentage of student growth does a teacher have to attain in order to qualify for a TIA distinction?

The percentages below are the statewide performance standards for student growth in each of the three teacher designation levels, ***regardless of the student growth measure used***.

Recognized Teacher	**Exemplary** Teacher	**Master** Teacher
55% of students meet or exceed expected growth	**60%** of students meet or exceed expected growth	**70%** of students meet or exceed expected growth

The district has adopted TEA's performance standards for student growth objectives, which ensure that teachers meet the statewide performance standards for their impact on student academic growth. 55% of students must meet or exceed student growth targets for a teacher to be designated as Recognized; 60% of students must meet or exceed student growth targets to be Exemplary; and 70% must meet or exceed student growth targets to be a Master teacher (Texas Education Agency, 2020). Thus, Cityscape's calculation for the teacher's student growth metric matches exactly to TEA's recommendation: the number of students who meet or exceed growth expectations divided by the total number of students with an expected growth score.

Prerequisite to Qualify for Cityscape's TIA Program

Teacher Attendance

There are numerous studies on the negative effects of teacher absenteeism, including a 2014 study by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), that reveal poor teacher attendance can be a significant challenge for a school district. Many studies have pointed to a significant correlation between poor teacher attendance and low student achievement, even when teachers miss as few as 10 days a year.

Therefore, Cityscape's TIA steering committee discussed placing teacher attendance as a third weighted measure in the district's TIA formula for earning a distinction. Arguments were made on both sides of the issue, until it was determined that placing teacher attendance as a weighted measure along with the T-TESS and MAP/CIRCLE scores would skew the student growth data we were attempting to determine. Nonetheless, many committee members were adamant that they wanted teacher attendance included in the district TIA plan as a best practice to deter and reduce absences among the instructional staff. All agreed on the subject's importance in creating a school climate where attendance is valued by students and teachers, alike.

The committee discussed various strategies to promote teacher attendance, such as paying teachers for unused leave, rewarding them with extra time off, restricting leave on specific dates and, as preciously mentioned, considering attendance as a metric in teacher evaluation programs. The committee agreed that investing in a system that keeps effective teachers in the classroom should be a priority for the district. A key part of that effort is creating a school climate in which consistent teacher attendance is the norm.

Therefore, the decision was made to use teacher attendance as a prerequisite to qualify for a TIA distinction. If a teacher misses more than the allotment outlined below, they will not qualify for a TIA distinction, no matter their T-TESS and MAP/CIRCLE student growth scores.

The attendance standards listed below represent the district requirements for a Cityscape teacher to earn one of the three teacher designation levels:

Recognized Teacher	**Exemplary** Teacher	**Master** Teacher
No more than 8 absences*	No more than 5 absences*	No more than 3 absences*

**These absences do not include legally protected days (e.g., FMLA, bereavement days).*

Spending Plan

During the district's TIA steering committee meetings, input was gathered on the development of the TIA spending plan. The steering committee is comprised of the superintendent, district chief officers, principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and teachers, who all played an important role in decision-making processes.

While each district makes its own determination on how to distribute TIA funds to teachers, Texas Education Code 48.112 specifies "at least 90 percent of each allotment be used for compensation of teachers employed at the campus at which the teacher for whom the district received the allotment is employed." The remaining 10 percent may be used by the district for "costs associated with implementing (TIA), including efforts to support teachers in obtaining designations." Districts will make individual decisions regarding how the TIA funds will be distributed between the teacher earning the designation and the other teachers assigned to his or her campus.

Below is a chart used by TEA in early communication on TIA to show the different levels of potential compensation, depending on rural and Title 1 status:

TEA Texas Education Agency

Teacher Incentive Allotment Funding

More Need

Designation	Base	Multiplier	Tier	Non Eco-Dis	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
			Student Point Value	X 0	X 0.5	X 1.0	X 2.0	X 3.0	X 4.0
Recognized	$3,000	$1,500	Non-rural	$ 3,000	$ 3,750	$ 4,500	$ 6,000	$ 7,500	$ 9,000
			Rural	$ 4,500	$ 6,000	$ 7,500	$ 9,000	$ 9,000	$ 9,000
Exemplary	$6,000	$3,000	Non-rural	$ 6,000	$ 7,500	$ 9,000	$ 12,000	$ 15,000	$ 18,000
			Rural	$ 9,000	$ 12,000	$ 15,000	$ 18,000	$ 18,000	$ 18,000
Master	$12,000	$5,000	Non-rural	$ 12,000	$ 14,500	$ 17,000	$ 22,000	$ 27,000	$ 32,000
			Rural	$ 17,000	$ 22,000	$ 27,000	$ 32,000	$ 32,000	$ 32,000

Max funding amount = $32,000

More Funding

Texas Education Agency, 2020

Cityscape's TIA steering committee determined that 90 percent should be provided directly to the teacher of record, who will earn their TIA distinction through a rigorous formula of excellence in the classroom combined with excellence in student achievement. Therefore, Cityscape Schools will provide 90 percent of the TIA funds directly to the teacher who earned a TIA designation and reserve the remaining 10 percent of the funds to support the TIA initiative at the district level. As the law dictates, district TIA funds will only be used for costs associated with implementing the TIA, including efforts to support teachers in obtaining designations. The steering committee wanted to utilize the entire 10 percent to financially support appropriate training, professional development, measurement tools, and all other necessary components to assist teachers in reaching a TIA level of distinction.

For a designee's first year, the district will provide TIA compensation to teachers through a lump sum payment (as a separate check/EFT from the district) no later than August 31 of that year. For subsequent years, the funding will be included in designee's bi-monthly paychecks for each year that a teacher generates funding for a TIA designation.

- If a designated teacher leaves the district prior to Winter Roster Verification (generally in February of each school year) then the designated teacher will not receive any TIA funds because no TIA funds will be generated to the district from the state.
- If a designated teacher moves campuses within the district during the school year, then the district will provide the funding to the designated teacher based on the campus in which the designated teacher worked during Winter snapshot (generally in February).
- If a designated teacher moves to the district prior to Winter Roster Verification, then the designated teacher will receive the allotment of funds generated by the state at the campus where the teacher is teaching during Winter Roster Verification. The spending plan will be the same for newly hired designated teachers.

TIA regulations state that districts are not required to forward funds if the teacher resigns or retires after the Winter Roster PEIMS submission but before August 31. The superintendent reserves the discretion to determine the outcome on a case-by-case basis. If the decision is made to not forward the funds to a designated teacher who leaves the district before August 31, the funds will be allocated to other staff at the designated teacher's campus before the August 31 deadline. It is important to note that

if the designated teacher retires ***before*** Winter Roster submission, then no TIA funds will be provided to the teacher.

Please note that Cityscape Schools cannot recommend a teacher to the state for a TIA designation if they do not remain in an eligible teaching position the year following the data capture year. For example, if a teacher is designated as a result of data collected in the 2021-22 school year, but the teacher moves into an Assistant Principal position in the 2022-23 school year, the state will not approve the TIA designation.

Distribution of Allotment Funds for Cityscape Schools		
Allotment Going to Designated Teachers	Allotment going to other teachers on the campus	Allotment going to District (Max 10%)
90%	*0%*	*10%*

How Will Allotment Funds Work in Conjunction with the Current District Salary Schedule?

According to TIA policy, while designations are tied to the teacher and not their employing district or campus, allotment funds are awarded to the district where the teacher was employed in late February (Winter PEIMS submission). The district employing the teacher in February will receive funds for that school year and must spend the allotment funds by August 31. The percentage of allotment awarded to the designated teacher varies by district. As previously stated, ***Districts are not required to forward funds if the teacher resigns or retires before August 31.*** If a designated teacher moves to a new district or campus between school years, the allotment for the next school year will be recalculated in April based on the new campus's rural status and level of socioeconomic need.

The district has a board approved compensation plan that provides approval for the TIA payments. The school board will approve the expenditure of TIA funds as part of the annual budgeting process. The district may propose a budget amendment to the school board in April or May of each year after the final allotment is determined for the district by the state.

The allotment funds will not replace the current district salary schedule. TIA payouts are in addition to the district's salary schedule.

For Cohort C, TEA notified districts in April 2022 for those teachers who earned designation. 90 percent of the allotment was used for teacher compensation (directly to the teacher of record) and funds were expended to designated teachers through a one-time lump sum payment. Designee's first payment was paid before August 31, 2022.

For Cohort D, TEA notified districts on or near April 2023 for those teachers who earned a designation. Again, 90 percent of the allotment was used for teacher compensation (directly to the teacher of record) and funds were expended to designated teachers through a one-time lump sum payment. Designee's first payment was paid before August 31, 2023.

For the most recent academic school year (2024-2025), Cityscape Schools ensured that all TIA funds are expended by the required date of August 31, 2024.

What were Cityscape's TIA Allotments for the previous Academic School Years?

The funding available from the Teacher Incentive Allotment varies by designation. The exact amount of funding per teacher is determined by a formula that takes into account the level of socioeconomic need at a campus and whether the campus is rural.

TIA funding goes to the campus where the teacher works and not directly to the teacher. However, districts must spend at least 90 percent of their allotment funds on teacher compensation on the campuses where the designated teacher works. Districts can set aside the remaining 10 percent for costs associated with implementing TIA.

2021-2022 School Year

	RECOGNIZED	EXEMPLARY	MASTER
Buckner Prep		13,764.00	
East Grand Prep	6,853.00		

2022-2023 School Year

	RECOGNIZED	EXEMPLARY	MASTER
Buckner Prep		27,830.00	
East Grand Prep	48,153.00		

2023-2024 School Year

	RECOGNIZED	EXEMPLARY	MASTER
Buckner Prep		42,027.00	
East Grand Prep	27,380.00	54,760.00	74,451.00

2024-2025 School Year

	RECOGNIZED	EXEMPLARY	MASTER
Buckner Prep		42,510.00	
East Grand Prep	13,982.00	111,856.00	101,216.00

Cityscape Schools' spending plan has been approved by the governing board, as required in TRS Rules, Subchapter B, Compensation, Rule 25.24, Performance Pay. Cityscape Schools will also complete the necessary RP20 on the regular payroll report, as and when appropriate. The district will also certify that the payments meet the criteria classified as performance pay in the RE Portal, as required by TRS. Prior to September of each academic school year, Cityscape Schools will communicate to TRS prior to reporting it on the regular payroll report, as directed by TRS.

The district will request that teachers currently employed with the district notify the HR Director upon completion of National Board Certification. For new hires, this will be a question asked during the intake process. The teacher will be required to show proof of active status with the NBPTS' National Board Certification.

This spending plan is reviewed during professional development activities each August where the district's overall TIA plan is communicated to all returning faculty and administrators.

Resources

To learn more about Teacher Incentive Allotment, see the Texas Education Agency Resources (https://tea.texas.gov/texas-educators/educator-initiatives-and-performance/educator-initiatives/teacher-incentive-allotment)

Teacher Incentive Allotment FAQ's (https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/tia_faq.pdf)

Video Explanation of Teacher Designations (https://youtu.be/Q1no6VQ6a2A?t=376)

Two Paths to Earning a Designation (https://youtu.be/Q1no6VQ6a2A?t=670)

T-TESS Evaluation Rubric (https://www.teachfortexas.org/Resource_Files/Guides/T-TESS_Rubric.pdf)

TIA Quiz Cityscape Staff

1. The initials T.I.A. stand for:

    a. Texas Innovation Agency
    b. Teacher Incentive Allotment
    c. Teaching Initiative Allowance
    d. Texas Instructors Allocation

2. The teacher observation system the district utilizes (for both Cohorts C and D) to evaluate instruction is T-TESS.

    a. True
    b. False

3. For grades Kindergarten through 8, the assessment tool the district's TIA plan utilizes to measure student growth is:

    a. Achieve3000
    b. Fast ForWord
    c. Istation
    d. MAP (Measures of Academic Progress)

4. The district's TIA plan weighs the teacher observation score evenly with the student growth measure at 50/50.

    a. True
    b. False

5. Teachers comprise _____ of Cityscape's current TIA steering committee.

    a. 10 percent
    b. 25 percent
    c. 46 percent
    d. 100 percent

6. Teacher attendance will be used as a prerequisite to qualify for a TIA distinction.

    a. True
    b. False

7. Which of the following is NOT a TIA designation as recognized by the state of Texas?

    a. Distinguished
    b. Exemplary
    c. Master
    d. Recognized

8. Only certified teachers can qualify for a TIA designation.

    a. True
    b. False

9. To obtain the first level of a TIA designation, a Cityscape teacher cannot miss more than eight days during the school year. These days do not include legally protected days (e.g., FMLA, bereavement). In order to obtain the second level of designation, a Cityscape teacher cannot miss more than five days. How many days are allowed for a Cityscape teacher to miss during the school year and still achieve the highest level of TIA designation?

    a. None
    b. One
    c. Two
    d. Three

10. Cityscape's TIA plan designates that 90 percent of the funding goes directly to the teacher of record who earns his or her distinction.

    a. True
    b. False

Quiz Answers:

1. B
2. A
3. D
4. A
5. C
6. A
7. A
8. A
9. D
10. B

*Please contact Dr. Billy Ferrell, Chief Officer of Culture, Climate, & Student Services with any questions or comments at 214-714-8060 or bferrell@cityscapeschools.org