Texas Title I Priority Schools Grant: 2014-2015

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At-a-Glance

The Texas Title I Priority Schools (TTIPS) grant was a program funded under the Title I Federal School Improvement Programs grants. The overall goal of the TTIPS grant is to assist some of Texas' most underperforming schools to make the necessary changes to undergo drastic improvement, including improvement of students’ academic performance, teacher quality, parent and community engagement, and campus culture. Campuses selected for the TTIPS grant received funds in order to make needed improvements.

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 the use of data to modify teaching and to provide staff with professional development.

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

1. Improved 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, and
7. Increase Teacher Quality.

These success factors were measured using various tests, surveys, and other district data. The schools and district set goals for each of the three years of the grant.

History of TTIPS in the District

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 2011-12 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). Although Spruce and Roosevelt had completed the three years of their grant implementation with the 2012-13 school year, they were permitted an extension of the period of availability of funds until September 30, 2014. Likewise, North Dallas and Smith New Tech High Schools were permitted an extension of the period of availability of their funds which ran until July 31, 2015, though their implementation period ended at the close of the 2013-14 school year. This allowance permitted the campuses to make the most of their grant funds toward campus improvement.

Three Dallas ISD campuses applied for Cycle 3 TTIPS grants in the summer of 2014, but none were awarded funding.

2014-15 Expenditures

The majority of both campuses’ grant funds were spent on supplies and materials, which included supplemental instructional materials and supplies, and books and other supplemental supplies for professional development. Smith New Tech High School spent a total of $218,494 during the extension period, with $108,914 going toward supplies and materials (See Figure 1). North Dallas High School spent a total of $322,820 during the extension period, with $171,717 going toward supplies and materials (See Figure 2).

Professional and contracted services (printing materials, educational field trips, transportation for tutoring/summer enrichment programs, and contracts for network trainers and substance abuse counselors) comprised the next largest category of expenditure at Smith New Tech High School. The campus spent $82,275 on this category, or 38 percent of their total expenditures.
The second largest category of expenditure at North Dallas High School was payroll, comprising 26 percent of the total spending, at $82,587.

The remaining funds were spent on travel for professional development and supplemental pay for summer enrichment programs.

During the 2010-11 school year, the goals associated with test scores were the greatest challenges for the schools, with most not meeting their goals (though scores did still improve in most cases). However, given that the schools did not receive funding until November, many grant programs could not be implemented in a meaningful manner that might have affected student academic performance. Despite this, schools were still able to show positive results in other indicators such as School Climate and Parent/Stakeholder Involvement.

In 2011-12, Smith New Tech, North Dallas, and Roosevelt met enough goals to meet the 70 point criteria set by TEA. In general, the three campuses had a positive trend in every goal and showed improvement across the seven critical success factors. Spruce was the one campus that did not meet enough of its goals to meet the 70 point criteria, and therefore had to undergo a special review.

In 2012-13, North Dallas was the only campus that exceeded the 70 points required, exceeding the goal by nearly 12 points. For a second year, Spruce was unable to make the 70 point requirement and was deficient by nine points. Roosevelt and Smith New Tech were also unable to make the 70 point requirement and missed it by two and six points respectively. Roosevelt and Spruce completed implementation in 2012-13, while North Dallas and Smith New Tech had one final year of implementation.

In 2013-14, 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. Smith New Tech and North Dallas completed implementation at the close of the 2013-14 school year, and the grant extension period closed on July 31, 2015.

No Dallas ISD campuses were awarded Cycle 3 TTIPS funding, bringing the program to a close for the time being.

**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. Campuses should make every effort to identify the valuable employees previously funded by these awards, and find other positions for them after the TTIPS grant has expired.

For more information, contact Program Evaluation at 972-925-6457.