

# Texas Title I Priority Schools Grant: 2010-2011

## At-a-Glance

The Texas Title I Priority Schools (TTIPS) grant was a grant authorized under the School Improvement Grants to be given to Title I campuses and other eligible schools. The purpose of the School Improvement Grants are to assist targeted schools that demonstrate the greatest need and commitment to use funds in order to raise student achievement with corrective action, improvement to, or restructuring of the campus environment. The overall goal of the TTIPS grant was to assist some of Texas' most underperforming schools to make the necessary changes to undergo drastic improvement. Campuses selected for the TTIPS grant received funds to be used to supplement, not supplant, current budgets 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 (each individual campus applying) had to agree to undergo one of the four intervention models. 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 2 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 to also implement practices aimed at improving use of data to modify teaching and providing staff with professional development.

The Closure Model was a grant to close a low-performing school and provided the financial ability to re-direct students to other higher performing schools. The Restart Model provide the financial ability to close down a school and reopen it as some form of a charter school.

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

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.

In the spring of 2010, four Dallas ISD schools applied for a TTIPS grant utilizing the Transformation Model (Justin F. Kimball, Franklin D. Roosevelt, H. Grady Spruce, and Seagoville High Schools), and one school utilizing the Turnaround Model (A. Maceo Smith High School, now A. Maceo Smith New Tech High School). Dallas ISD did not apply for any schools to undergo the Closure or Restart models of intervention.

In the Summer of 2010, TEA awarded A.M. Smith, Roosevelt, and Spruce high schools with the TTIPS grant. TEA awarded Roosevelt a total of \$5,246,825 and Spruce a total of \$5,205,909 (100% of the request amounts) to be spent over three years. A.M. Smith received

permission for a delayed implementation of the grant for the 2011-2012 school year, and was awarded \$5,056,896 in August 2011.

### Teacher Advancement Program

The TTIPS grant called for a system that rewarded teachers, principals, and staff who, in implementing the Transformation Model, had increased student achievement and high school graduation rates. The Turnaround Model also had the option of implementing this system. The district decided to utilize the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) to fulfill this requirement. The Milken Family Foundation researchers developed TAP in 1998 and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching administered the program. The TAP system is a comprehensive research-based reform model that provides differentiated compensation for teachers and principals based on teachers' performance in the classroom and the academic performance of their students. The TAP program also provides career advancement opportunities for teachers in the form of salary augmentation for increased responsibilities and duties. The TAP system also provides time for teachers to have ongoing professional development during the day.

The TAP system employs an evaluation and bonus system that is partially based on classroom observations and student performance on the state tests (measured through value-added models). Half of the teacher bonus is based on student achievement value-added growth, which is based on two parts: 20 percent based on school-wide value-added growth and 30 percent based on value-added gain of an individual classroom teacher's students. If the teacher taught a non-state tested course, such as art or physical education, the 50 percent value-added bonus is based solely on school-wide gains. The value-added component will be based on teacher's Classroom Effectiveness Indices and the school's School Effectiveness Indices. The TAP website (<http://www.tapsystem.org/>) provides additional information about the TAP program.

The remaining 50 percent of the bonus is based on teacher classroom performance (see Figure 1). The classroom performance evaluations are based on a series of classroom observations conducted by a leadership team. The leadership team is composed of master teachers, mentor teachers, and principals. The reviews are based on a four-domain rubric: Instruction Design and Planning, Learning Environment, Instruction, and Responsibilities. Although teachers are evaluated on content knowledge, the focus of this four-domain rubric is not content specific and therefore all teachers, including those in special areas, can be evaluated.

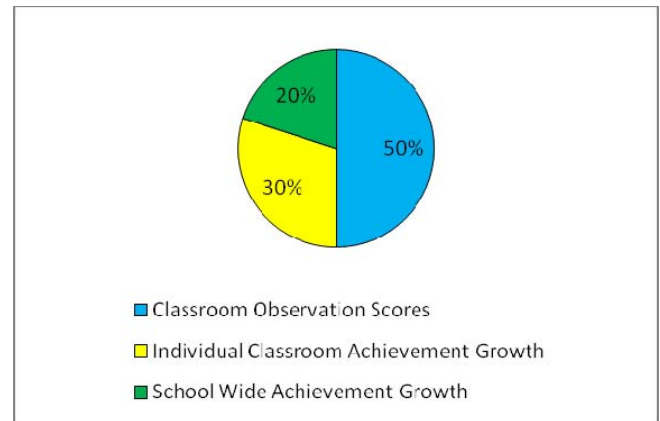


Figure 1 – TAP Evaluation System for Teachers

Entering into TAP required each campus to apply and allow for a presentation to teachers working at the individual campus. Following this presentation, teachers at each campus voted whether or not they were willing to participate in the TAP program. In order for TAP to implement their program, they required that a majority of the teachers at the campus voted to participate. This voting requirement ensured “teacher buy-in” to the program. In the fall of 2010, a TAP representative went to Roosevelt High School and Spruce High School to make the required presentation. Seventy-six percent (76%) of teachers at Roosevelt High School voted in favor of the TAP program and 67 percent of teachers at Spruce High School voted in favor. A. Maceo Smith planned to begin the TAP application once their TTIPS grant implementation begins in 2011-2012 school year.

## Implementation

The district created a Turnaround Office with a director (known as the district shepherd) who directly reports to the Superintendent of School. The purpose of the Turnaround Office was to take a leadership role and provide the support needed to implement TTIPS guidelines. The Turnaround Office was responsible for monitoring each campus' TTIPS activities, maintaining communication between district leadership and the campuses, building parent and community support, establishing clear expectations for the campuses, and providing campuses the flexibility, resources, and support needed to reduce barriers and compliance requirements in order to achieve student progress. The director would assist in the implementation of a school's planning efforts for this grant. In addition, the Turnaround Office had a position devoted to dropout recovery efforts and served as a single-point of contact for TTIPS schools, with the mission of identifying, tracking, and recovering students who had dropped out from a TTIPS school.

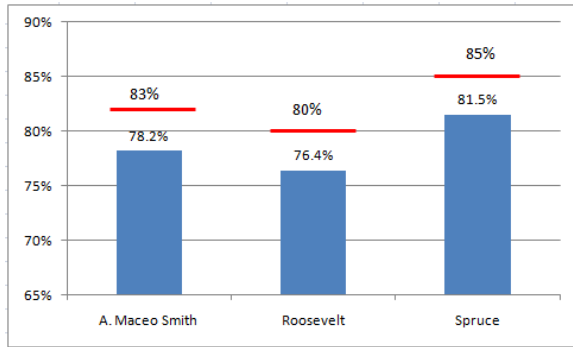
A Maceo Smith applied for a delayed implementation for the grant and expected to receive the majority of its first year funds in August of 2011. Roosevelt and Spruce received their funding in November of 2010, after TEA approved all amendments. While schools were able to implement many grant programs, the timing of receiving the funds prevented the execution of the vast majority of the 2010-11 scheduled TTIPS grant initiatives. The district was unable to hire the grant shepherd position until Spring of 2011, and schools were unable to hire their project managers until Spring 2011. Furthermore, the schools were unable to initiate the TAPS program during the 2010-11 school year, which was meant to be a major contributor to improving student academic performance. Despite the delay in grant execution, TEA still expected schools to abide by their 2010-11 goals stated in the grant application.

## Outcomes

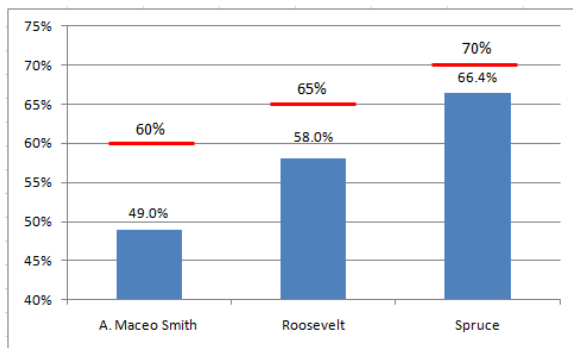
In July 2011, the district submitted the outcomes of the seven Critical Success Factors measures for each school. Under TEA rules, Roosevelt and Spruce had to report their progress toward each goal. If a school missed 70 percent of the gain needed to meet their first year goals (i.e. 70% of 2010-11 goals minus 2009-10, the baseline) then the school had to provide a corrective action plan detailing how the school would work towards meeting that goal in 2011-12. A. Maceo Smith had to report its 2010-11 outcomes, but did not have to provide any action plan because the school had applied for delayed implementation.

Each school set 27 goals. Each goal was linked to one of the Critical Success Factors outlined in the grant. Both Roosevelt and Spruce missed 6 of their school's 27 first year goals. Two of the goals were tied to teacher CEIs and the progress towards those goals will not be known until October 2011.

In general, each school met the majority of their TTIPS goals for each of the measures across the seven Critical Success Factors, with the exception of Academic Performance. The TAKS goals 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, and A. Maceo was not scheduled to start the grant until the 2011-12 school year, the results were not surprising nor did they indicate a failure of the grant. The delay in receiving the funds meant that many grant programs, including TAP, could not be implemented in a meaningful manner that might have affected student academic performance. Next year's academic results will be a better indicator of grant success at each school. It should also be noted that despite the delay in receiving funds, schools were still able to show positive results in other indicators such as School Climate and Parent/Stakeholder Involvement.



**Figure 3 – TAKS Reading 2010-11 Scores, with TTIPS Goals marked as Red Lines.**



**Figure 4 – TAKS Mathematics 2010-11 Scores, with TTIPS Goals marked as Red Lines.**

### Recommendations

**Vertical Buy-In** – Once the district shepherd and school project manager positions were filled, many of the initial challenges of implementing the grant eased. However, with the change in some school’s principals and Learning Community executive directors (EDs), the TTIPS office should work to make sure that EDs and principals know the expectations of the grant at all levels (including teachers, project managers, principals, directors, district shepherd, etc.) and work together to fulfill these expectations.

**Policy Adjustment** – The district needs to make sure that the district shepherd and project managers are given the discretion provided to them by the grant including the ability to: hire and oversee TAP positions, give teachers tuition reimbursements as provided by the grant, attend mandated conferences, and integrate programs designed to improve parent involvement. Many

of the initiatives TTIPS schools run are unique to those schools; therefore, the district will need to ensure all the resources and policies are in place for smooth implementation. In addition, the grant is intended for schools and shepherd to have a level of autonomy to implement grant policies. This will involve coordination from departments such as Human Resources, Information Technology, Evaluation & Accountability, and other departments. The district shepherd, project managers, principals, and other relevant department representatives should meet early in the fall to forecast future issues. That would allow potential problems to be addressed proactively rather than reactively later in the year.

**Bureaucratic Consolidation** – For 2011-12, each TTIPS school resides in different learning communities, under different EDs. Likewise, each school has different contacts for HR and other departments. The Evaluator recommends that the TTIPS schools be consolidated as much as possible under one hierarchy (for example, all TTIPS schools have the same HR contact to discuss HR issues with). Ideally, all TTIPS schools would report to the same ED, either one of the current EDs or someone assigned to be the sole ED for TTIPS schools.

**TAP Monitoring** – The TAP program should be evaluated, including implementation and TAP’s affect on student academic outcomes.

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