Texas Title I Priority Schools Grant: 2013-2014

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At-a-Glance

In the summer of 2010, TEA awarded Smith New Tech, Roosevelt, and Spruce high schools the TTIPS grant. TEA awarded Roosevelt a total of $5,246,825 (100% of requested amount) and Spruce a total of $5,205,909 (100% of requested amount) to be spent over three years. Smith New Tech received permission for a delayed implementation of the grant for the 2011-2012 school year, and was awarded $5,056,869. In the summer of 2011, TEA awarded North Dallas High School the TTIPS Cycle 2 grant. North Dallas received $5,981,152.00 (100% of requested amount. For the 2013-2014 school year, although Spruce and Roosevelt had completed the three years of their grant implementation, they were permitted an extension of the period of availability of funds until September 30, 2014.

Program Description

The TTIPS grant program, under the direction of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), described four intervention models designed to improve low performing schools. In order to receive the grant, applicants had to agree to undergo one of the four intervention models. Franklin D. Roosevelt, H. Grady Spruce, and North Dallas agreed to the Transformation model and A. Maceo Smith New Tech agreed to the Turnaround model. The Turnaround Model required the school’s principal and 50 percent of the current staff to be replaced, improvement in the use of data to guide instruction, and strengthening community- and social-supports for the students. The Transformation Model required the principal to be replaced unless the principal had been with the school less than two years. In addition, the school was to implement a staff evaluation system tied to student achievement and other factors such as classroom observations. The school was also required to implement practices aimed at improving use of data to modify teaching and providing staff with professional development.

Campuses receiving the grant were measured by how well that campus improved across seven critical success factors (CSFs):

1. Academic Performance
2. Increase the Use of Quality Data to Drive Instruction
3. Increase Leadership Effectiveness
4. Increase Learning Time
5. Increase Parent/Stakeholder Involvement
6. Improve School Climate
7. Increase Teacher Quality

These success factors were measured using various tests, surveys, and other district data. The schools and districts set goals for each of the three years of the grant.
school year, results of SKR observations would be one component of the performance based compensation (PBC) that was calculated by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). The other half of the PBC was based on student achievement value-added growth, which is based on two parts: 20 percent on school-wide value-added growth and 30 percent based on value-added growth of an individual classroom teacher's students. If the teacher does not teach a TAKS/STAAR tested course, such as art or physical education, the 50 percent value-added PBC is based solely on the school-wide growth. Teachers at extension campuses, Roosevelt and Spruce High Schools, will receive financial awards based solely on their CEI quintile. Those in the first quintile will receive $1,000; those in the second quintile will receive $2,000; those in the third quintile will receive $3,000, and so forth. While this system necessarily excludes teachers without CEI’s, program management determined it to be the most appropriately comparable system to the one in place at North Dallas and Smith New Tech High Schools for the year.

Outcomes

The grant provided funds for schools to improve across seven areas of the school: academics, increase use of quality data to drive instruction, increase leadership effectiveness, increase learning time, increase parent/stakeholder involvement, improve school climate, and increase teacher quality. As part of the application process, campuses and the district had to set a series of measures and goals for each area. Roosevelt and Spruce completed implementation in 2012-2013, but were permitted an extension of the period of availability of School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds that were awarded for Cycle 2 schools until September 30, 2014; North Dallas and Smith New Tech had one final year of TTIPS granted funding. In 2011-2012, Smith New Tech and North Dallas reached the 70 point requirement. In 2012-2013 North Dallas was the only campus that achieved the 70 points required. In 2013-2014, Smith New Tech earned 91.7 points, while North Dallas earned 58.7 points, and missed the 70 point requirement for the first time in its grant history.

In a survey of TTIPS teachers, respondents generally rated Teacher Quality, the Use of Quality Data, and Leadership highly. Two domains in which a significant variance between campuses can be seen are Parent/Stakeholder Involvement and School Climate. The two campuses at which teachers rated Parent/Stakeholder involvement the lowest were also the two who rated School Climate the lowest: Roosevelt and Spruce High Schools. A survey of parents of students attending TTIPS campuses found that the large majority of parents responded that the TTIPS schools do a good or very good job in talking with them about student situations.

Three Dallas ISD campuses applied for Cycle 3 TTIPS grants in the summer of 2014, but none were awarded funding. Both A. Maceo Smith New Tech and North Dallas High Schools also applied for an extension year to spend their fund balances through September of 2015, in the same manner Roosevelt and Spruce High Schools did in 2013-2014. At the time of this report, these applications were still under review, with no decision returned.

Recommendations

Campuses and the district should have a sustainability plan in place for campuses, especially regarding personnel: Campuses should have a long-term strategy that considers what the impact will be without these grant funded activities, and how the district and campuses can moderate that impact. More importantly, as part of the TTIPS activities, many highly qualified personnel were hired to enact various aspects of the grant (e.g. master teachers for the TAP program, campus coordinators). These highly skilled employees will no longer have positions at the campus after the final year of implementation since their positions are grant funded. The campus and district should make every effort to identify these valuable employees and find other positions for them after the TTIPS grant expires.

For more information, please refer to the full report EA14-148-2 found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888.